

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

Arrive Asheville (AVL), hike loop trail at Montreat, introductions and Welcome dinner

Please plan to arrive at the Asheville Airport (AVL) by 1:30 pm or at Montreat by 2:30 pm. We'll meet you there and after brief introductions, we'll be on our way to Montreat, our home base for the trip. Located about 18 miles outside of Asheville, this small town/retreat center is known for its peaceful and beautiful setting and great hiking trails. We'll settle into our home for the week and then head out for a hike to introduce you to the area and terrain (lots of rocks and roots) and to stretch your legs. The hike is a 2.5 mile loop on part of the Greybeard trail that connects to the Harry Bryant Trail with a short detour to a small waterfall and then ends at the Wildlife Sanctuary. We return to the lodge for our first dinner together. After dinner - those rocking chairs on the front porch may be calling! D.

## DAY 2

Climb Mt Craig, visit the Folk Art Center

After a hearty breakfast, we drive about an hour on the famous Blue Ridge Parkway to Mount Mitchell. Mount Mitchell, the tallest peak east of the Mississippi, has a road ascending to the summit where an observation tower offers panoramic views of the surrounding Black Mountains. Weather permitting, our destination today will be Mount Craig, the second-highest peak in the eastern US. The trail begins from the parking lot of Mount Mitchell and trails through a lush, high-elevation forest that's home to some rare and endangered plants, shaded by sweet-scented spruce and balsam fir trees. While the destination is less than 1 mile, it takes about an hour and does require climbing (part of the way on stairs), and some rock scrambling as we descend one peak and summit another. Another option for those who prefer not to scramble is to explore the Balsam Nature Trail and visit the gift shop and café. On the way back we'll stop at the Folk Art Center, home of the Southern Highland Craft Guild. Started in 1930, the guild is a band of artists who joined together to create a market for high quality authentic mountain crafts. Their efforts have resulted in keeping traditional crafts alive that might otherwise have been lost. Depending on time, there may be an option to stop in the town of Black Mountain, known for its numerous upscale gift shops, galleries, and Appalachian style craft stores, with local craftsmen demonstrating iron works, wood bowl turning, and hand thrown pottery. Upon our return to the lodge we will gather for another delicious dinner. B,L,D

## DAY 3

Whitewater rafting on French Broad. Options for ziplining or mineral soak in afternoon

This morning we head west for a great half day of whitewater rafting on French Broad, the area's premiere whitewater river. Our expert raft guides will help us navigate class II and III rapids, suitable for novice and experienced rafters alike. After rafting you can either choose a zipline tour, or to spend the afternoon soaking in the mineral waters of Hot Springs, N.C., both excellent choices! Zip-lining is a canopy tour offered by our rafting company where you'll be zipping from tree to tree in a beautiful mountain setting. The tour is an exciting combination of zips, rappels, and short hikes. Not appealing? Then join your guide for a relaxing soak in the local mineral water hot springs! Regardless of your choice, the group will eventually reunite in Black Mountain for dinner at a local restaurant before heading back to the lodge and enjoying the satisfaction of another excellent day. B,L,D.

## DAY 4

Tour of Biltmore Estate, visit Antler Hill Winery

We'll spend the day visiting Asheville's best known site: the Biltmore Estate. This grand mansion (which is an understatement since, at 178,926 square feet, it is the largest mansion in America) and the 8,000 acre grounds have been impressing people since George Washington Vanderbilt built it in the late 1890s. If you've ever wondered what the Gilded Age looked like, this would be it. We'll spend the morning touring the main house and gardens.

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Lunch will be on your own to allow time for exploration after our scheduled tour of the house. There is a lovely cafe next to the house, adjacent to the gardens.

Following our house tour, Antler Hill Village beckons with its array of shops it's an adventure into local crafts and plenty of souvenirs. Not into shopping? Other options available: exploring the grounds on foot or by bicycle on some of the 22 miles of hiking/biking trails found on the estate, walking along the French Broad River, through lush green forest, spending more time strolling on the 2.5 miles of paths in the manicured gardens and just enjoying the feel of that glorious Gilded Age. But wait - still more to come - we'll complete the afternoon with a visit to the Antler Hill Winery, the Biltmore winery. We'll learn how the original dairy barn was converted into our state-of-the-art winery, and how they developed a winemaking philosophy. And, of course, no winery tour is complete without the opportunity to taste the product! After touring, hiking, biking, shopping and wine tasting, we'll head back to the inn for dinner and relaxing on the porch! B, D

## DAY 5

One last Blue Ridge Hike, visit the Mt. Pisgah Inn, dinner in Asheville

This morning we'll head the opposite direction on the Blue Ridge Parkway to take in some new and beautiful views. Our hike today will be on the Graveyard Fields trail, a 3-mile loop that takes you through a high mountain meadow and winds its way past several stunning waterfalls. The trail isn't as spooky as it sounds - its name comes from tree stumps left behind from logging and fire that look like gravestones. After lunch on the trail and finishing the hike, we'll pay a visit to the revered Mt. Pisgah Inn on our way home. You can explore the Inn's trails, visit the gift shop, or take in 180-degree views from the observation deck. Our day ends with dinner at one of the many local restaurants in Asheville before heading back to the lodge for our last night together on the porch. B,L,D

## DAY 6

Hike Lookout Mountain, depart

It's just so hard to leave, so we'll take one last walk to hopefully "fill up" on nature and take it with us as we depart. We'll hike Elizabeth's Path, located just northeast of the Montreat Gate. As we meander along we'll soak in the beautiful treed canopy, the sounds of the Flat Creek stream and just being outside in this wonderful Blue Ridge Mountain scenery. Eventually we do have to head back to the lodge and finish packing and say our "good byes" to our mountain home. We'll have you back to the Asheville airport by noon and you can plan to fly home any time after 1:30PM. B