

Douglas Putman Memorial Cabin

GENERAL INFORMATION

Built, owned, and maintained by the Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club, the Douglas Putman Memorial cabin is a large stone structure located just off the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains, in Nelson County, Va. It is approximately 18 ½ miles south of Waynesboro, Va. and Interstate 64, about 4 miles from the club's section of the Appalachian Trail, and not far from both Crabtree Falls and the Wintergreen ski resort. The cabin, at about 2,300 foot elevation, is situated on 15 acres of club owned land pretty much surrounded by National Forest property. It is on the wooded, western slope of Entry Mtn. The Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP-- part of the National Park system) is the closest road and the main way to access the cabin. Cabin renters leave their cars in a gravel parking lot at milepost 18 ½, in a small meadow just off of the Parkway. This is White Rock Gap. Directly across the Parkway is the unmarked access trail to the cabin. Just over half a mile in length, the trail soon widens out to become an old roadway. After descending a bit, away from the Parkway, the route is easy to follow and mostly level. About half way to the cabin (as you pass by some huge boulders on the uphill side of the trail) you leave National Forest land and are on club property.

Access to the cabin is restricted to foot travel only (you could also bicycle in, or in the winter use cross country skis).

The cabin has bunk space for 12 people, on simple raised wooden platforms (there are 4 single bunks in the loft; there are 4 double wide bunks that sleep 2 people each—3 downstairs and 1 in the loft). There is a large fireplace at one end of the cabin, a wood burning cook stove along the back wall, a large wooden table with benches, and various cabinets and storage cans. The cabin comes fully equipped with pots and pans, cups and glasses, plates and cutlery—everything you need. There are 3 lanterns for light. There is a 2 burner cook stove that, like the lanterns, runs on propane (these screw on propane bottles cost about \$2 each and renters must supply their own). There is a light-weight hand cart, stored inside the cabin, that renters can use to haul their gear and equipment from the parking lot. Water can be obtained from an unprotected spring, about 75 yards downhill. There is a front deck with a view of the sunset and stars. An exceptionally large and clean outhouse is just down the hillside.

With no electricity, phone, running water, or central heat, the cabin is a simple, primitive structure. With a sturdy roof, foot thick stone walls, a wood floor, and a quality wood burning cook stove, the cabin is a secure and luxurious haven.

You will need to pack or cart in all your own personal gear, food, and bedding (a sleeping pad is highly recommended). Be prepared to replace any firewood you use during your stay (a splitting maul, axe, and hand saws are provided, as well as a heavy duty hand cart and a two person litter for moving wood cut by the work crews).

The Cabin and Winter Usage / Access:

No matter what time of year it is, all club members should have a good map of the area, and the best one readily available is map # 12, printed by the Potomac A.T. Club; it covers both the A.T. and the paralleling route of the Blue Ridge Parkway (from Rockfish Gap near Waynesboro south to Route 56), and shows all of the trails and minor roads to be found in the immediate area (including those in the St Mary's Wilderness and Sherando Campground area). The Virginia Gazetteer Map Book is good to have along as well, for a wider and more complete view.

The maps are good to have along because in the winter months the Blue Ridge Parkway may be closed due to ice and snow (sometimes it is closed for weeks at a time). When this occurs, the closest parking is in the small mountaintop community of Love, where county road 814 intersects the Parkway (at milepost 16.1). From here, it is about a 2 ½ mile hike along the Parkway to White Rock Gap and the access trail to the cabin—a 3 mile hike, altogether, with possible icy or deep snow conditions.

There have been times when cabin renters arrived to find the Parkway open, and so they drove to the gap and left their cars in the gravel lot, walking the half mile to the cabin and spending a night or two. But, during their stay, it snowed, and the Parkway was closed. In this case, the rangers usually leave a note on your car instructing you where to exit the Parkway (if, that is, it is still passable). In this situation, the way out is to drive south on the Parkway several miles, then exit on a gravel county road that drops off to the east. A good map is essential, or at least reassuring.

In the winter, cabin renters could alternately park in the National Forest campground at Sherando and hike approximately 2 ½ miles (all uphill) on the White Rock Gap Trail. This trail ends at the Parkway right at the gravel parking area in White Rock Gap, only half a mile from the cabin.

Winter usage of the cabin may come with a few extra challenges, but it is almost always worth it—the pristine snow, the wide open views, the challenges themselves.

For updates about the Parkway's status, you can call the rangers at the Whetstone Ridge office, at milepost 27. The number is 1 540 377 2377.

CABIN RENTAL:

To rent the cabin you must 1. be a member of the club, and 2. participate in a cabin maintenance / orientation weekend. Cabin maintenance / orientation trips are scheduled 4 or 5 times a year and are meant to acquaint new members with the cabin, it's history and it's rules, how to open and close it up, how to operate the wood burning cook stove, etc. Some light to moderate maintenance work is also done during these trips. These weekends are fun, free of charge, and open to all. There is a 12 person limit at the cabin itself, but people are welcome to camp out nearby.

Once qualified to rent the cabin on their own, all club members are equally entitled to reservation privileges (unless suspended for cause) on a first come first served basis.

To rent the cabin, to ask questions or check on availability, call the cabin reservation officer (Bob Adkisson) at 627 5514. If no one answers, leave a message with your name, call back number, and the dates you are interested in. Someone will get back to you ASAP. There is also an email address for the cabin committee, found on page 2 of the club's newsletter; this is especially good for general questions about the cabin.

The cabin can be reserved 8 weeks (56 days exactly) in advance for private trips.

If you want to lead a group trip to the cabin, one fairly open to all club members, there is no time limit or restrictions—you could even schedule such a trip over a year in advance and announce it in the upcoming club calendar. You do need to publicize such trips as far in advance as possible, get it in the club newsletter and possibly on the website. You, as trip leader, would be responsible for the cabin during the time of the rental, responsible for collecting the fee from all the participants and getting it to the rental officer.

If you rent the cabin for a private trip, the person renting the cabin can invite whoever they want to join them-- friends and non-club members, etc; however, that person must accompany the group the whole time (a person qualified to rent the cabin cannot leave the cabin in the hands of non-club members or people who haven't attended a maintenance / orientation trip-- they signed the release form, they are responsible for the cabin during the reservation period, they must remain there the whole time). When you rent the cabin, it and the 15 acres of club property are all yours—we do not try and fill the cabin to capacity by combining groups, nor are other club members allowed to stop by to visit (unless, of course, you gave them prior permission).

Sometimes 3 or 4 people call wanting the same weekend so, for popular times of the year (the spring and autumn months especially), renters need to try and plan ahead if possible, call exactly 8 weeks in advance. No calls for reservations are taken before 8 a.m. If you don't get the weekend or time you requested, ask to be placed on a stand by list, in case the first person cancels their reservation.

Typically, the cabin is rented about 4 out of 5 weekends. Usually the summer months are the slackest time for rental and, at worst, throughout the year, sometimes the cabin is only

used 3 or 4 nights in a particular month. Conversely, other times it is rented 15 to 18 nights a month. Weeknights (Sunday night thru Thursday night) the cabin is almost always available, so if you are retired, or have an unconventional work schedule, or a lot of time off, consider a mid-week rental.

RENTAL FEES:

Rental fees go to pay off the yearly taxes and insurance on the cabin, plus some needed supplies or tools. Fiscally, the cabin pretty much breaks even most years.

The standard rental fee is \$5 per person per night. There is, however, a \$10 a night minimum fee for both Friday and Saturday nights.

The rental fees are paid to the cabin reservation officer after your stay. You should return the cabin key at the same time (unless you plan to stay at the cabin in the near future, and have permission of the reservation officer to hold on to it). If you pay by check, the check should be made out to TATC. The cabin reservation officer can help you with the math if you have any questions. If you mail the key and check back, please indicate how many people you had, for how many nights, etc.

If you cancel a cabin reservation less than 7 days before the time of your stay, you are charged the minimum fee for that period—unless someone else takes over your reservation.

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