

Below is the proposed itinerary for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

## DAY 1

### Trip Orientation and Introductions. Welcome Dinner

Note: When we hike through Wilderness Areas, we will split into 2 smaller groups to adhere to group size requirements.

Welcome to Damascus! Meet at 5PM at our lodging for the week, a large VRBO on Main Street of the small town of 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 the airport to our lodging with Mt Rogers Outfitters (more information will be sent with the Pre-Departure Document). We'll meet at the lodging, settle into our rooms and after dinner, get acquainted and go over all the information regarding our upcoming week of hiking. (D)

## DAY 2

### Hike Dicky Gap to Fox Creek Gap

Our first day on the AT! Leaving Damascus we'll make note of the wooden stairway descending the final few feet from Straight Mountain to the final path into Damascus. We'll pass this landmark each morning until, on our last hiking day, we get to descend it and walk into Damascus.

After shuttling to our 'put in point' and taking pictures, we'll embark on our journey on the fabled Appalachian Trail. Our trail starts at Dicky Gap, where the AT skirts the northern slope of Iron Mountain, passes through deep canopy, and continues along rolling terrain sprinkled with rocks, boulders, and a few steeper climbs before reaching our first AT shelter: Hurricane Shelter. After a brief stop we'll continue our climb to the top of Iron Mt. From there we descend to Fox Creek Gap with its cascades and pools of refreshing cold mountain water; a beautiful spot to enjoy before being picked up and shuttled back to Damascus for a hot shower and a great home cooked meal. Overnight: Damascus (B, L, D)

Distance: 8.5miles Elevation Gain: 2,470' Elevation Loss: 2,300'

## DAY 3

### Hike Fox Creek Gap to Massie Gap

Starting at our ending spot from yesterday, we'll begin a sustained but moderate climb up the north side of Pine Mountain to another AT shelter - Old Orchard. This part of the trail is very pretty with lots of small water crossings and beautiful foliage, flowers, and rocks. We'll take a break here before continuing our climb to the top of Pine Mountain where the views are magnificent. After admiring the view, we'll descend to an area known as The Scales. Passing through The Scales we will once again climb - this time up Stone Mountain with beautiful vistas accompanying us. This will be our first opportunity to see the wild ponies that inhabit this part of the trail as well as giving us a great view of the fall foliage around us. As we re-enter the forest canopy, we'll be walking thru the Little Wilson Wilderness area and over both Big Wilson Creek and Little Wilson Creek before arriving at another AT shelter - Wise Shelter. Leaving the shelter we will make our way, yes - you guessed it, 'up', toward Massie Gap where our shuttle will be awaiting our arrival. Overnight: Damascus (B, L, D)

Distance: 9.8 miles Elevation Gain: 2,694' Elevation Loss: 1,463'

## DAY 4

### Hike Massie Gap to Elk Garden

Although the mileage may appear to be less for today, it is the most strenuous day of the week but also one of the prettiest! Old growth forest, Grayson Highlands, Fat Man's Squeeze, Wilburn Ridge, Rhododendron Gap – all these are part of our path today. Vista after vista and "Sound of Music" moments await. The AT shelter in this section is Thomas Knob - another perfect opportunity for a break and gazing at the panoramic vista from the rocky prominence just behind the shelter. Leaving the shelter area, we will take a bit of a side trip as we follow the path that leads to the top of Mount Rogers, the highest peak in Virginia. The hike to the top (optional) will take about 1 hour and steadily climbs with an elevation gain of about 500 feet in less than 1 mile. There are no views from the summit but the old growth forest we hike through is beautiful. Returning, we'll continue toward our destination for today, Elk Garden. Overnight: Damascus. (B, L, D)

Distance: 7.1 miles with 2 optional miles Elevation Gain: 1,683' (+230' with Mt. Rogers) Elevation Loss: 1,886' (-230 with Mt. Rogers)

**DAY 5**

**Hike Elk Garden to Bear Tree Gap**

Back to Elk Garden this morning, we continue making our way south. Our destination today is Creek Junction Station - right where the AT and the Virginia Creeper Trail intersect and the former location of a stop on the railway line servicing Damascus and Abingdon. Our hike continues to give us beautiful meadows, gorgeous views, and dense canopy. Today we'll enjoy the view from Buzzard Rock and drink in the beauty of a lovely patch of pine forest. The AT shelter we pass today, Lost Mountain Shelter, is located among one of those pine forests and offers a beautifully peaceful settings for a shelter - if that shower and another great meal weren't awaiting us perhaps, we'd just stay the night! But we will continue, crossing and following Laurel Creek for a while and eventually making our way to our takeout spot for the day, Bear Tree Gap where our shuttle is waiting. Tonight you have the opportunity to explore the delicious restaurant selection in Damascus. Overnight: Damascus (B, L)

Distance: 13.2 miles Elevation Gain: 2,881' Elevation Loss: 4,281'

**DAY 6**

**Bear Tree Gap to Damascus**

It's hard to believe but this is our last day (at least for this trip!) on the AT. We'll pick back up at Bear Tree Gap, keep hiking south and walk triumphantly into Damascus! Along the way we'll stop by a deep woods pond for a frog concert, summit Straight Mountain overlooking the Virginia Creeper Trail, and enjoy that stairway walk we've passed each day, down to our final path into Damascus. (B, L, D)

Mileage: 11.6 Elevation Gain: 3,149' Elevation Loss: 2,072'

**DAY 7**

**Happy Trails to You!**

Farewell Virginia AT! You are free to leave any time after breakfast. As a reminder if you're flying, the Tri City (TRI) airport is approximately 1 hour from Damascus and you can catch a shuttle through Mount Roger's Outfitters. (B)