



Backpacking the Appalachian Trail: An Introduction to Lightweight Backpacking

TRIP AT-A-GLANCE

Dates: June 12 - 19, 2010
Location: Damascus, VA
Cost: \$ *1110
Rating: 3
Activities: Backpacking, camping
Meeting Place: Mt. Rogers Outfitter in Damascus, VA
Arrive: 5 pm on June 12th
Depart: anytime after breakfast on June 19th

* Deduct 5 % for being one of the first 5 to register (by 03/12/10) and 3% of the entire trip fee when the balance is paid by check.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- experienced guides
- three nights lodging and four nights camping
- dinners and breakfasts from dinner Saturday to breakfast the following Saturday
- group camping, cooking, and safety equipment
- round trip shuttle from hotel to the trail

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- transportation to/ from trip start/end.
- parking in Damascus is available for \$2/night. If you are flying into Bristol (TRI) airport, you can arrange a shuttle from Mt Rogers Outfitters
- Lunches and snacks
- Guide gratuities

Trip Highlights

- Experiencing the freedom and comfort of carrying a backpack under 30 lbs
- Learning all the techniques of backpacking so you can do it on your own
- Backpacking over one of the most scenic sections of the Appalachian Trail
- Learning about the "culture" of thru-hikers
- Seeing wild pony herds and enjoying the azaleas and rhododendron in bloom

Trip Overview

This section of the Appalachian Trail is known for high alpine meadows, towering rhododendron and azaleas, wild pony herds and other more indigenous wildlife, and spectacular views. It is the perfect setting for learning all about backpacking or, if you have backpacked previously, learn techniques from our expert guides that will keep your pack under 30 pounds. We keep our mileage low on this trip so that everyone has the energy to learn.

Our Itinerary

Saturday: Meet at 5 p.m. at Mount Rogers Outfitters, an outdoor store on the main street of the small town in Damascus, Virginia. If you are flying in, the closest airport is Tri-City airport (TRI) in Bristol, VA and you can arrange a shuttle from there with Mt Rogers Outfitters. After we're gathered there, we'll move over to Between the Trails, our basecamp 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.

Sunday: Today will be spent on going into detail most of the things we briefly discussed the night before, e.g. staying hydrated, foot care, and what to bring and how to pack it. We will also begin the task of identifying those items we will take with us and those items

CANCELLATION POLICY

In the unfortunate event that you must cancel your trip, your refund will be determined by the following formula:

Days Prior to Trip	Refund
90 + days	All but \$50
90 – 61 days	50% of deposit
60 – 30 days	50% of trip fee
29 days or less	No refund

Adventures in Good Company reserves the right to cancel or alter a trip due to unforeseen weather, unsafe conditions, low registrations or other circumstances.

On the rare occasion when Adventures in Good Company must cancel a trip, all payments received to date will be refunded, including the non-refundable portion of your deposit.

Adventures in Good Company is not responsible for expenses incurred in preparation for any canceled trips, including airplane tickets.

TIPPING GUIDELINES

Tipping at the end of the trip is optional. If you feel your guide(s) did an outstanding job and would like to reward them for their efforts, a suggested rule of thumb is US \$5 to \$10 per person, per day.

Oftentimes, trip members organize a group envelope (this makes it anonymous) and present it at the last shared meal.

Our Itinerary Continued

that will be left behind. We will spend most of our day on demonstrations of equipment, adjustment of packs, the shakedown and generally getting ready. Before dinner we will take a trip to the local outfitters for those items that were forgotten or maybe even those items we just have to have. After dinner, with all of our hard work done to get ready we can relax and look forward to our adventure.

Monday: After parking our cars, we are shuttled to the start of our hike. We put in at Dicky Gap and from there our destination is Hurricane Shelter. The terrain is mostly rolling today with a bit of a climb to Hurricane Shelter. Total mileage 5.2

Tuesday: We start our day with a climb to the top of Iron Mt. From there we descend to Fox Creek Gap and then climb up again to Old Orchard shelter. This part of the trail is very pretty with lots of small water crossings and beautiful foliage, flowers, and rocks. There is quite a bit of uphill today, although none of it is steep and there is plenty of time to cover the distance. Total mileage 5

Wednesday: Our hike starts with a climb to the top of Pine Mountain where the views are magnificent on a clear day. We then descend to an area known as The Scales. Right after this is where we meet the wild ponies that inhabit this part of the trail, known for their exceptional interest in any food you may be carrying in your pack. With any luck we will also start seeing some of the amazingly large azaleas and rhododendrons that are usually blooming at this time of year. From there the trail ascends again to Wise Shelter, where we camp in a lovely meadow just before the shelter. 5.9 miles.

Thursday: This may be one of the prettiest days of the trip! We hike up to a ridge with great views and then through a state park, over another ridge and through a gap with more great views, and onto Thomas Knob shelter, which is widely considered to be one of the nicest on the Trail. Although the actual mileage is only 5 miles, it will feel much longer. 5 miles

Friday: Thoroughly steeped in the lore of the Appalachian Trail and the art of backpacking, we'll hike out to our pick up spot at Elk Garden and return to town for hot showers, beds, and a final farewell dinner in Abingdon. 4.2 miles

Saturday: You are free to leave anytime after breakfast on Saturday.

Packing List

FOOTWEAR

- 1 pair midweight hiking boots (Gore-tex, cordura, or leather). They should fit comfortably, without constriction, when you are wearing your socks
- 1 pair lightweight camp shoes (sandals, clogs) to wear in camp.
- 2 pair thin liner socks; silk or synthetic equivalent (Capilene, Coolmax, Polypropylene) **Not everyone prefers liner socks**
- 2 pair hiking socks: wool or synthetic equivalent (Thermax, Ultimax, or Coolmax)

CLOTHING (including what you are wearing)

- 1 pair comfortable, lightweight, synthetic hiking pants/zip-offs (Supplex, or nylon/polyester/spandex blend) (optional: you can also wear shorts or a skirt w/long underwear for warmth)
- 1 lightweight long sleeved fleece or lightweight long sleeved wool shirt.
- 1 pair lightweight long underwear top and bottoms: silk, wool or synthetic equivalent (Capilene, Thermastat, MTS, or polypropylene)
- 1 pair shorts or hiking skirt: Not cotton.
- 1-2 synthetic T-shirts
- 1 wide-brimmed or duck bill hat, or baseball cap for sun, rain and high fashion.
- 1 stocking cap, wool or fleece or a buff
- 1 pair gloves: wool, Capilene, or Polartec
- 1 rain parka and rain pants: a **waterproof**/breathable fabric like Gore-tex. Partial or full length leg zippers are great for easily putting your pants on over your shoes or boots.
- underwear
- a fresh change of clothes for the ride home

EQUIPMENT

- 1 backpack: internal frame of at least 3900-4600 cu in capacity OR external frame of at least 4200 cu in.
- 1 sleeping bag; synthetic fill or down fill, warm to 20 degrees F
- 1 **lightweight** sleeping pad: "closed cell" foam pad, Thermarest® self-inflating pad, or Ridge Rest® pad
- 3 or 4 stuff sacks or Ziploc bags for organizing your gear in your pack
- 2 heavy-duty, extra-large garbage bags to line your backpack and sleeping bag stuff-sack
- 1 rain cover for your backpack
- Hydrations system or 2 one-quart water bottles
- Trekking poles

ESSENTIALS

- small headlamp with fresh batteries
- lip block with SPF of at least 15
- Sunglasses (100% UV blocking)
- 2 bandannas
- bowl, cup and eating utensils
- SMALL** pocket knife

We provide the sunscreen and insect repellent as part of the group gear unless you need something specific.

TOILETRIES (small everything)

- toothbrush, small toothpaste, dental floss, moist towelettes (1 per day), sanitary supplies and a zip-lock plastic bag, contact lens paraphernalia, glasses
- personal "patch kit": bandaids, 1 safety pin, moleskin, compeed, duct tape, foot powder, ibuprofen, personal medications, if any. **Individuals allergic to insect stings must bring an epi-pen.** Please consult your physician and tell your guide.

OPTIONAL

- small journal and pen
- camera and film /memory card
- short gaiters
- small, lightweight backpacking towel (like PakTowl)
- orienteering compass
- compression sacks for your sleeping bag and clothing will give you more packing space in your backpack

Notes on the Packing List

Adventures in Good Company's packing list covers what we have found to be essential for your safety and comfort. Because of weight considerations, please use discretion when adding to the list. For a five day backpacking trip, your pack may weigh up to 35 pounds. Your share of the group equipment may initially weigh 8-12 pounds. Weigh your pack at home and check to make sure everything fits in the pack, with room to spare for group food and equipment

Backpack: You want to bring a backpack that has 3900 - 4600 cu. in. capacity for an internal frame OR external frame of at least 4000 cu in. It is essential to have a backpack that fits correctly, as an ill-fitting pack can ruin your trip. While we understand wanting to borrow a pack, do not try to get by with someone else's pack that doesn't quite fit. Be sure to have your backpack fitted to you by your local outfitter whether it is a new one you purchase for the trip or one that you already have. Need help deciding on a backpack? Ask for our information guide on buying a backpack.

Boots: Well-fitting, sturdy boots that come above your ankle are very important to your safety and enjoyment. If you plan to buy new boots, break them in by wearing them around town and taking some short hikes *before* your trip. Leather boots may be waterproofed in various simple ways, and cordura boots will be waterproof if they're lined with Gore-Tex. If you have weak ankles or are recovering from an ankle injury, get leather boots – you'll find that this will give you more support in uneven or slippery terrain.

Sleeping bag: Bring a sleeping bag with down or synthetic insulation, wrapped in a heavy plastic bag (trash compactor bags work well) inside its stuff sack. Weight and bulk are some of the factors to consider in sleeping bags. Down bags are lightweight and compact, but they need to be kept dry in order to keep you warm. Synthetic bags are usually heavier and bulkier, yet they still keep you warm if they are wet. Consider packing your sleeping bag in a compression stuff sack. This will decrease the amount of space your sleeping bag takes up in your pack. Air out your bag frequently on a trip. Bring a bag rated to 20 degrees F.

Fabrics: Synthetic fabrics are often specified on this equipment list: Capilene, Thermastat, Polartec and Gore-Tex. In addition, there are many other patented brand names used by different manufacturers, which can make it all seem even more complicated. Basically, they all have one thing in common: The synthetics do not absorb much water compared to cotton—thus, they continue to provide warmth when wet. The specific fabric name is not as important as having material with these qualities and having a variety of weights available to you as your layering system. They really *are* miracle fabrics. Wool is also a very good choice, especially some of the new clothing made by Ibex or Smartwool. It is 100% merino wool, keeps you warm and dry and is not itchy. It also doesn't absorb the odors the way many synthetic materials do. You can also buy less expensive wool clothes at a second hand or Army/Navy store. Cotton is not a good choice! **Wet cotton (even heavyweight sweats) will rob you of your body heat faster than if you were wearing no clothing at all.**

How to pack: Several small stuff sacks (rather than one large one) are a great way to organize your gear. Line your backpack with a heavy-duty, extra large garbage bag for waterproofness. This is essential if you don't have a raincover for your pack and useful even if you do. Internal frame packs should be large enough for the bag to fit inside, and they are usually lashed to the outside of external frames.

Hydration: For backpacking trips it is very important to your safety and enjoyment to have an *independent* ability for accessing your water. As you are backpacking you will need to be able to drink water frequently without having to remove your pack. One method is to have a water bottle attached to your waist strap. Another option is to use a HYDRATION SYSTEM such as CamelBak, Platypus, and Gregory bladder bags, which are simply a collapsible water bag with a hose attachment that you drink from. These fit inside your pack with the hose positioned over your shoulder where you can access your water without the use of your hands. Bladder bags can hold 40-100oz. of water. Instead of carrying 2 one-quart water bottles you could carry one 70 oz. bladder bag.

Items on your packing list can be purchased through a number of outdoor outfitters including:

Recreational Equip. Inc (REI)
800-426-4840
www.rei.com

Eastern Mountain Sports (EMS)
603-924-7231
www.ems.com

Sierra Trading Post
800-713-4534
www.SierraTradingPost.com

Also check out the websites on the Affiliate page of our website (under Resources)

Additional Trip Preparations

HELPFUL WEBSITES

Appalachian Trail Conference:

www.appalachiantrail.org

The Appalachian Trail Conference is a private, volunteer-based nonprofit organization, dedicated since 1925 to building, protecting, and managing the Appalachian Trail for the public. This is a comprehensive and useful web site.

Appalachian Long Distance Hikers' Association: www.aldha.org.

A non-profit open to those who have hiked the AT, and anyone else. This site has lots of very useful information and links

WEATHER

The weather varies based on the altitude. In the towns, it will be very pleasant, up to the low 80s. As we climb up, the weather becomes changeable mountain weather, which could include rain and cold wind. Bringing the proper equipment will add greatly to your enjoyment and your safety.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

The first two nights we will be staying at Between the Trails in Damascus (877/288-8211). The last night we will stay at the Holiday Inn Express in Abingdon (877/270-6397). Cell reception may be spotty. Once we begin the trail there is no reliable cell reception. Be sure to inform those at home that you will be out of communication for those days.

CONDITIONING

The object of our backpacking trips is to go as lightweight as possible. Ideally, no one will go out with more than a 30-pound pack. You should anticipate the possibility of carrying more than 30 pounds since it is often difficult to achieve the goal on the first try. Training with a 40-pound pack will prepare you very well for this trip. This trip also involves hiking with significant elevation changes while carrying your pack. Assuming that you are already in reasonably good aerobic condition, the single most important preparation you can make is to spend time hiking with your backpack on and loaded. If you don't have time for a weekend trip, take your backpack to the nearest park after work twice a week and walk up and down hills. Start 6 to 8 weeks before the trip with an hour and work up to two, and gradually increase the weight in your pack. If you live in the flatlands, find some stadium stairs or a tall office building. This should be in addition to your regular aerobic exercise (Stairmasters or Stepmills are great).

If you don't exercise regularly now, we advise you to start an exercise program *at least* three months before your trip. For example, you might start walking 4 or 5 times a week for half an hour, at a pace that is fast enough to make you breathe deeply. Hills are good for this. Gradually add time until you are comfortable hiking for two hours. Other options are working out at a health club on a Stairmaster or treadmill, aerobics classes, cross country skiing or any activity that makes you breathe harder. The key is to exercise at a rate that makes you work, but not so hard that you are unable to talk or gasping for breath. Alternate longer days with shorter days. Two months before the trip also incorporate day hikes as suggested above. **Mall walking will not be sufficient preparation for this trip.**

RECOMMENDED PRE-TRIP READING

Bryson, B. *A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail*. This book is both informative about the trail and very entertaining, at least the first part. It tends to peter out towards the end but the first part will have you laughing and groaning.

Tate, Junius. *Walkin' On the Happy Side of Misery: A Slice of Life on the Appalachian Trail*. One of the best books written by a thru-hiker. If you're contemplating hiking the whole trail and really want to know what it's like, read this book.

Jardine, Ray: *Beyond Backpacking; Ray Jardine's Guide to Lightweight Hiking*. This book is often credited with starting the lightweight revolution. This book is full of great tips for both beginning and experienced backpackers, and is a great read.

Trip Preparations Continued

OUR TRAVEL AGENT

If you need assistance with making your travel plans, call Sara Schuitemaker at Scan East West Travel. Her toll-free number is 800-727-2157 and her email is sara@scaneastwest.com.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We highly recommend travel insurance. We know that women never want to cancel their trips, and the reasons for doing so are always excellent. Occasionally it's a sudden illness; even more frequently it's the illness of someone they care about. Trip insurance at least minimizes the disappointment and expense during what is often a difficult time. In addition insurance covers the cost of lost baggage; medical expenses during your trip, including emergencies, repatriation, and evacuation; and trip delay. If you decide to purchase insurance, you can secure a policy through your own insurance company or enroll with the company we use, Travelex Insurance. Call 1-800-228-9792 or visit www.travelexinsurance.com. The location code is 20-0016.

MORE RECOMMENDED PRE-TRIP READING

Hugo, Beverly. *Women and Thru-Hiking on the Appalachian Trail*. Beverly was a 48 year old single mom when she thru hiked the AT. She has taken the responses of experienced women long-distance hikers from surveys and questionnaires and skillfully woven them into a narrative form that gives answers to all the questions a prospective female hiker might have

Adkins, Leonard. *The Appalachian Trail: A Visitor's Companion*. If you're interested in natural history, this is definitely the book to buy. It contains all the essential information about the AT - from the trail's fascinating history to detailed information on the geology, trees, flowers, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals of the Appalachian Mountains.

Townsend, Chris: *The Backpacker's Handbook* (Not especially a lightweight backpacking book but just a good reference book)

Mueser, *Roland Long Distance Hiking Lessons from the Appalachian Trail*. Blending sage advice with personal experiences and anecdotes, this unconventional book is an unusually thoughtful account of long-distance trekking on the Appalachian Trail. Mueser draws upon interviews and questionnaire data gathered from over 100 long distance hikers hoofing it through the Appalachian Mountains.

Hall, Adrienne *Backpacking A Woman's Guide* If you're a woman looking for the lowdown on how to be a well-prepared, properly geared, safety-conscious, and low-impact backpacker, this is a good place to start.

GETTING THERE

The trip begins at 5pm at the Mount Rogers Outfitters in Damascus, VA. 110 Laurel Ave, Damascus 24236

Flying

The closest airport is Tri-City airport (TRI) in Bristol, VA and Mt. Rogers Outfitter can help arrange a shuttle from there. Several major airlines fly into TRI including: Northwest, United, Delta, and US Airways. Plan to arrive by 3 pm.

Driving

From Tennessee: Take I-81 N (crossing into VA) Take the US-11N/US-58 exit (EXIT19) toward Abingdon/Damascus; Turn Right onto US-11N/US-58E/Lee Hwy. Continue to follow US-58E.

Getting There Continued

From the North/East: Take I-81 S Toward Roanoke. Take the VA-91 exit (Exit29) toward Damascus/Glade Spring. In Glad Spring, turn Left onto VA-91/Maple St. Continue to follow VA-91. Go 5.4 mi. Turn Right onto Liberty Hall Dr/VA-91. Go .7 mi. Turn Right onto Monroe RD/VA-91. Go 4.6 Mi. Turn Right onto McCann Rd. go .7 mi. Turn Left onto Vails Mill Rd. Go.8 mi. Turn Left onto Jeb Stuart HWY/ US-58 Continue to follow US-58. End at outfitters.

LODGING

Depending on your connections, you may be able to fly into TRI the morning of the trip. If not, here are some possible lodging options. Prices were current at the time, but may have changed, and do not include taxes. Let us know if you're interested in finding someone on the trip to share a room with and we'll try to hook you up.

If you have a gambling spirit, the cheapest way to find a hotel room is to go through Priceline (www.priceline.com). When you have a choice of area, choose the airport area. Even if the hotel in this area doesn't offer an airport shuttle, the taxi will be cheap. Another possibility: a hotel discount internet site. You can find these on our website at www.goodadventure.com/resources/affiliates.html.

The following are a sample of the possibilities.

La Quinta Inn Kingsport (423/ 323-0500)

10150 Airport Parkway

Kingsport, TN 37663

Avg. Price: \$79 - \$99 per night

Amenities include: complimentary breakfast, free wireless internet, fitness center, free parking, outdoor pool, airport shuttle.

Sleep Inn, Inn and Suites (432/ 279-1811)

200 Hospitality Place

Kingsport, TN 37663

Avg Price: \$75 -\$105 per night

Located one mile from TRI. Amenities include: Free airport shuttle service, free continental breakfasts, Free wireless high-speed Internet access, Free *USA Today*