

A hike from Hurricane Campground (about 35 miles east/northeast of Damascus)

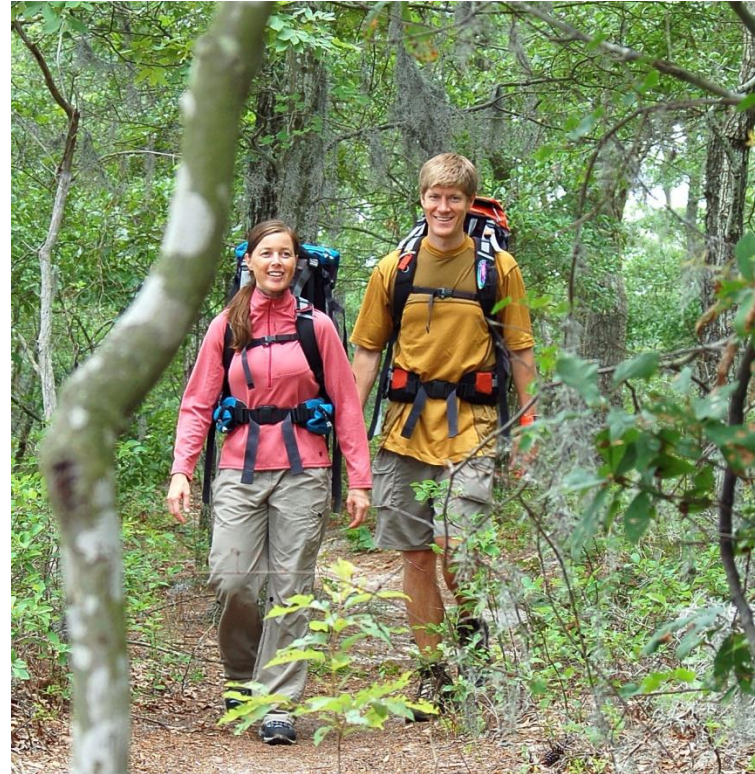
Take Rte. 91 North from Damascus to I-81, exit 45, then Rte. 16 through Sugar Grove to Rte. 650; *or* take Rte. 58 east from Damascus to 603, and 603 to Rte. 16, then left to Rte. 650.

Hurricane Creek/Feathercamp Ridge Loop (66.2 miles):

Across the road from Hurricane Campground, take the blue-blazed Dickey Gap Trail to the A.T. (0.5 mile); then the A.T. northbound (straight) to the blue-blazed Comers Creek Falls Trail (0.9 mile) Take the Comers Creek Falls Trail .3 mile to the Iron Mtn. Trail and turn right; then the IMT westbound to Chestnut Flats (2.9 miles). Take the A.T. southbound, crossing Rte. 603, past Old Orchard Shelter, through the scenic Scales, past Wise and Thomas Knob Shelters, descending to cross Rte. 600, then over Whitetop Mtn., past Lost Mtn. and Saunders shelters, and across Rte. 58 at Straight Branch, continuing on the AT to take the IMT/AT connector trail on Feathercamp Ridge (39.5 miles); then turn right and follow the IMT eastbound back to Chestnut Flats (17.5 miles). Take the A.T. northbound (left), past Hurricane Shelter, to the Dickey Gap Trail (4.1 miles) and the Dickey Gap Trail back to Hurricane Campground (0.5 mile).



Moderate Hikes and Backpacking Trips near Damascus



Recommended map for these and other hikes in this area: the National Geographic Trails Illustrated map of the Mt. Rogers area. This map is available for sale at the following outfitters in Damascus, VA: Mt. Rogers Outfitters, Adventure Damascus, and Sundog Outfitters; also at the Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area Headquarters on Rte. 16 near Sugar Grove, VA, and at Grayson Highlands State Park, and from National Geographic online. This selection of hikes was prepared by the Mt. Rogers Appalachian Trail Club: www.mratc.org.

Hikes from Grayson Highlands State Park:

Grayson Highlands State Park (*Rte. 58 east from Damascus about 30 miles to Rte. 362 in Grayson County*) is a good base for backpacking and long or short hikes in a beautiful setting. The website:

www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/grayson-highlands gives you all the information you need for camping or hiking the many trails in the Park, with mountain views and wild ponies.

For backpacking, GHSP borders the Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area and provides easy access to the Appalachian Trail. Reserve a spot in the Backpackers' Parking Lot at the Park:

<https://www.reserveamerica.com/explore/grayson-highlands-state-park/VA/140172/35528/campsite-booking>

The spur trail that leaves the parking lot leads directly to the AT. Turning right (or north on the AT from the spur trail) brings you to the Scales in about 5 miles, and 5 more miles leads to Highway 603 near Troutdale. Turning left (or south on the AT from the spur trail) takes you past Thomas Knob Shelter to the base of Mt. Rogers, Virginia's tallest mountain, in about 4 miles, and another 4 miles takes you to Elk Garden and Route 600 between Konnarock and Whitetop.

Some backpackers and day hikers enjoy the 11.6 mile **High Country Loop:**

From Massie Gap in Grayson Highlands State Park, take the Rhododendron Trail up to the A.T. (0.5 mile); then the A.T. northbound through the Scales to the Pine Mountain Trail (6.4 miles); the blue-blazed Pine Mountain Trail through scenic Crest Zone to Rhododendron Gap (2.1 miles). Turn left on the A.T. over Wilburn Ridge to reach the

Rhododendron Trail again (2.1 miles) and return to Massie Gap (0.5 mile). The more challenging, blue-blazed Wilburn Ridge Trail can be used in place of the A.T. for 0.8 mile on Wilburn Ridge; it leads over rock outcroppings that the A.T. bypasses. The hiking distance is identical.



Rhododendron Gap

Two hikes from Route 603 (about 20 miles east of Damascus):

Take Rte. 58 east out of Damascus, turning left on it when Rte. 91 South goes straight. In about 10 miles, go straight on Rte. 603 where 58 turns right. Continue on 603 for about 3 miles, then turn right on Laurel Valley Rd. and go about 5 miles (Hike 1) or 7 miles (Hike 2).

1. Grindstone or Mt. Rogers Trail to Fox Creek Loop (24.8 miles):

From Grindstone Campground (or the Mt. Rogers Trail parking lot on VA 603), take blue-blazed Mt. Rogers Trail up to reach the A.T. near Deep Gap (4.0 miles); then the A.T. northbound past the ½ mile trail to the summit of Mt. Rogers. (A side trip in and out to the summit of Mt. Rogers would add 1 mile to the hike.) Then go past Thomas Knob Shelter, Wise Shelter, through the Scales, and down to VA 603/Fox Creek (14.8 miles). Continue on the A.T. north to Chestnut Flats (2.3 miles); then turn left on the Iron Mtn. Trail west to Cherry Tree Shelter (2.0 miles). Take the blue-blazed Flat Top Trail from the shelter back to VA 603 (1.7 miles) or the woods road, Rte.828, to Grindstone on 603 (2.1 miles). (The two VA 603 crossings are only two miles apart.)

2. Fox Creek/Feathercamp Branch Loop (52.4 miles):

From the Fox Creek/VA 603 A.T. crossing and parking lot, take the A.T. southbound past Old Orchard Shelter. Pass through the scenic Scales, past Wise Shelter, Thomas Knob Shelter, the Mt. Rogers high country and the short spur trail to the summit of Mt. Rogers. Descend to Rte. 600, then ascend again to the magnificent views from Whitetop Mtn. Descend again to reach a crossing of Rte. 58, pass Lost Mtn. and Saunders Shelters, then cross 58 again at the Straight Branch Bridge (35.2 miles). After crossing Feathercamp Creek in 1/10 mile, go straight on the blue-blazed Feathercamp Trail north to the Iron Mtn.Trail (1.9 miles). Then take the IMT eastbound (right) to Chestnut Flats (13.0 miles) and the A.T. southbound (right) back to Fox Creek/VA 603 (2.3 miles).

Two Hikes from Beartree Recreation Area

Take Rte. 58 out of Damascus and left when 91 South splits off. Go about 7 miles to the Beartree Recreation Area road on left.

1. Beartree Lake/Creek Junction Loop (10.5 miles):

From Beartree Lake fishermen's parking lot, take the lavender-blazed Beartree Gap Trail across a dam and U.S. 58 (right) to the A.T. (0.5 mile); then take the A.T. southbound (right) past the two access trails to Saunders Shelter and down the switchbacks. (A side hike to the shelter adds .5 mile.) Turn left on the short, blue-blazed connector from the AT to the Virginia Creeper Trail (4.1 miles), then turn left on the Creeper through the Taylor Valley hamlet and up Whitetop Laurel Creek gorge to the next junction with the A.T. (on left) at Creek Junction (4.2 miles). Then take the A.T. southbound to the Beartree Gap Trail (1.2 miles), turn right, and follow the Beartree Gap trail back to the fishermen's parking lot (0.5 mile).

2. Beartree Campground Loop (45.4 miles):

From the fishermen's parking lot near the Beartree Lake dam, take the Beartree Gap Trail across Beartree Gap Rd. (Rte. 837) to the Iron Mtn. Trail at Shaw Gap (2.8 miles); then the IMT eastbound (right), past Straight Branch Shelter, to Chestnut Flats (10.8 miles). Then take the A.T. southbound through the scenic high country (crossing Rte. 603, past Old Orchard Shelter, Scales, Wise and Thomas Knob Shelters, descending to cross Rte. 600, reaching scenic Whitetop Mtn.), then downhill past Lost Mtn. Shelter to the junction of the AT with the Beartree Gap Trail (31.3 miles). Then take the Beartree Gap Trail and cross Rte. 58 back to the fishermen's parking lot (0.5 mile).



Mt. Rogers high country with wild ponies



Three hikes from Damascus:

1. Damascus/Feathercamp Branch Loop (14 miles):

From Damascus, take the A.T. northbound. (The AT ascends a set of stairs from Rte. 58.) Pass the Iron Mtn. Trail connector (2.5 miles), cross the Beech Grove Trail (1.5 miles), and reach the junction of the AT with the blue-blazed Feathercamp Branch Trail (.5 miles) on the left. Follow the Feathercamp Branch Trail upstream (north) 1.9 miles, crossing the branch several times, to the Iron Mtn. Trail. Take the IMT westbound (left), passing the Beech Grove Trail (3 miles), to the short connecting spur trail to the AT (left) you passed earlier on the south slope of Feathercamp Ridge (2 miles). Then take the A.T. (right turn) southbound back to the Stairs at Damascus (2.5 miles).



2. Damascus/Beartree Loop (25 miles):

From Damascus, take the A.T. northbound, ascending a set of stairs from Rte. 58. Continue on the AT crossing 58 again at Straight Branch (about 5 miles from Damascus), and after 2 more miles, continuing up a series of switchbacks and passing two blue-blazed trails leading $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to Saunders Shelter, for an optional stop. About $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles past the shelter, turn left on the Beartree Gap Trail. (11.7 miles to this point.) Follow it across Rte. 58, turning left at the lake, and continuing through the fishermen's parking lot to follow the trail across the campground road and turn left on the Iron Mtn. Trail at Shaw Gap (3.3 miles). Take the yellow-blazed IMT westbound past the Beech Grove Trail (3 miles) and 2 miles to the short spur trail (left) to the A.T.; then the A.T. southbound (right) back to the Stairs at Damascus (2 miles).

3. Damascus/Comers Creek Loop (71.2 miles)

From Damascus, take the A.T. northbound (The AT ascends a set of stairs from Rte. 58.) to the Iron Mtn. spur trail (left) (2.5 miles). Turn right on the IMT (east) to the Comers Creek Falls Trail, turning left (20.4 miles). Take the Comers Creek Falls Trail down to the A.T. (0.3 mile), and the A.T. southbound past Hurricane and Old Orchard Shelters, through the Scales, past Wise and Thomas Knob Shelters and the scenic Mt. Rogers high country, over Whitetop Mtn., past Lost Mtn. and Saunders Shelters and back to Damascus (48.0 miles).

Comers Creek Falls

