



## Trip Summary

# Introduction to Lightweight Backpacking on the AT June 5 – 12, 2016

### TRIP AT-A-GLANCE

Dates: June 5 – 12, 2016

Location: Damascus, VA

Cost: \$ 1325

A 3% discount off the trip fee is available if the final balance is paid by check.

- Singles: There are 3 singles available for the 'in town' portion of the trip for an additional \$160 each

Rating: 3

Activities: Backpacking, camping

Meeting

Place: Mt. Rogers Outfitter in  
Damascus, VA

Arrive: 5 pm on June 5

Depart: Anytime after breakfast on  
June 12

### WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Experienced guides
- Three nights lodging and four nights camping
- Dinners and breakfasts from dinner Sunday to breakfast the following Sunday
- Group camping, cooking, and safety equipment
- Round trip shuttle from Damascus to the trail including driver gratuity.

### WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Transportation to/ from trip start/end.
- Parking in Damascus is available for \$2/night. If you are flying into Bristol (TRI) airport, you can arrange a shuttle from Mt Rogers Outfitters
- Backpacks, sleeping bags and other personal gear
- Lunches and snacks
- Guide gratuities
- alcoholic beverages (alcohol in town is fine – no alcohol on trail)

### Trip Highlights

- Experiencing the freedom and comfort of carrying a backpack under 30 lbs
- Learning all the techniques of backpacking so you can do it on your own
- Backpacking over one of the most scenic sections of the Appalachian Trail
- Learning about the "community" of thru-hikers
- Seeing wild pony herds and enjoying the azaleas and rhododendron in bloom
- Detailed and illustrated Introduction to Lightweight Backpacking handbook.

### Trip Overview

This section of the Appalachian Trail is known for high alpine meadows, towering rhododendron and azaleas, wild pony herds and other more indigenous wildlife, and spectacular views. It is the perfect setting for learning all about backpacking or, if you have backpacked previously, learn techniques from our expert guides that will keep your pack under 30 pounds. We keep our mileage low on this trip so that everyone has the energy to learn.

### Our Itinerary

**Sunday, June 5:** Meet at 5 p.m. at Mount Rogers Outfitters, an outdoor store on the main street of the small town in 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 there with Mt Rogers Outfitters. After we're gathered there, we'll move over to [Between the Trails](#), our basecamp for the next 2 nights. We'll start with introductions and an overview of the trip, and then review some of the most important aspects of wilderness backpacking. We'll go out to eat at a local restaurant and then get to bed early.

**Monday, June 6:** Today will be spent going into detail about lightweight backpacking and wilderness hiking/camping. We will spend our time listening, discussing and doing 'hands on' activities. Topics and activities will include safety in the wilderness,

## CANCELLATION POLICY

In the unfortunate event that you must cancel your trip, your refund will be determined by the following formula:

Days Prior to Trip	Refund
90 + days	All but \$50
90 – 61 days	50% of deposit
60 – 30 days	50% of trip fee
29 days or less	No refund

- (1) Adventures in Good Company reserves the right to cancel or alter a trip due to unforeseen weather, unsafe conditions, low registrations, or other circumstances.
- (2) On the rare occasion when Adventures in Good Company must cancel a trip, all payments received to date will be refunded, including the non-refundable portion of your deposit.
- (3) Adventures in Good Company is not responsible for expenses incurred in preparation for any canceled trips, including airplane tickets.

## Travel Insurance:

Although travel insurance is not required we do strongly recommend purchasing. AGC's travel insurance company is TravelEx and we highly recommend them. Application with TravelEx can be done online at [www.travelexinsurance.com](http://www.travelexinsurance.com) or by telephone at 1-800-228-9792.

If using TravelEx please note the following:

- Your welcome letter represents the date of your original deposit
- To include any pre-existing conditions you must purchase a policy within 21 days of your initial deposit.
- Travel Basic is the only policy that does not have a 'pre-existing' clause option.
- The location number is 20-0016

## Our Itinerary Continued

setting up camp, cooking, water filtration, clothing, setting up tents and tarps, the "ten essentials" and Leave No Trace philosophy. In the afternoon we begin the task of identifying those items we will take with us and those items that will be left behind - the infamous 'shakedown' of personal equipment - disbursement of group gear, packing and adjusting our backpacks. There will also be plenty of time for questions as well as for getting to know each other. Before the final packing of our packs we will make a trip to Mount Rogers outfitters for those items that were forgotten or maybe even those items we just have to have. After dinner, with all of our hard work done we can relax and look forward to our adventure.

**Tuesday, June 7:** After parking our cars, we are shuttled to the start of our hike. Then, when the necessary 'before' picture has been taken, we will begin our trip on the AT. We begin the hike by skirting the northern slope of Iron Mountain, passing through deep canopy and along rolling terrain sprinkled with rocks and boulders. We cross several small streams and wetlands before reaching our first steep climb just below the crest of Iron Mountain. This final 'up' to our destination for the evening, Hurricane Shelter, is approximately 2 miles with an elevation gain of about 1,000 feet. Our shelter/camping area at Hurricane welcomes us and we will unpack (also known as pack explosion) set up camp, do our camp chores, and then enjoy a soup appetizer, and dinner!! If energy allows we can have a campfire tonight. Total mileage 5.2

**Wednesday, June 8:** We start our day with a short climb to the top of Iron Mt. where the Appalachian Trail intersects with the Iron Mountain Trail. We will continue on the AT and descend until reaching the gap on the southern side of Iron Mountain. Here we cross the beautiful mountain stream of Fox Creek Gap with its cascades and wonderful pools of cold mountain water. Crossing the paved VA. 603, we will re-enter the forest on the southern side of Fox Creek and enter the Lewis Fork Wilderness Area. We then begin a sustained but moderate climb up the northern side of Pine Mountain to our next 'home' for the night, Old Orchard Shelter. At Fox Creek we will be at 3,400 feet of elevation and will steadily climb to about 4,000 feet of elevation over 1.5 miles. Total mileage 5

**Thursday, June 9:** Our hike starts with a climb to the top of Pine Mountain where the views are magnificent on a clear day. We then descend to an area known as The Scales, originally used as a corral for cattle during round-ups, when cattle were pastured in the highlands during the summer months. It is now a beautiful backcountry campsite complete with an outhouse, water source, trashcans and a wilderness campground host. After passing through The Scales we begin climbing again. This climb will take us up Stone Mountain with its magnificent vistas to the west and north. This will be our first opportunity to see the wild ponies that inhabit this part of the trail, known for their exceptional interest in the food we are carrying in our packs. As we near our shelter area for the night, Wise Shelter, we will cross another lovely mountain

stream, Little Wilson Creek, which is not only a wonderful water source but offers great pools for cooling off on a hot day! With any luck we will also start seeing some of the amazingly large azaleas and rhododendrons that are usually blooming at this time of year. Our campsite is just shy of Wise Shelter in a lovely meadow with a great view toward the east. Our terrain today is mostly either up or down with elevation gains/losses of just under 1,000 feet in 1 - 1.5 miles. Total mileage 5.9 miles.

**Friday, June 10:** This may be one of the prettiest days of the trip! We begin this morning by traversing through beautiful old growth forest in Grayson Highlands State Park, steadily ascending a rocky ridge to one of the many beautiful vistas we will be rewarded with today - making us feel a bit like we have stepped into the Sound of Music. Below us is Massie Gap, which we next descend into and cross over, leaving Grayson Highlands and entering George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. Wild ponies also frequent this area and we often see both the adults and the colts along the way. Once across the Gap we continue climbing, steeply in a few places, until we reach the crest of the climb - Wilburn Rdge. The rest of our day will be spent on rolling terrain, above tree line on rocky and boulder covered trails. Our path will skirt Wilburn Ridge continuing to offer vista after vista, ascend stone stairs that skirt Grandview Peak with panoramic views of Pine and Stone Mountains; ascend to Fat Man's Squeeze, a short but rocky tunnel through large boulders; descend one short area of 'scrambling' down; and finally emerge onto an open field with, of course, more vistas. At this point we are in Rhododendron Gap, at an elevation of 5,440 feet, with acres of rhododendrons and magnificent views. From Rhododendron Gap our final mile will take us through meadows and traverse a small pine forest. Upon arriving at Thomas Knob Shelter, our shelter/camp area, we will set up camp and if energy allows will set off to 'bag' the highest peak in Virginia, Mount Rogers. The trip to the top will take about 1 hour and steadily climbs up 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. Although the actual mileage today is only 5 miles (not including climbing Mt Rogers), it will feel much longer. 5 miles

**Saturday, June 11:** Our last day of hiking on the AT - and what a way to go out! Our trail today will begin by traversing through an open area from Thomas Knob with beautiful morning views to the east, then descending from the junction of the AT and the Mount Rogers trail and into another old growth forest with huge beautiful trees and deep canopy. We continue under canopy for a couple of miles and arrive at a meadow with one of our last views north of us. Skirting the meadow on the AT we continue under canopy, taking our time on this last day to enjoy the forest and the good company in the wilderness. As we enter an old orchard we see before us the final climb of the trip, and the trail ascends and then descends to Elk Garden where our shuttle will be waiting for us. Thoroughly steeped in the lore of the Appalachian Trail and the art of wilderness backpacking, we'll return to Damascus before heading to Abingdon for hot showers, beds, and a final farewell dinner. 4.2 miles

**Sunday, June 12:** You are free to leave anytime after breakfast on Sunday.

## Packing List

### FOOTWEAR

- 1 pair midweight hiking boots (Gore-tex, cordura, or leather). They should fit comfortably, without constriction, when you are wearing your socks
- 1 pair lightweight camp shoes (sandals, clogs) to wear in camp.
- 2 pair thin liner socks; silk or synthetic equivalent (Capilene, Coolmax, Polypropylene) NOTE: Not everyone uses liner socks
- 2 pair hiking socks: wool or synthetic equivalent (Thermax, Ultimax, or Coolmax)

### CLOTHING (including what you are wearing)

- 1 "hiking costume" either: 1 pair comfortable, lightweight, synthetic hiking pants/zip-offs OR 1 pair shorts OR 1 hiking skirt (Supplex, or nylon/polyester/spandex blend)
- 1 lightweight long sleeved fleece or lightweight long sleeved wool shirt.
- 1 pair lightweight long underwear top and bottoms: silk, wool or synthetic equivalent (Capilene, Thermastat, MTS, or polypropylene).
- 1 wide-brimmed or duck bill hat, or baseball cap for sun, rain and high fashion.
- 1 stocking cap, wool or fleece or a buff
- 1 pair lightweight gloves: wool, Capilene, or Polartec
- 1 rain parka and rain pants: a **waterproof**/breathable fabric like Gore-tex. Partial or full-length leg zippers are great for easily putting your pants on over your shoes or boots.
- Underwear
- Change of clothes for last evening out/travel home

### EQUIPMENT

- 1 backpack: internal frame of at least 3900-4200 cu in capacity OR external frame of at least 4200 cu in.
- 1 sleeping bag; synthetic fill or down fill, warm to 20 degrees F
- 1 **lightweight** sleeping pad: "closed cell" foam pad, Thermarest® self-inflating pad, or Ridge Rest® pad
- 3 or 4 stuff sacks
- 1 heavy-duty, extra-large garbage bag
- 2 tall white kitchen trash bags
- 1 rain cover for your backpack
- Hydration system or 2 one-quart water bottles
- Trekking poles
- 3 – 4 quart and gallon size ziplock bags

### ESSENTIALS

- Small headlamp with fresh batteries
- Lip block with SPF of at least 15
- Sunglasses (100% UV blocking)
- 2 bandannas
- Bowl, cup and eating utensils
- Ear plugs (for a good night's sleep)

**We provide the sunscreen, TP and insect repellent as part of the group gear unless you need something specific.**

### TOILETRIES (small everything)

- Toothbrush, small toothpaste, dental floss, moist towelettes (1 per day), sanitary supplies and a zip-lock plastic bag, contact lens paraphernalia, glasses
  - Personal "patch kit": band aids, 1 safety pin, compeed, duct tape, foot powder, ibuprofen, personal medications, if any.
- Individuals allergic to insect stings must bring an epi-pen.** Please consult your physician and tell your guide.

### Not required but highly recommended:

- Short gaiters
- Compression sacks for your sleeping bag and clothing will give you more packing space in your backpack.

### OPTIONAL

- Small journal and pen
- Orienteering compass
- Camera and film /memory card
- SMALL** pocket knife

## Notes on the Packing List

**Please note:** If you are not familiar with any of the terms used as explanation regarding the equipment or clothing required for this trip or would like help with any item listed please let us know. Detailed Information will be sent beginning 6 months prior to your trip regarding equipment, what to look for and how to purchase. Please let us know if you need information on any item before that time.

**Backpack:** You will need a backpack that has 3800 - 4000cu. in. capacity for an internal frame OR external frame of at least 4000 cu in. It is essential to have a backpack that fits correctly, as an ill-fitting pack can ruin your trip. While we understand wanting to borrow a pack, do not try to get by with someone else's pack that doesn't quite fit. Be sure to have your backpack fitted to you by your local outfitter whether it is a new one you purchase for the trip or one that you already have. Need help deciding on a backpack? Ask for our information guide on buying a backpack.

**Footwear:** Well-fitting, sturdy hiking boots are very important to your safety and enjoyment. If you plan to buy new boots, break them in by wearing them as much as possible and taking some short hikes before your trip. For general trekking/hiking there are many choices in both materials and styles of boots. Your choice will depend on the environment you will be hiking as well as your personal preferences and physical condition of your feet and

ankles. Boots can be made of leather, nubuck leather, synthetic materials or a combination and come in low, mid or ankle cut styles. For general trekking/hiking we recommend low/mid-height height, lightweight/midweight hiking boots/shoes with Vibram or Vibram type soles. Please note: If you have weaker ankles or are recovering from an ankle injury consider either the mid-height or the ankle height boots. More information regarding choosing a hiking boot is available upon request.

- **Remember to waterproof your boots before the trip.** (Even boots billed as 'waterproof' still need to be treated with a waterproofing product – it's the interior lining that is actually the 'waterproof' part of the boot, not the exterior.)

**Sleeping bag:** Bring a sleeping bag with either down or synthetic insulation that is rated for 20 degrees F. Other than temperature rating, weight and bulk are some of the factors to consider in sleeping bags. Down bags are lightweight and compact, but they need to be kept dry in order to keep you warm. Synthetic bags are usually heavier and bulkier, yet they still keep you warm if they are wet. We strongly recommend using a compression sack for your sleeping bag, this decreases the amount of space your sleeping bag takes up in your pack.

**Clothing:** All clothing for active wear should be made from synthetic/synthetic blends, down/down blends or wool/wool blends. **NO COTTON for your active wear.** The clothing listed on the packing list has been chosen for your specific trip conditions and for its versatility for layering. Layering is the most practical and efficient method of insulating the body. Several layers of varied weight materials provide better insulation than one thick Layer of clothing. Also, adding or subtracting layers allows you to adjust to the temperature at your particular level of activity.

### Please Note:

The Adventures in Good Company's packing list covers what we have found to be essential for your safety and comfort for this particular trip. Please follow the packing list carefully.

Because of weight considerations, please do not add to the packing list.

Your share of the group equipment may initially weigh 5 - 7 pounds. Weigh your pack at home and check to make sure everything fits inside of your pack, with room to spare for group gear.

## Notes on the Packing List, Continued

**Hydration:** It is very important to your safety and enjoyment to have an independent ability for accessing your water to facilitate drinking frequently. One method is to have a water bottle attached to your waist strap. Another option is to use a **HYDRATION SYSTEM** such as an MSR, CamelBak or Platypus type bladder system. These systems are simply collapsible water bags with a hose attachment that you drink from. These fit inside/outside your pack with the hose positioned over your shoulder where you can access your water without the use of your hands. Bladder bags traditionally come in 1, 2, and 3 Liter sizes. We recommend a 2Liter size.

**Rain Gear:** You will need a parka or jacket made of a coated nylon or a waterproof/breathable fabric like Gore-tex, HellyTech, Membrane, H2No, or Ultrex. Be sure it keeps water out. Before making this important purchase, be sure that it fits you properly. It should be large enough to fit over all your layers. In particular, the hood needs to be effective. It should shield your face from the rain and turn with your head. Movement of your arms must not interfere with the hood. Put on your daypack; can you still raise your arms? Lastly, the wind/rain pants. They should be comfortable, allow enough room for your layers, and permit free movement of your legs (for example, can you crouch comfortably?). Partial or full-length leg zippers are useful for easily putting your pants on over your boots.

**Short gaiters:** are highly recommended for keeping your socks clean (reducing the chance of blisters), keeping debris out of your boots (another blister preventive measure), providing another barrier between you and poison ivy and most importantly---if it rains they keep your socks dry and prevents wicking water down into your boots.

**Pack Cover:** These are waterproof, usually elasticized covers designed to go over your daypack and keep both the pack and its contents dry in case of inclement weather. Pack covers are sized. If you are purchasing a pack cover be sure to either take your pack with you or know the size cover you need. Many daypacks do come with built in pack covers. An alternative to purchasing a pack cover is to use a heavy-duty, plastic bag to line your pack to protect the contents from rain.

**Personal First Aid Kit:** We recommend bringing a small first aid kit with the following items: blister and/or foot remedies for blisters, hot spots, etc. (band aids/compeed/moleskin/personal choice), personal prescription medications, over the counter medications for common ailments (respiratory/colds, stomach issues, sore muscles/joints). Your AGC guide will have a first aid kit as well but if you already know what works for you it's best to have that with you rather than experiment on a trip

- **Please note: If you have severe reactions to insect bites/stings or other severe allergic reactions and have been advised to carry an Epi-Pen please do not forget to bring that with you and let your guides know.**

**Regarding organization/packing your backpack:** Several small stuff sacks (rather than one large one) are a great way to organize your gear, clothing and food. Compression sacks are highly recommended for sleeping bags and clothing.

## Notes on the Packing List, Continued

**Trekking Poles:** Trekking poles are a requirement for this trip. Trekking poles contribute to your safety by improving your balance and stability, and to your health by saving stress on your hips and knees. In addition they help conserve your energy by transferring some of the work to your arms and chest. If you are not familiar with trekking poles we have written a blog spot that addresses the most commonly asked questions about trekking poles. You can find that at: <http://blog.adventuresingoodcompany.com/blog-women-travel/bid/154714/Trekking-poles-for-hiking-trips-the-4-most-common-questions>

If you are purchasing trekking poles for your trip please make sure they meet the following guidelines:

1. Height of the poles can be adjusted
2. They have an upright (as opposed to cane-like) handle
3. Have wrist straps that can be adjusted.

For a detailed description of considerations when purchasing a pair of trekking poles please see: <http://blog.adventuresingoodcompany.com/blog-women-travel/bid/153280/Choosing-Trekking-Poles-for-your-Next-Hiking-Trip>

**Please note:** Trekking poles can be an expensive equipment purchase. If this is new to you we suggest purchasing an inexpensive pair (EBay, or some of the big box stores can be a good source) or borrow a pair from a friend. During your trip you will have the opportunity to learn the correct technique to use them, practice with them and also see what others may have chosen. Once you've gained a bit of experience and you know that hiking is going to be a regular part of your life, you can make a more informed decision about whether you want to invest in the 'perfect' pair of poles.