

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

Instruction and practice in using hiking poles, trip orientation and welcome dinner

We'll meet at the Atlanta airport at 1 pm. From there we'll take the metro to the spot where the shuttle picks us up and transports us to a deluxe vacation home that is our home for the trip. After getting settled in we have our first lesson: how to adjust, hold, and place trekking poles. This is a basic skill that we'll be practicing all week so next we stretch our legs and practice using poles with a short walk. After the first of many hearty dinners we'll start discussing hiking basics: what to wear and what to bring with you, how to adjust your pack for maximum comfort, foot care, and how to choose a hiking pace.

DAY 2

Learn map and compass, hike the Appalachian Trail from Gooch Gap to Woody Gap, learn foot care

This morning we'll have a workshop on how to read a map, use a compass, and plan a hike. Map and compass are a topic that can only be learned with practice, so we'll put this morning's lessons to use throughout the rest of the trip. In the afternoon we'll hike a 3.5 mile section of the Appalachian Trail, from Gooch Gap to Woody Gap with about 400 feet elevation gain. Before and during the hike we'll review how to effectively use hiking poles on uphill and downhills and hiking techniques such as the rest step. Along the way and at the top of the mountain we'll pull out maps and compasses.

Since first aid is such an important topic, we will spend time this evening looking at what you should carry in a First Aid Kit and how to treat a couple of the most common problems. In particular, since painful feet are the most common way to ruin a hike, we will review foot care in depth with hands on practice.

DAY 3

Discuss water treatment and other safety issues, hike from Springer Mountain to 3 Forks, plan hike

This morning we'll discuss conditioning, nutrition, how to determine how much water to carry and various methods of treating it. We'll also discuss common safety issues: getting lost, getting injured, bad weather, hypothermia, heat exhaustion, bears, river crossings, and lightning. Of course after that we may be feeling too scared to ever want to hike again! But that will quickly disappear on our next hike. We'll hike 5 miles, starting at Springer Mountain (yes, the start of the Appalachian Trail) and hiking to 3 Forks. If we have time, we can add another 2 miles with an out and back hike to Long Creek Falls. 3 Forks has several streams so this will be a great place to practice water crossings.

Using the skills and knowledge we've gained over the previous days, we will put it all together as we spend the evening planning tomorrow's hike.

DAY 4

Hike from Nimblewill Gap to Amicalola Falls State Park, final Farewell dinner

Today is an all-day hike where we'll put together everything we've learned. We'll start at Nimblewill Gap and hike to Len Foote Hike Inn. This hut is similar to the AMC huts in the White Mountains and, just like them, is a great place to reward yourself with a refreshing glass of lemonade. We'll then continue to Amicalola Falls State Park. The moderate trail traverses diverse landscapes, dipping and rising across ridges and down through mossy, ferny creek valleys. The total mileage is 6.1 to 7.1 miles, depending on whether we stop at the top of the Falls or continue to the Visitor Center.

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DAY 5

Short hike or town visit, finish by 1 pm for flights after 4pm

This morning after breakfast, we'll spend a little time talking about hiking destinations and where to find more information about them. We'll then pack up and depending on time either have a short hike or a chance to explore the beautiful town of Dahlonega, a hidden jewel set in the North Georgia mountains. We'll plan to be done by 1PM and those who are flying home can plan for flights after 4:00pm