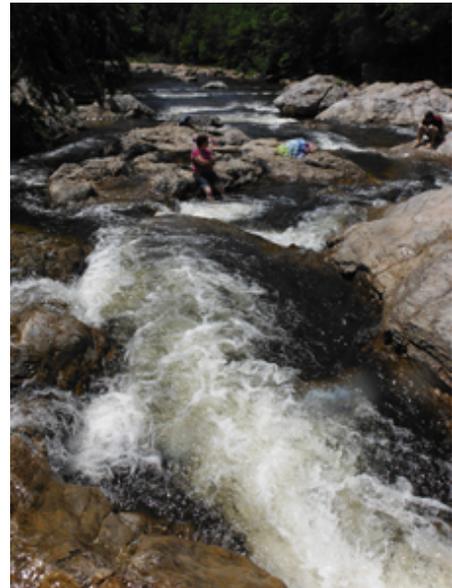


Swimming the Keystone State

Me and the missus took a 3 day, 2 night go at central PA's best.

Day 1: Haystacks

This site is so named as the rock formations resemble haystacks, or so its said. Personally I did not see the resemblance. The posted directions were very good, we arrived and began the trek. Right out of the gate I'll say the that though I did enjoy my time at Haystacks I felt the effort to get to the site and its quality were out of balance. The hike is the better part of an hour. Haystacks had fast moving water and a lot of rock formation to make the flow interesting, but though it did get fairly deep here and there (6-ish feet) there was no pool per say to leap into or waterfall that you could interact with. There were loads of locals here, and the area is easily large enough to support a good crowd. That did make it clear that I was in the right place. The water was nicely cool and very clean, but without a place to jump from or a pool to jump into I'd say it be more worth it if the hike was 50 yards. So, a fine site but IMO not worth the effort.



The weather started taking a turn just as we arrived back at the car, so we pushed off site #2 for the day, Rockrun, and instead made way for Canton, PA, the town where we'd be spending the night. Most little towns that make it to a map are a few houses and a garage, but Canton was a classic old town right from a 1950's post card. Nice. Our accommodations were at "Doc's Irish Inn". An old place no doubt but completely renovated - good bar, good dining, a laid back older crowd and free wifi. Our room was small, one of the few with a double bed which was the largest they had to offer as many over-night guests are lone hunters.

One neat thing in town is a early 20th century theater, the Rialto. It's one of 5 or 6 central PA old theaters that offer new release films in a classical environment. I'm all over that, if you are too the Rialto is well worth a few bucks to take in a flick.

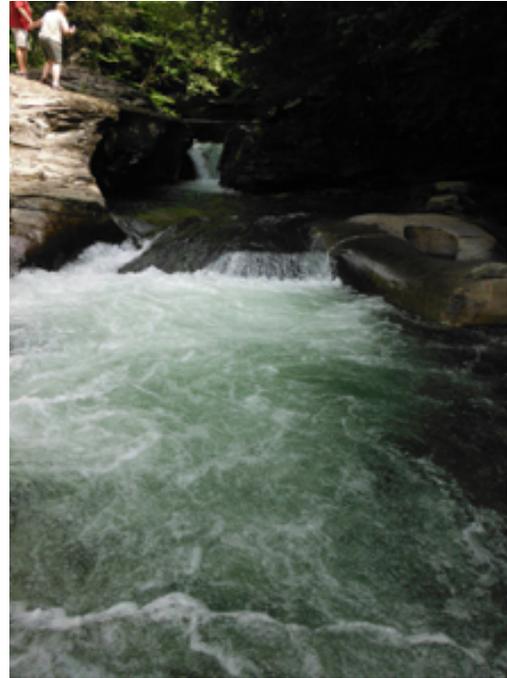
Unfortunately upon my return to Doc's it was clear the laid back older crowd had been replaced by the off-key singing loud and obnoxious crowd, and the bar is open till 1:30. Really, attract the late night one-to-many crowd OR overnight guests - but not both. It was a long, loud night, Next time I'll figure out some other place to lay my hat - although I'd return for dinner.

Doc's offers no breakfast - or staff. Nobody was there and the downstairs completely locked up when we left. There is a station to make coffee and grab a cereal bar, that's about it. There was a great little

hole in the wall though that seemed a very good fit with the Rialto called the Chatterbox a block off of the main light for the town. Very enjoyable breakfast for a 70's price!

Day 2: Rockrun, Stoney Fork

Rockrun was tougher to find, the pull off did not seem to match up perfectly with directions. But where there are a couple cars there is hope, so we parked. You need to walk in back of a rental cabin which feels a little like invading someone's space, but when I asked to dial directions the occupants of another cabin walked us there. Really nice folks. On the plus side I have to say this site has it all, a nice fall, a place to jump and it appears to be pretty deep. The only down side was the temperature - holy mother of God. A guy fishing there said it was about 45F, I believe him. After finding it I was definitely going in, but this was a real quick dip. Coldest swimming hole water I've ever felt. 15 degrees warmer and this place would be a real high ranker. But hypothermia would be a real concern here so we did not stay long. We chose to forego Pirate Rock (the write up suggested it was better for kids) and head straight to Stony Fork.



The directions got us there, one thing needs to be said about Stony Fork Creek Rd. It almost goes all the way to 414, but not quite. The dirt part of the road is a snow mobile trail, and 50 yards shy of 414 there is a shallow section of river deep enough to stop a car. I thought it was a bridge out, but realized that there never had been a bridge. Snow mobiles just cross it when frozen. From a map an approach from 414 may look tempting, but you must approach from the north.

Big Falls was a steep approach (as described) but a good site. There are a couple places to jump from, I jumped once but just missed an underwater ridge I could not see from above. That spooked me so I kept it to 1 jump. The water is good but not awesome, there is a chute that deposits into the pool as a waterfall which you cannot ride but looks really nice. It's a real nice swim, but the magic that got me to stay in Warren Falls Vermont for 3 hours was missing. We took a stroll down stream, I have to say the patterning in the rock that the creek flows over is really stunning, a photographers dream. I enjoyed some fast creek water rushing over me and we moved on. Just north of "Big Falls" is "Little Falls", they say 1/2 mile. Nope, the pull off was just 1/10 of a mile away! The path to Little Falls was very easy, and at the end was a site in my personal top 10%. You can jump but be careful, it's not super deep. Great pool, really refreshing water and a terrific waterfall. The best part of that, I've sat under the crushing



flow of falls before which I really enjoy, but this was the first falls I could actually get behind. Stony Fork Little Falls was a top notch swim, I wish it had been a bit deeper closer to the jump points, but aside from that it was aces in my book, a swimming hole where you could lose a couple hours.

Our accommodations for that night were in Cedar Run, would have been a 15 minute drive had that bridge not been out. Took nearly an hour to get to that point on 414 by going around, though not being prepared for

the detour with maps – and a signal-starved GPS - was mostly to blame. Along the way we found ourselves in Wellsboro. We did not stop but I have to say, this was a drop dead gorgeous, polished town. If you're checking out these places coming from the north, seriously consider this as a hub.

Cedar Run was really unusual, a little hamlet just off 414 and over a bridge. Beautiful spot, and the Cedar Run Inn where we stayed was charming. Only demerit - no A/C. It was not so bad a night, and a fan in the window was fine. The room was OK, dinner and breakfast very nice and the general feel of the place a 10. We were just half way through dinner when the wife started floating ideas that would involve a return! If Cedar Run is more in the direction you are going I can't recommend it any higher.

