



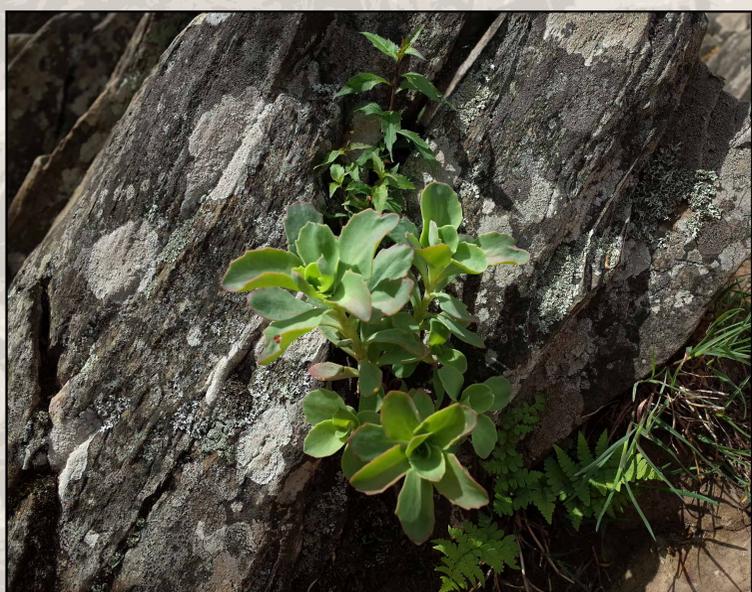
Bearfence Trailhead

Did You Know?



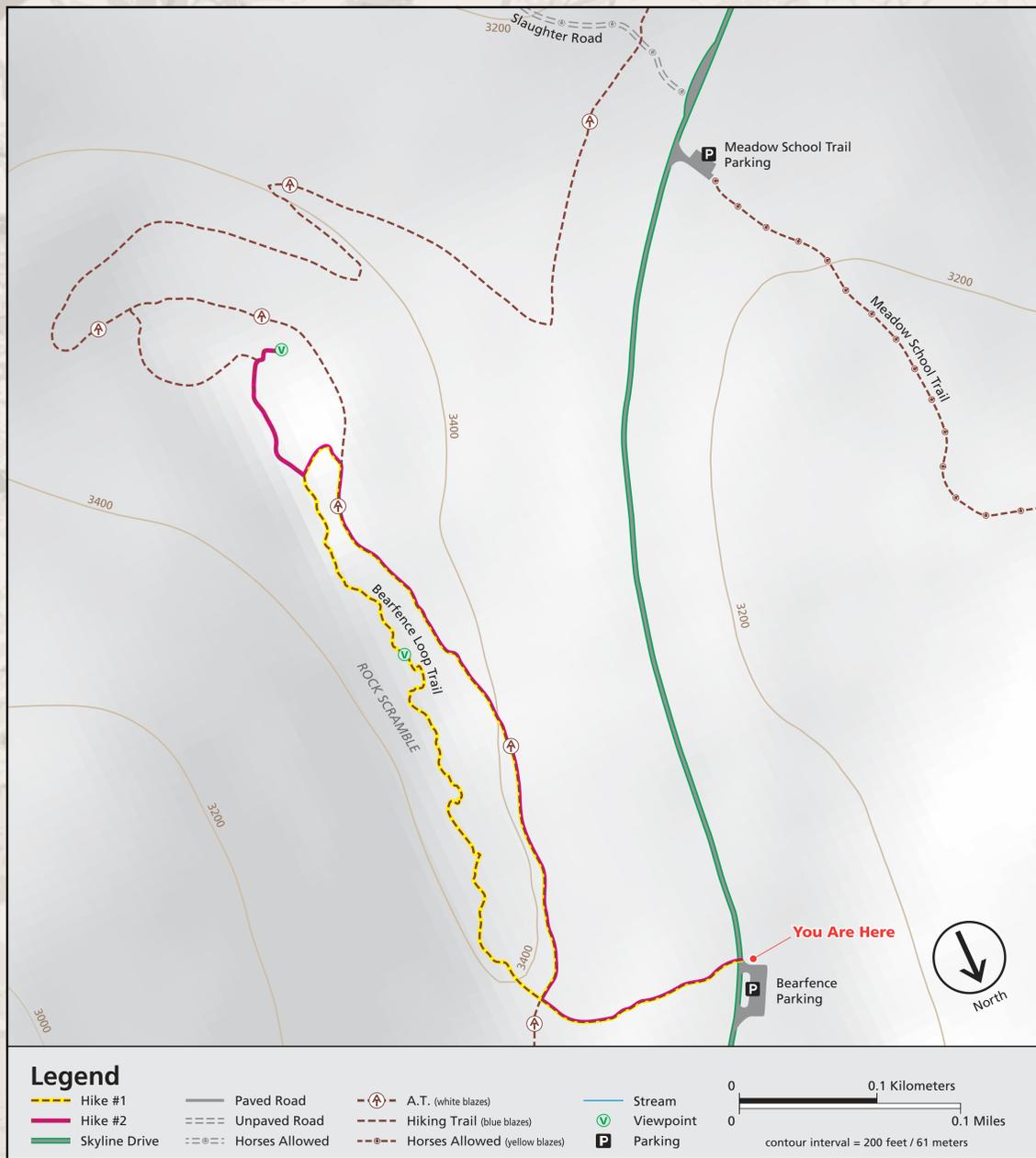
Rock of Ages

You'll have to navigate the boulders and jagged, nearly vertical rocks of Bearfence by using your feet and hands. The rocks are mostly greenstone—originally volcanic lava, but with millions of years of compression, metamorphosed into the gray-green rock you see today. Over time, freezing, thawing, and trees taking root in the rock will break these boulders down into soil.



Rocky Top

Even on the rockiest mountaintop there is life. Part fungus and part algae, lichens grow on rocks and are indicators of clean air. Mosses, saxifrage, and stonecrop can also take root on and in between rocks, needing only the smallest amount of soil—even using their own decaying matter—to grow. Black birch trees can send down long roots to find moisture and nutrition in the thinnest soil. They seem to grow right out of the rock! The plant life that grows on and around rocks is tough but delicate. Please tread lightly.



Suggested Hikes

--- Hike #1: Bearfence Rock Scramble

1-mile lariat, moderate, 1 hour hiking time, 311-foot elevation gain. This hike includes a rock scramble, which means you'll be pulling yourself up, over, and between boulders, using your feet and hands. Cross Skyline Drive and climb the stairs up the bank. At the trail post, continue straight ahead on Bearfence Loop Trail. After the rock scramble, turn right onto the connector trail. Go right on the Appalachian Trail north. At the intersection, turn left and return to the parking lot.

— Hike #2: Bearfence Viewpoint - No Rock Scramble

1.1-mile round trip, easiest, ¾ hour hiking time, 305-foot elevation gain. This route eliminates the rock scramble from the hike. Cross Skyline Drive and climb the stairs up the bank. At the trail post, turn right onto the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) south. Go left on the connector trail, then turn right on Bearfence Loop Trail. You'll see the viewpoint on your right. Retrace your steps to the starting point.

Emergency:
1-800-732-0911
(Cell phone service is unreliable)

Before You Go!

- Hike #1 includes a rock scramble; do not attempt in wet or icy conditions.
- Hike #1 may not be suitable for those with a fear of heights.
- Pets are not allowed on Bearfence Loop Trail. Where allowed, pets must be on a leash at all times.
- Be sure you are physically able to complete the hike you've chosen.
- Take plenty of water—at least a quart per hour.
- Be sure you know your route. Free maps are available at entrance stations, visitor centers, and www.nps.gov/shen
- Stay on the trail and avoid trampling sensitive vegetation.
- When you return from your hike, check for ticks.
- Be sure someone knows where you are and when to expect your return.