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 at Roanoke hotel, introductions and trip orientation, Welcome dinner

Please note: This trip is recommended for experienced backpackers. Our preference is that you have participated in the Introduction to Lightweight Backpacking offered each year by AGC in June or have equivalent lightweight backpacking experience. If this trip is the one that fits your schedule but you have never backpacked or it has been a long time since you have backpacked you will need to plan on arriving at the trip beginning 1 day early, 9/21/2019, by 3pm in order to have adequate time for preparation. The additional charge for this day will be $175 per person and will include a room at the trip hotel (based on double occupancy) and guide. Otherwise your first day is Sunday, when you will meet at 4 p.m. at our hotel in Roanoke, Va. If you are flying in, there is a shuttle from the airport and you should plan to arrive by 3:30 pm. We will start with introductions and a discussion of what to leave behind, and then go to dinner. We spend the rest of our evening getting ready for our wilderness backpacking adventure and, as is always a good idea at the beginning of a backpacking trip, get to bed early.

DAY 2

Backpack Sinking Creek to Niday Shelter

No easing into the trip for us! We begin our journey on the Appalachian Trail at Sinking Creek, VA and head north! A couple miles down the trail we'll see an amazing sight - the Keffe Oak - the largest oak tree on the AT in the south, over 18 feet around and over 300 years old; this magnificent tree has limbs as large as most tree trunks! We'll continue to the top of Brusters Knob, pass Sarver Hollow Shelter and walk along the ridge with fabulous views, cross over the Eastern Continental Divide and then head downhill to our shelter area for the night Niday Shelter. Elevation gain/loss: 1320/1429 Mileage: 9.9

DAY 3

Backpack Niday Shelter to Pickle Branch Shelter

This morning we begin with a deceptively mellow section. Then, just as we are wondering where the hills have gone, the trail gives way to what we are more used to - up! We will cross several streams, some on bridges and some on rocks, and climb up leg steps. We will stop to visit the Audie Murphy Memorial, the site of the 1971 plane crash that killed the most decorated U.S. soldier of WWII. At 3080 feet, the scenic overlook behind the monument affords excellent views of Sinking Creek Mountain and upper Craig Creek Valley. We then begin our descent to our home for the night--Pickle Branch Shelter. The final descent into the shelter area will be much steeper than our previous descents and we will be quite happy to have our poles with us! The only disappointment for the day is not finding any pickles waiting for us, much less hamburgers to go with them. Elevation gain/loss: 1112/1351 Mileage: 10.1

DAY 4

Backpack Pickle Branch Shelter to Four Pines hostel

Don't let the shorter mileage fool you into complacency - it's a tough day but also an amazing day! We begin by doing what we usually do in the Southern Appalachians--go up. This time we will climb steeply up a rock and often boulder-strewn path for approximately 2 miles to reach the summit of Cove Mountain, with a brief stop off at Hemlock Point at 2600 feet to catch our breath and take in the vista. We will stop for lunch at Drakens Tooth, a spectacular monolith that is one of the most famous rock formations in the area and worth many pictures. Once there, you'll have a difficult time realizing you're in the mountains - the entire area is white sand and you could swear the sound of the ocean is just beyond the monolith! After enjoying the summit, we begin descending on the steep and boulder strewn path. Our descent will involve ladders and a bit of scrambling, pretty typical AT hiking! Along the way we'll pass other magnificent views such as Lost Spectacles Gap, Devils Seat, Viewpoint Rock and Boisies Rest. We eventually gain the valley floor, cross Va 624, and walk a short distance on the road to the Four Pines Hostel. There you are!!
Viewpoint Rock and Rawies Rest. We eventually gain the valley floor, cross VA 624, and walk a short distance on the road to the Four Pines Hostel. There you'll have the choice of camping on the grounds or sleeping inside on a cot in your sleeping bag. Plus if you're longing for a shower it's there and plenty of hot water! Elevation gain/loss: 1099/1210 Mileage: 6.9

**DAY 5**

**Backpack Four Pines hostel to Catawba Mountain**

Leaving the Four Pines Hostel we'll say goodbye to the chickens and ducks and make our way back to our beloved up and down trail. Entering the woods will by now feel quite familiar and we'll continue hiking north. Our path today takes us over several streams and up and down a series of truly rolling terrain. Considering the milder terrain, our legs will think it's a rest day! Our destination tonight will be at the foot of Catawba Mountain where we'll enjoy the iconic McAfee's Knob. elevation gain/loss: 393/275 Mileage: 7.9

**DAY 6**

**Backpack Catawba Mountain to Lambert Meadow Shelter**

The morning brings excitement - McAfee's Knob is close by! A series of switchbacks takes us thru the boulder strewn path up to the top of Catawba Mountain and there it is—one of the most photographed spots on the AT - McAfee's Knob. An amazing 360 degree view of the surrounding countryside and just begging for lots of pictures! After spending some time taking in this magnificent spot, we'll descend from McAFee Knob passing such places as the Pig Farm Campsite, where there are no pigs, and Snack Bar Rock, where unfortunately there isn't a snack bar. Another vista awaits at Rock Haven just prior to passing by Campbell Shelter. From here we will be treated to level to slightly descending terrain for about 3.5 miles before it turns sharply uphill (of course!), this time headed to Tinker Cliffs. Tinker is a common name here (there is a Tinker Mountain and Creek, as well as Cliffs) and it comes from the legend that a number of Revolutionary War deserters hid out here and made pots and pans, and hence were named "tinkers". We will follow this rock wall for a half mile north with vista after vista after vista. After leaving the rock cliffs we encounter The Well, a natural rock hole, Lunch Box rock (of course there is no lunch), and Scorched Earth Gap. Our last night on the trail will be spent at the Lambert Meadow Shelter - a beautiful stream with many really nice campsites as well as a lovely shelter and outhouse! Hopefully we can stay awake long enough for a campfire and share some memories of the week. Elevation gain/loss: 2894/1703 Mileage: 8.4

**DAY 7**

**Backpack Lambert Meadow Shelter to Daleville, VA**

It's always bittersweet to leave our last campsite and begin our walk out of the woods. Luckily, we'll still get plenty of time to enjoy the solitude of the woods and a few more great vistas before we encounter civilization in Daleville, Va. where our shuttle awaits to transport us to our hotel. Elevation gain/loss: 200/875 Mileage: 9.4

**DAY 8**

**Depart anytime**

0 miles? What will our bodies think?!). After meeting for one last time at our hotel for a continental breakfast we will say our last good-byes and those of you driving are free to leave. If you are flying out, the hotel has an airport shuttle and you can plan to fly out anytime.