

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 Dulles Airport, Transfer to Retreat Center, Welcome Dinner**

Meet at 1PM at the Dulles Airport (IAD) or 3PM at our lodging near Harpers Ferry. If you are flying, group transportation from the airport to Harpers Ferry will be arranged for 1PM. The shuttle ride is about an hour and will deposit you right at the door of our retreat center. If you prefer to drive to Harpers Ferry, please plan to arrive at 3PM. We will start with introductions and a discussion of all things hiking as well as an overview of our trip. There will be some time to relax and go for a walk before an easy dinner of pizza and salad. We'll head to bed early, anticipating an early morning and a full day tomorrow. (D)

Overnight: Blue Mountain Retreat

## **DAY 2**

**Hike from the Maryland/Pennsylvania State Line to Route 77**

After a delicious and hearty breakfast, we will have about an hour shuttle to our hiking start at Pen Mar Park near the Pennsylvania and Maryland state line. Hiking southward along the Appalachian Trail on our first leg through Maryland, this part of the trail is mostly forested and has a little of everything: easy flat walking, some rocky ascents and descents, plus occasional great views. We reach 1800 feet a couple of times, including the appropriately named, High Rock. We will take a break at the Raven Rock trail shelter and get a glimpse of thru-hikers experience. Then, a few more hills "down and up and down" when we emerge from the forest to our pick-up location at Route 77. Tonight (and every night) we'll return to our private retreat where our guides prepare a home-cooked meal, designed to replenish our spirits and bodies. (B, L, D)

Distance: 8.2 miles. Overnight: Blue Mountain Retreat Center

## **DAY 3**

**Hike from Route 77 to the I-70 Footbridge**

Another day on Appalachian Trail! We'll enjoy breakfast before shuttling back to the place we ended the previous day. Today we go back to Foxville Road/Route 77. We start off hiking with a relatively short uphill, then down and back up to a ridge along South Mountain State Park. In fact, we travel in South Mountain State Park for our entire trip through Maryland, with some smaller state parks adjoining along the way. South Mountain was the site of some important Civil War battles and we pass placards that memorialize the struggle at several points along the way. We pass a couple of shelters, which make for nice breaks, and several rocky outcrops that drop off steeply to views of patchwork green farm fields below and the blue hills in the distance. This section has two gorgeous overlooks of the surrounding valleys and mountains at Black Rock and Annapolis Rocks. We finish the day at the A.T. trailhead parking lot off I-70. Hiking on the A.T. footbridge that crosses I-70 frequently draws honks and waves from cars passing below and confirms our own inclinations that Hiking is way more fun than driving! After a long and satisfying day, we'll shuttle 'home' for another delicious dinner and a bit of relaxation. (B, L, D)

Distance: 11 miles. Overnight: Blue Mountain Retreat

## **DAY 4**

**Hike from I-70 to Gathland State Park**

Once again, we return to yesterday's finish to continue hiking south through Marylands forested mountains. It's not every day you hike past a monument to our first president, but today's trek has a stop at the Washington Monument in Washington Monument State Park. Located atop South Mountain, this is the first completed monument dedicated to the memory of George Washington -- a stone tower initially erected by the citizens of Boonsboro in 1827. After admiring the stonework and history, we continue on past the Dahlgren Backpacker campground and through Fox's Gap. We have some more up and down hiking, including a rocky trail down from White Rocks Cliff. We end the day's hike at Gathland State Park, rich with civil war history. It's best known for the imposing War Correspondents Arch, the only monument dedicated to the memory of Civil War correspondents. We're getting pretty close to the end and itâ€™s a short drive back to our lodging and dinner.

Distance: 11.5 miles. Overnight: Blue Mountain Retreat, Harpers Ferry (B,L,D)

**DAY 5**

**Hike from Gathland State Park, Dinner and free time in Harpers Ferry**

After breakfast, we shuttle back to Gathland State Park where we continue our journey across Maryland. Our trail gently slopes up, past the Ed Garvey shelter (a great lunch stop), and onward to the dramatic Weverton Cliffs. Our last views are spectacular from here, as we enjoy a snack looking over the Potomac River and into West Virginia and Virginia. Then it is a short steep downhill to the Potomac River, where the trail follows the historic Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal Towpath.

Today, we'll have completed our grand total of 40.2 miles across Maryland! After we have time to freshen up at our lodging, we'll drive into nearby Harpers Ferry where we'll have a couple of hours free to explore. We'll have dinner there tonight at a local restaurant, celebrating our adventures along the trail, getting all our 'trail names' straightened out, and perhaps thinking about our next A.T. opportunity!

Distance: 9.5 miles. Overnight: Blue Mountain Retreat, Harpers Ferry (B,L,D)

**DAY 6**

**Optional hike, Harpers Ferry, Return to airport**

Depending the weather, and our interests, we have a couple of options this morning for a last hike or visit to Harpers Ferry. For those of you driving, you are free to leave any time after 11 a.m. For those of you flying out of Dulles, the shuttle will leave Blue Mountain at 11:00 a.m. and you can plan to fly any time after 2:00 p.m.

(B)