



ADVENTURES
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SLACKPACKING VIRGINIA

Trip Summary

HIGHLIGHTS

- Hiking one of the most beautiful sections of the Appalachian Trail
- Enjoying wild pony herds, amazing vistas, beautiful mountain streams and fall foliage
- Hiking thru Rhododendron Gap, Fat Man's Squeeze, Buzzard Rock, The Scales - all classic AT landmarks
- Returning to a comfortable bed and hot shower at the end of every day
- Earning your trail name and learning the lore of the Appalachian Trail
- Carrying only what you need for the day on your back

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TRIP AT A GLANCE

Location:	Damascus, Virginia
Activities:	Hiking
Arrive:	Plan to arrive in Damascus by 5pm on Day 1
Depart:	Any time after breakfast on the last day. The airport is an hour away and you should arrive 1 hour before your flight.

Trip Overview

The Appalachian Trail truly has mythic status and for many of us, hiking it is a dream. But then we look at the reality of it and find the prospect of carrying a 40–50-pound pack on our back and sleeping on the ground rather daunting. Solution? Slackpacking! We offer many slackpacking trips along the trail and this beautiful section in Virginia is one of the best! We'll cover a little over fifty miles, returning at the end of the day to our lodging in the friendly little town of Damascus. We cover significant mileage on this trip, so it still requires being in good shape. Maximum group size: 12

Rating

This trip involves hiking from 7 to 13 miles a day (see the itinerary for daily mileage) with **significant** elevation changes and **footing that is both rocky and uneven** at times. **It requires being in very good physical condition.** While you can always choose to stay in town for the day, there are no options for shortening the daily hikes. This trip is rated 4. Prior to beginning the trip, participants should be engaged in aerobic conditioning for at least 40-50 minutes 4-5 times a week. **Additional endurance exercise (e.g., going for a 2 hour hike once a week) and/or strength training is usually required. Rating: 1 2 3 [4] 5.**

What's Included

- 2-3 experienced AGC guides based on group size
- Six nights lodging
- All meals from dinner on Sunday through breakfast the following Saturday with the exception of one dinner
- Daily shuttles back and forth to the trailhead

What's not included: Airfare to/from Virginia (TRI), travel to Damascus, one dinner, alcoholic beverages, guide gratuities.

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 5 p.m. 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 (information to 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

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 descend it and walk into Damascus. After shuttling to our 'put in point' and taking the requisite first pictures, we'll be off. 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 that promised shower and a great home cooked meal. Mileage: 8.5 B, L, D

DAY 3

Starting at our ending spot from yesterday we'll begin a sustained but moderate climb up the northern 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. Mileage: 9.8 B, L, D

DAY 4

Although the mileage may appear to be less for today, it is the most strenuous day of the week and one of the prettiest days of the trip! 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. Mileage: 7.1, optional mileage +2.0 B, L, D

DAY 5

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. Mileage: 13.2 B, L

DAY 6

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. Mileage: 11.6 B, L, D

DAY 7

After sharing one final breakfast, you are free to leave any time after breakfast on Saturday. Please note, for planning purposes, the airport is approximately 1 hour from Damascus. B

ADDITIONAL TRIP INFORMATION

Getting There

The trip officially starts 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; you can arrange a shuttle from there with Mt Rogers Outfitters (information to be sent with the Pre-Departure Document). If you are driving, there is parking at our lodging.

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 spending 6 nights at our accommodation on Main Street (specific details will be sent with the Pre-departure Document). Our 'home' sleeps a maximum of 22 and has 4.5 baths. Plenty of room to move around, good gathering spaces, a spacious kitchen, Wifi and linens provided.

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.](#)