

**Backpacking the Appalachian Trail:
An Introduction to Lightweight Backpacking
Damascus, Virginia
June 15 - 22, 2008 (Sunday - Sunday)**

The Appalachian Trail, the oldest long distance trail in the United States, has achieved almost mythic status. Originally constructed in the 1920s, it wanders along ridgelines and through valleys and occasional towns, as it runs for over 2,000 miles from Georgia to Maine. While the East Coast is often regarded as having little wilderness worthy of the name, the Trail belies this notion. One of the delights of the Trail is that though it is often rugged and remote, it is also designed to accommodate both people who want to hike the entire trail, and those who choose to "section hike" it; that is, hike a new section every year. Consequently there are well-spaced shelters and springs, and access trails that allow great flexibility in how far one chooses to hike. These features make the Appalachian Trail ideal both for those who want to learn all about lightweight backpacking, and for those who are already veteran backpackers and want to experience one of the greatest trails in America!

Our trip begins at 5 pm at the Mount Rogers Outfitters, an outdoor store on the main street of the small town in Damascus, VA. After we've gathered there we'll move to the Between the Trails lodge, our base camp for the next 2 nights. We'll start with introductions and an overview of the trip, and then review some of the most important aspects of backpacking. We'll go out to eat at a local restaurant and then get to bed early. The next day will be spent on demonstrations of equipment, adjustment of packs, the "shakedown" and generally getting ready. We will also begin the task of identifying those items we will take with us and those items that will be "left behind". Tuesday will begin our backpacking journey as we are shuttled south for the start of our hike.

This particular part of the trail is known for high alpine meadows, towering rhododendron and azaleas, wild pony herds and other more indigenous wildlife, spectacular views, and places with names like Fat Man's Squeeze and Buzzard Rock. Our moderate mileage will leave us plenty of time (and energy!) for learning all the arts of backpacking: pitching tents and tarps, tent care and repair, using and fixing stoves, cooking and meal planning, map and compass etc. We'll also learn about the human and natural history of the area. For those who are already knowledgeable on these topics or who aren't interested in learning them, there will be time for reading, writing in your journal, relaxing, or sometimes some additional hiking. Saturday we will come off the trail, return to town for hot showers, beds, and a final farewell dinner in Abingdon. You are free to leave any time after breakfast on Sunday.

We will emphasize lightweight backpacking on this trip. If you haven't kept up with backpacking trends in the last 10 years, the lightweight revolution is well worth learning about. Our guides are experts: if you follow their direction about what to bring, your pack will weigh under 30 pounds even with your share of group food and gear. Minimizing your pack weight as much as possible will give you more energy to appreciate the beauty.

This trip is for any woman who is a novice or experienced backpacker, and for those who want either a basic or a thorough introduction to lightweight backpacking. Our trek involves early mornings, strenuous hiking—including carrying 30-pound packs, and significant elevation gain and loss. Although we will not be attempting huge mileage, participants should prepare for the physical requirements of this journey (we'll send you helpful conditioning suggestions when you register). Your guides are experienced outdoorswomen who love to teach as much as they love to backpack.

To reserve a place on this adventure, please send your deposit of \$200 or the full trip fee to the office, or call to register by phone. The fee is \$995 (deduct \$50 if you register by 2/15) and includes guide services; group camping, cooking, and safety equipment; three nights indoor lodging; and dinners and breakfasts from dinner on the first Sunday through the following Sunday's breakfast. If you are flying in, the closest airport is Tri-City (TRI) airport in Bristol, VA and a shuttle is available from there to Damascus. Each participant provides a comfortable backpack, sturdy and well-fitting boots, a sleeping bag and pad, lunches and snacks. Our food is hearty and delicious- we think you'll be surprised at just how good "backpacking food" can be. If you have a dietary restriction or allergy, please let us know at least three weeks in advance. When you register, we'll send you information to help you prepare for your journey, including a detailed packing list and travel suggestions. Please call us with any questions you might have; we'd be delighted to welcome you to one of the premiere long-distance trails.

A d v e n t u r e s i n G o o d C o m p a n y

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