

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

Meet at Atlanta Airport, Introductions and Trip Briefing, Welcome Dinner

We'll meet at the Atlanta airport at 1PM and together take the MARTA (Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority aka the local metro system) Redline to the North Springs station. Here the shuttle will pick us up and transport us to our lodging, a large vacation home, for the week. Tonight we'll get to know each other and review everything we need to know for our upcoming adventure to keep us safe and healthy. (D)

Overnight: Retreat on the Ridge

## DAY 2

Hike Springer Mountain to Horse Gap

We start our hike at Springer Mountain (3,782 feet), the famous southern terminus of the Appalachian Trail. Several plaques adorning the mountaintop and sweeping views of the Cohutta Mountains positively beg for photos to be taken. Since we cannot actually start at the summit, we will need to first backtrack a mile from the nearest access point. Today's hike is a long gradual descent followed by a not quite as long gradual ascent to the top of Hawk Mountain (3,200 feet), before descending to Hightower Gap (2,850 feet). We'll see an AT shelter today as well as a beautiful waterfall. (B, L, D)

Hiking Distance: 11.1 miles. Elevation Gain: 1600 feet, loss 1310 feet

Overnight: Retreat on the Ridge

## DAY 3

Hike Horse Gap to Woody Gap

Our hike today is definitely more strenuous, with several steep ascents and descents as we climb up and over Sassafras Mountain, Justus Mountain, and Ramrock Mountain. Fortunately, the toughest part is during the first half of the day and after that, the trail mellows out a bit. This part of the trail is the perfect introduction to the up and down nature of hiking in the northern Georgia mountains. (B, L, D)

Hiking Distance: 10 miles. Elevation Gain: 3400 feet, loss 1450 feet

Overnight: Retreat on the Ridge

## DAY 4

Hike Woody Gap to Neels Gap

The high point of today's hike, both literally and metaphorically, is Blood Mountain (4,461 feet). Blood Mountain is the highest point of the Georgia Appalachian Trail section. There are first a couple of warm-ups first as we go up and over Gaddis Mountain and Turkey Stamp Mountain before the final 900-foot climb to the top. Blood Mountain is full of history and we'll be glad to take a rest as we ponder the history that gave it its name. From there it's all downhill to Neels Gap and a great outfitter store where we can buy maps, t-shirts, or anything else you've decided you need – ice cream anyone? (B, L, D)

Hiking Distance: 10.7 miles. Elevation Gain: 2800 feet, loss 2480 feet

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Overnight: Retreat on the Ridge

## DAY 5

### Hike Neels Gap to Hogpen Gap, visit Dahlonega

After the last 3 days, we will be ready for this relatively short day! This section is known for open ridge tops with excellent views and wildflowers and the well-graded trail for today makes this a pleasant hike. Don't be fooled, however, it's still not a flat! The trail starts with a 900-foot climb up Levelland Mountain and ends with a challenging climb out of Tesnatee Gap. We should be able to complete this part in a half day, which gives us the perfect opportunity to fill our afternoon with a visit to the nearby charming town of Dahlonega. Your guides will drop you off and dinner will be on your own tonight. (B, L)

Hiking Distance: 6.4 miles. Elevation Gain: 1800 feet, loss 1400 feet

Overnight: Retreat on the Ridge

## DAY 6

### Hike Hogpen Gap to Unicoi Gap

Today's hike starts with "humps" and ends with "humps" with (you guessed it!) lots of humps in-between! Luckily today is not as steep as previous days but still has plenty of undulating smaller ups and downs. Today is when you become intimately familiar with PUDs and MUDs (pointless ups and downs and mindless ups and down)! It is a long day and we'll be glad to see our shuttle waiting for us at the end. (B, L, D)

Hiking Distance: 13.6 miles Elevation Gain: 2,654 feet

Overnight: Retreat on the Ridge

## DAY 7

### Hike Unicoi Gap to Dicks Creek Gap

Are we really hiking 16 miles today? Maybe, maybe not. The first section is 4 miles and includes two climbs that are over 1,000 feet, with another optional 500-foot climb to the summit of Tray Mountain. Luckily, there is road access at Tray Gap for those wishing to skip the first 4 miles. Starting at Tray Gap makes it a 12 mile day instead of a 16 mile day. The last 12 miles go through remote wilderness, traversing from the second highest mountain in the section to the lowest gap on the trail. (B, L, D)

Hiking Distance: 16.1 miles. Elevation Gain: 5200 feet, loss 4000 feet

Overnight: Retreat on the Ridge

## DAY 8

### Hike Dicks Creek Gap to Bly Gap

Today, we will finish the Georgia section of the Appalachian Trail! From Dicks Creek Gap, we'll start a steady ascent of Little Bald Knob, Buzzard Knob and As Knob. With just 3.2 miles to go, we'll cross Blue Ridge Gap where there is a Forest Service road. We'll continue to climb as we approach North Carolina and celebrate when we see that little sign denoting the state line. We can continue another 0.1 miles to Bly Gap, which is a definite highlight with nice views to the West and a very distinct tree in the gap itself. Because there is no road at the state line, we'll backtrack 3.2 miles to the road at Blue Ridge Gap. You are now eligible for a Georgia Thru-Hiker patch! You can purchase a patch from the Georgia ATC's website. Tonight, we'll go into town to celebrate our accomplishments (and our well-

toned quads!) with a final farewell dinner. (B, L, D)

Hiking Distance: 12.2 miles Elevation Gain: 2,867 feet

Overnight: Retreat on the Ridge

## **DAY 9**

### **Farewell Appalachian Trail!**

What?! No hiking today? Unfortunately, it is true but what a week weâ€™ve had. You are free to leave any time after breakfast. If you are flying out, we will have you back to Atlanta airport by 11AM and you can plan a flight out after 1PM. (B)