

Catherines FA Turnsheet

+East 211 Parking Lot to Bird Knob -- about 6 miles.

From the parking lot the early miles climb gradually up a twisty, rocky trail for about 1.9 miles to the start of the steep climb up to Bird Knob. It is about one mile to a picnic area, and then another .9 mile to the start of the climb up to Bird Knob. The trail forms a T intersection, and the Bird Knob trail is on the left (if you continued straight, you would go to the Visitors Center). So you must turn left and go up the mountain. You go up for about two miles -- steep for only a half mile or so, then slightly less intense. Be sure to check out the views at the top. You can look over New Market and the green valley below. Really excellent!

The trail continues on south along the top, with some slight ups and downs, with lots of rocks, but it gets a little more runnable as you go south. You will come to a sign on the right side of the trail that says something like Bird Knob is a couple of miles ahead, but indicates there is a trail to the left. Continue on (to the right) toward Bird Knob, and following the white blazes. You will run some more miles, and crossing some cleared Forest Service roads (but continue on the trail south). You will eventually come to a clearing. The trail will seem to die, with a faint hint of trail to the left and ahead -- turn left and go down the hill. As you go, you will see the trail pick up again and go down into a little gully. It broadens and becomes easy to run. You will go to a Forest Service road again, and find yourself running on it through the little gully, then up to the southeast to a gravel road. There will be a metal barrier across the road. Go around it onto the gravel road. You have just completed the first section -- estimated to be about 7 miles. This is also the first aid station of the run.

+ Bird Knob to Catherine Furnace -- about 4 miles

After you leave the aid station follow the dirt road down for about ½ mile and you will come to a left turn on Roaring Run Trail (Purple). Make the left turn and go up to the top and turn right to go down the Purple Trail, heading south (do not turn on Pink), in between two mountains until you reach Catherine Furnace.

+ Catherine Furnace to the Yellow Trail -- about 3 miles

After refilling at Catherine Furnace, go back onto the road and continue your downward venture. Bear left at the intersection and across the little bridge onto Cub Run Road. Up you go for about 2 and a half miles to the Morgan Run Trail (Yellow). Aid station number 3 is located at the turn onto Yellow (water only). This station is more limited in its offerings than the major aid stations.

+ Yellow Trail to the Orange Trail -- about 1.5 miles

The Yellow Trail (Morgan Run Trail) goes up to the Orange Trail, heading west. It is nearly straight up a hollow in between opposing mountain slopes. It just about goes up the middle of a stream too -- called Morgan Run. It is truly beautiful and green, but rocky and slow going. Be VERY careful for the slippery rocks. Think of this section as icy and you will do stay upright. As you get to the top the trail will flatten out and get soft. There are a lot of ferns, and could be a bit muddy. At the Orange Trail intersection turn right.

+ Orange Trail to Pitt Spring -- about 3.7 miles

The Orange Trail heads north, with some ups and downs, but it is all very runnable. It is a Forest Service fire road that is a bit overgrown. You will run along it for about 3.7 miles. As you approach Pitt Spring, there will be a clear change to a downhill trail. You will come out to the spring, and aid station (water only). After the aid station you will be back on the gravel road heading east to Cub Run.

+ Pitt Spring to Catherine Furnace/Purple Trail -- about 2 miles

At Pitt Spring, refill your water again. At the road, turn downhill to the right, heading the same direction as before (on section three). Except this time, when you reach the marked intersection, turn left and follow the dirt road to Catherine Furnace (aid station #5). From the left turn, it is about a half mile downhill. The furnace will be on your left, clearly visible. You will cross over the little creek and immediately turn left onto the purple trail. The purple blazes are hard to see, but the trailhead is clear, and it is very close to the furnace and the stream.

+ Purple Trail End to Bird Knob -- about 4 miles

The Purple Trail is evil.

It is long, slow climbing, in a hot part of the day, on a difficult, rocky trail. The start is kind of cool -- shaded and easy to run, but it gets insidious within a mile. And that's the bite. You think it is going to be easy, but it just keeps on going up. Oh hell, it is still fun, of course, but be prepared for your legs to be aching when you get over the mountain to the road. You will go up the Purple Trail, heading north, in between two mountains. This is a long, progressively steeper climb. You are not anywhere close to the top until you get to the switchbacks. Follow the too steep downhill to the dirt road and make a right turn. There is a nice view of the valley if you stop there and look back from where you came.

After only half a mile of dirt road you will come to aid station number five. From the aid station, continue up the dirt road straight to the metal gate. Go around the barrier and follow the "Ant Road.". From this gate all the tough uphill are done! It is not quite all downhill from here, but close enough!

+ Back to the Start -- about 6 miles

The gravel road will change into a wide dirt road, then grow narrower, but still clearly a jeep type road. It will go slightly right at some points. Be prepared for several cross roads and one road that goes straight ahead but leads to a dead end -- you will want to bear right when in doubt. The dirt road feels longer than it looks on the map. At the end is a clearing, and the Bird Knob Trail in on the left of the clearing. There will be a little opening, and pretty much nowhere else to go. Within a few dozen feet, you will come upon the sign you saw in the first section. Turn right, head to the north, and go back down the mountain. It will still be some miles before you are done, but the trail will be somewhat familiar, shaded, and with some great views on the way. At the bottom of the Bird Knob Trail, turn right and continue back to the East 211 Parking Lot. It is a nice gentle downhill in the last 2 miles, and you will be very happy indeed by that time to be done.