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SLACKPACKING HARPERS FERRY

Trip Summary

HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoying the beautiful vistas over the Shenandoah Valley
- Hiking the infamous "roller coaster" - 13.5 miles of ups and downs
- Learning the role that this area played in the Civil War
- Experiencing a true AT experience at the [Bears Den Hostel!](#)

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TRIP AT A GLANCE

- Location:** Harpers Ferry, WV
- Activities:** Hiking
- Arrive:** Arrive Dulles Airport at 1:00 p.m. on DAY 1
If you're driving, meet at the Bears Den Hostel just outside Harpers Ferry at 3 p.m.
- Depart:** Departure is on Day 7. If you're driving, you're free to leave any time after breakfast. If you're flying, there is a 9:30 a.m. group shuttle to IAD for flights out after 12:30 p.m.

Trip Overview

The Appalachian Trail, while often rugged and remote, is designed to accommodate both people who want to hike the entire trail and those who choose to section hike it, either by backpacking or by slackpacking. This trip covers the northernmost section of Virginia, covering 60 miles between Harpers Ferry, where the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) headquarters is located, and Chester Gap just outside of Front Royal. In between are 60 miles of classic AT trail with varied terrain including beautiful vistas over the Shenandoah Valley, the 'roller coaster' section (with those AT 'muds' and 'puds'), great shelter areas for lunches and breaks - all the time following the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains that forms the boundary between Virginia and West Virginia. Join us as we complete this beautiful section of the AT!

Rating

This trip is rated both a 4 and 5 because it involves hiking from 6.5 to 14 miles a day (see the itinerary for daily mileage) and requires being in excellent physical condition. On two days there are shorter options and the rating of 4 is appropriate if you choose these or if you prefer to just take one or two days off from hiking. A rating of 4 requires aerobic conditioning for at least 40-50 minutes 4-5 times a week with additional endurance exercise (e.g., going for a 2-hour hike with elevation gain once a week) and strength training recommended. Going for longer hikes before the trip is recommended if you want to hike the entire 60+ miles.

Rating: 1 2 3 **[4]** **[5]**.

What's Included

- Two to three experienced AGC guides, based on group size
- Six nights lodging at Bears Den Lodge
- All meals from dinner on Saturday through breakfast the following Friday
- Daily shuttles back and forth to the trailheads

What's not included: Travel to and from Dulles International Airport (IAD), alcoholic beverages, guide gratuities, and travel insurance

OUR ITINERARY

Below is the itinerary we have planned 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 1:00 p.m. at the Dulles Airport (IAD) or 3:00 p.m. at the Bears Den Lodge in Bluemont, VA, approximately 22 miles south of Harpers Ferry. If you are flying, group transportation from the airport to Harpers Ferry will be arranged for 1:00 p.m. The shuttle ride is about an hour and will deposit you right at the door of the hostel. If you prefer to drive to Harpers Ferry, please plan to arrive at the Bears Den Lodge by 3:00 p.m. After settling in we'll gather for introductions and trip orientation before enjoying one of the first delicious dinners made by your guides. The Bears Den is quite isolated, and a walk outside brings you to clearings where the sky is star studded with no ambient light - a wonderful beginning to an exciting trip!

Overnight: Bears Den Lodge (D)

DAY 2

Today and every day we'll have an early and hearty breakfast, so we have adequate time to prepare for the day and get on the trail early. After breakfast, we'll shuttle to the very tip of Harpers Ferry, near the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, where we'll start along the Appalachian Trail. Passing Saint Peters church and Jefferson Rock, we'll cross over the Shenandoah River and continue under canopy to Keys Gap. For those who would like to keep hiking, we'll continue through Buzzard Rocks, along Laurel Springs, and on to the Blackburn Center situated approximately .3 miles off trail. The Blackburn Center is a PTC maintained shelter area. While they offer bunk space and tenting platforms for those who are backpacking, we'll meet our shuttle there and head back to the Bears Den Lodge Distance: 13.0 miles. Elevation gain/loss: 2,720 feet/1,900 feet

Think you might want to ease into the week a little more gently? We've got you covered. You can always take out at Keys Gap for a 6.3-mile day with an elevation gain/loss of 1440 ft. /800 ft. You don't even have to decide till you get there. Tonight, and every night we'll return to our lodging where the guides will prepare a filling, home cooked meal, designed to replenish your spirits and your body.

Overnight: Bears Den Lodge (B,L,D)

DAY 3

Another day on trail! This morning we'll shuttle back to the Blackburn Center, where we ended yesterday, and hike the .3 miles (all up!) to rejoin the AT. We'll pass through Snickers Gap (maybe a trail angel will have left some real Snickers?) and begin the first 4 miles of the infamous 13.9 mile 'Roller Coaster' - so called because of tightly packed ups and downs. There will be plenty of rocks, great challenging ups and lovely wooded downs. We'll pass Raven rocks and Crescent Rocks - yes, there is a theme here - and at the end of the day we'll walk right to the Bears Den Lodge - our home away from home! Dinner tonight is a wonderful treat - There we'll be a lovely al fresco pizza dinner (catered by a local restaurant) complete with a gorgeous salad and dessert - pizza never tasted so good!

Distance: 9 miles Elevation gain/loss: 2,100 feet/2,000 feet

Overnight: Bears Den Lodge (B,L,D)

DAY 4

Putting back on trail this morning from the Bears Den Lodge, we'll first pass by the Bears Den rocks - beautiful granite and sandstone boulders that do look like they would make the perfect den for bears! If you want a big challenge, you have the option to hike 13.9 miles, including the remaining 9.9 miles of the 'Roller Coaster', and on to Ashby Gap. If that isn't appealing, you can opt for an earlier out after 7.5 miles. You will still have lots of up and down, but the shorter mileage allows you to do it at a slower pace. Regardless of which you choose, at the end of the day we'll end up shuttling back to our home on the trail - the Bears Den.

Distance: 13.9 miles Elevation gain/loss: 4,000 feet/2,000 feet, or 7.5 miles and less gain and loss.

Overnight: Bears Den Lodge (B,L,D)

DAY 5

After another hearty breakfast, we'll be back on trail this morning starting at Ashby Gap. We'll start off hiking by passing a rock wall that was originally surveyed by 19-year-old George Washington. The trail today passes several AT shelters including Whiskey Hollow and Manassas Shelter. Whiskey Hollow is a newer shelter built by the local AT club. After a long and absolutely satisfying day, ending at Manassas Gap, we'll shuttle back to the Bears Den for another delicious home cooked meal and a well-deserved rest.

Distance: 13.6 miles. Elevation gain/loss: 2,400 feet/2,780 feet. Overnight: Bears Den Lodge (B,L,D)

DAY 6

Can it really be over so soon? Sadly, yes. And our last day on trail, is going to be a great one! We'll put in at Manassas Gap for our final 8.7 miles of the trip. About halfway through we'll be sure to take a break at the Jim and Molly Denton Shelter area. This shelter has a great front porch as well as a solar shower and yes, running water! We'll finish the day with a slow downhill, losing about 1,000 feet in elevation, where we'll find ourselves on Route 522 and our awaiting shuttle. We should be back in plenty of time to prepare for dinner out tonight where we'll remember our week together and say goodbye, until the next AT opportunity!

Distance: 8.7 miles. Elevation gain/loss: 1,955 feet/1,590 feet. Overnight: Bears Den Lodge (B,L,D)

DAY 7

As always, we start the day with a great breakfast. Except today we won't be burning it off! After close to 60 miles and about 12,000 feet elevation gain and loss in 5 days, our bodies will be confused - no hiking today! If you're driving, you're free to leave when you need to. If you are flying, there will be a 9:30 a.m. group shuttle to IAD for flights out after 12:30 p.m. (B)

ADDITIONAL TRIP INFORMATION

Getting There

Plan to fly into the Dulles Airport, DC (IAD) not later than 12:30 p.m. in time to meet the group at 1:00 p.m. for a shuttle to Harpers Ferry.

If you're driving, plan to meet the group at the [Bears Den Lodge](#) by 3 p.m. The address is 18393 Blue Ridge Mountain Rd, Bluemont, VA and is approximately 35 miles south of Harpers Ferry, WV.

If you would like assistance with airfare, we recommend contacting our AirDesk Partner, [Exito Travel](#). Start by submitting this [form](#). Just fill in your dates and destinations, including any additional notes about preferred carriers, class of service, possible stopovers, etc., and an agent will typically respond via email within a few hours. If you prefer to call, the number is 800-655-4053; be sure to tell them you are traveling with Adventures in Good Company.

Please note: Most of the international airlines are in-network for Exito, so they do not charge extra for their services (and often have access to discounted rates). When necessary, processing fees out-of-network carriers are minimal at around \$35-\$50 per ticket.

Accommodations

We will be staying at a true Appalachian Trail hostel - the historic [Bears Den Lodge](#) located right on the Appalachian Trail. This stone lodge was built in 1930. The beds in the lodge are bunk beds and we will use all of the reservable bunk rooms in the lodge for this week (there is one downstairs bunk room always available for hikers). We will occupy all of the lower bunks and 2 upper bunks. Each bunk room has a bathroom with a shower, sink and toilet. There is also a washer and dryer at the hostel.

Travel Insurance

We recommend that you purchase a travel protection plan to help protect you and your travel investment against the unexpected. For your convenience, we offer travel protection through Travelex Insurance Services. For more information on the available plans or to enroll, visit www.travelexinsurance.com or call 1-800-228-9792 and reference location number 06-0331.

Travelex Insurance Services, Inc CA Agency License #0D10209. All products listed are underwritten by, Berkshire Hathaway Specialty Insurance Company, NAIC #22276.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Cancellation charges reflect the many expenses Adventures in Good Company cannot recover if you cancel, even if you must do so due to illness, injury, or personal emergencies. These fees are not meant to be punitive. The charges made reflect the expenses Adventures in Good Company has incurred in administering your reservation and planning for your participation. We recognize that the majority of those who cancel their reservations do so out of necessity. Please note that we do not make any refunds for any unused portion of your trip, not arriving, arriving late, or leaving the trip early.

[Click here for our Cancellation & Payment Policies and Booking Terms & Conditions.](#)