Cliffside Overlooks, a Cave Organ of Stone — A 3-Day Skyline Drive Road Trip

One hundred five miles of ridgeline driving through Shenandoah National Park, with a night at each of the park's two mountaintop lodges, a pair of short hikes to a summit and a waterfall, and a detour into a cavern deep enough to hold a stone pipe organ — with real lodges, real trail distances, and 2026 prices.

DURATION
3 Days

BEST TIME TO GO
Mid-to-Late October
peak fall color along the ridge, though it shifts year to year; late April–May brings wildflowers and full waterfalls with lighter crowds, and summer weekends are the busiest and haziest

FROM
$420 USD / person
for 2 people, incl. 2 nights' lodging inside the park, the park entrance fee, and Luray Caverns admission

Day 1 — Front Royal & the Northern District

A drive south from the park's northern entrance, with a short loop hike and the first of dozens of overlooks before the day ends at the park's highest lodge.

Skyline Drive Entrance — Front Royal

$30 USD per vehicle, valid 7 days · self-guided

The park's northern entrance sits right at Front Royal, about 70 miles west of Washington, D.C. — the fee covers unlimited entries for a full week, so it's worth timing a return trip around it.

Dickey Ridge Visitor Center & Fox Hollow Trail

~1 hour, 1.2-mile loop · self-guided, free

The park's first visitor center, four miles in, with an easy loop trail past an old homestead site and family cemetery — a gentle warm-up before the drive gets twistier.

Lunch — Elkwallow Wayside

~45 minutes · $10–$15 USD / person

A no-frills roadside grill at mile 24, known among regulars for its blackberry milkshakes — a good excuse to get out of the car around the halfway point to Skyland.

Overnight — Skyland Resort

From $260 USD / night, for 2 people

The highest point on Skyline Drive at 3,680 feet, with rooms and cabins looking straight down into the Shenandoah Valley — dinner at the on-site Pollock Dining Room comes with the same view.

Skyland Resort · https://www.goshenandoah.com/lodging/skyland-resort

Day 2 — Stony Man Summit & Big Meadows

The park's two signature short hikes back to back — the easiest summit view in Shenandoah and a waterfall trail — before a second night at the park's social hub.

Stony Man Summit Trail

~1.5 hours, 1.6-mile round trip · self-guided, free

The second-highest peak in the park, reached by the easiest summit hike on Skyline Drive — a rocky overlook at the top gives a 270-degree view over the valley with barely any elevation gain.

Dark Hollow Falls Trail

~1.5 hours, 1.4-mile round trip · self-guided, free

The closest waterfall to Skyline Drive, dropping seventy feet over a series of rock ledges — the trailhead sits right by Big Meadows, though the return climb is steeper than the way down.

Big Meadows Wildlife Watching

~1 hour, self-guided · free

A rare open meadow inside the forested park, planted deliberately to keep it clear — white-tailed deer graze here most evenings, and it's one of the more reliable black bear sighting spots in the park.

Overnight — Big Meadows Lodge

From $240 USD / night, for 2 people

A 1939 chestnut-bark lodge at the park's midpoint, with a great room built around a stone fireplace where guests gather most evenings to watch the sunset over the valley.

Big Meadows Lodge · https://www.goshenandoah.com/lodging/big-meadows-lodge

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