

Backbone Mountain, MD, 3,360 ft. – May 29, 2005, HP #3: No Long-Distance Views

Friday May 27, my employer surprised me by encouraging me to take off early, a couple hours after lunch. As such, last minute, I decided to embark on an outdoor adventure for the Memorial Day long-weekend, and I invited Yenny to join me. The intended destination for the evening was a campsite in the George Washington forest near Wardensville, WV. From there the idea was to venture to Blackwater Falls State Park in the Allegheny Mountains and also to find the highest point in Maryland.

Packing took some time, and I became worried about Friday long-weekend traffic, so I called Yenny and we decided it would be easier to forego Friday night camping and instead leave the next morning. Early Saturday morning we met at my place - I had moved from Arlington to Herndon VA for a better paying job about thirteen months prior.

At Moorefield WV, with a whole day ahead of us, we detoured off the direct line to Blackwater Falls, and followed the same roads I had used when I visited Seneca Rocks and Spruce Knob almost four years earlier. Needing a break from the serpentine drive, we hiked to the top of Seneca Rocks. This time we took some nice photos from within the “realm of the climber” area above the impressive cliff faces.

Since we were in the neighborhood, once again, we popped over to Spruce Knob, the highest point in West Virginia, just 20 miles away. After checking out the views from the summit platform, and taking a few photos, we drove to Spruce Knob Lake. Without stopping, we turned to the north, passed through Job, on to Harman, and across the Canaan Valley - covering 50 miles from the highpoint to Blackwater Falls State Park.

It was raining when we arrived and too late in the evening to visit the falls. As such we opted to drive into the Monongahela Forest hoping to find a remote camp spot. Finding one was not easy, but eventually a suitable spot was discovered. Auspiciously, the rain broke long enough for us to catch an amazing sunset as the sun settled behind the wooded mountains of Tucker county.

Sunday morning, we climbed up Olsen’s tower, and then drove into Davis, WV for lunch. Following lunch, we made it to the beautiful Blackwater Falls, named for its amber waters tinted by red spruce needles and the tannic acid of fallen hemlocks. The falls are an impressive fifty-seven feet tall.





From Blackwater Falls we headed toward the West Virginia/Maryland state line and Backbone Mountain. The trail to the Maryland highpoint is a rough logging type road just over a mile in length from highway 219. Since my SUV was equipped with four-wheel drive, we drove up most of the way, walking only when the driving became extra rough.

The highpoint is called Hoyer-Crest, at an elevation of 3,360 feet, and contains a large sign on a metal post. Hoyer-Crest is named in remembrance of the First World War Captain Charles Hoyer, a descendant of early settlers to the area, and founder of the Garrett county historical society. Hoyer was also a veteran of the Spanish-American War.

Backbone Mountain crosses the border of Maryland and runs into West Virginia, earning its name because the thirty-nine-mile-long ridge which it spans is often rugged and rocky. Thick tree coverage on the summit does not allow for any long-distance views. In 2005 the Highpointers Club had not yet installed one of their benches seen at many of the minor elevation highpoints today.

Heading back down, we encountered an obstruction - a car parked across the logging road. Luckily, my vehicle was able to barely squeeze by, gaining access to the highway. Seventy plus miles later we entered the George Washington Forest at Wardensville, WV where we located the campsite we had relinquished on Friday.

Memorial Day we enjoyed the peaceful solitude and remoteness of the area as we cooked on an open fire. Imagine our delight when a raft of wild turkeys passed by. It was four o'clock in the afternoon when we drove into Herndon, wrapping up an eventful and enjoyable long weekend, with my third highpoint reached.

