

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

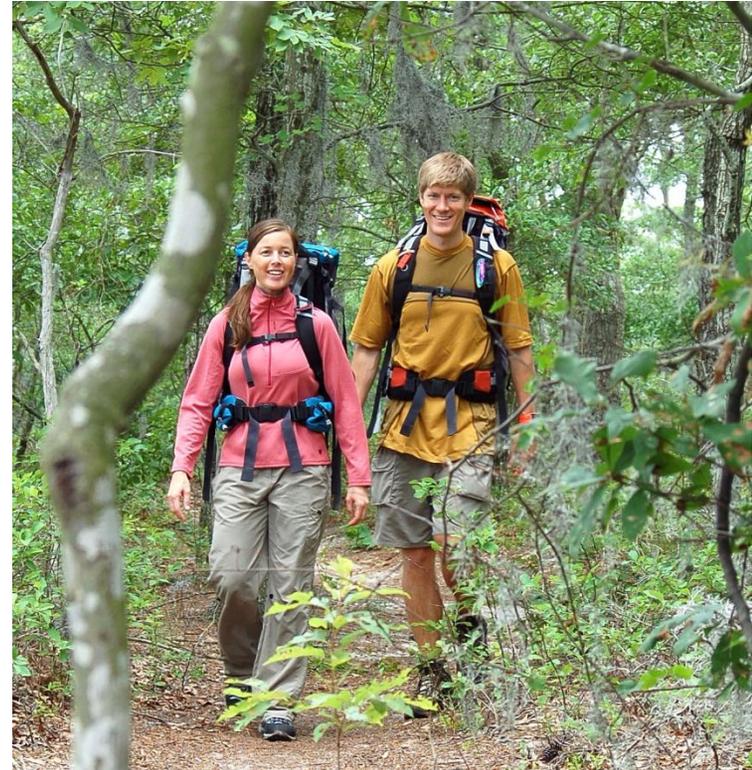
Take Rte. 91 North from Damascus to I-81, exit 45, then Rte. 16 through Sugar Grove to Rte. 650; or take Rte. 58 east from Damascus to 603, and 603 to Rte. 16, then left to Rte. 650.

## 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 up to the Iron Mtn. Trail (0.3 mile, right); then the IMT westbound to Chestnut Flats (2.9 miles). Take the A.T. southbound through the scenic Scales, Mt. Rogers high country, and Whitetop Mtn. down to 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) to the Dickey Gap Trail (4.1 miles) and the Dickey Gap Trail back to Hurricane Campground (0.5 mile). This route passes nine shelters.



## **Moderate Hikes and Backpacking Trips near Damascus**



*Recommended map for these and other hikes in this area: the National Geographic 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.*

## 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: [http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state\\_parks/gra.shtml](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/gra.shtml) 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. The Backpackers' Parking Lot at the Park is a safe place to leave your car, and 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*

## 2. Beartree Campground Loop (45.4 miles):

From the anglers' parking lot near the Beartree Lake dam, take the Beartree Gap Trail across Beartree Gap Rd. and follow the yellow diamond-shaped blazes up (northward) to the Iron Mtn. Trail at Shaw Gap (2.8 miles); then the IMT eastbound (right) to Chestnut Flats (10.8 miles). Then take the A.T. southbound through the scenic high country (Scales, Mt. Rogers area, Whitetop) down to its junction with the Beartree Gap Trail (31.3 miles); and the Beartree Gap Trail back to the parking lot (0.5 mile), passing six shelters on route.



*Beartree Lake*

## **2. Damascus/Beartree Loop (25.2 miles):**

From Damascus, take the A.T. northbound (The AT ascends a set of stairs from Rte. 58.) to the Beartree Gap Trail (11.7 miles). After six miles, the trail goes up several switchbacks and passes two blue-blazed trails leading ¼ mile to Saunders Shelter, for an optional stop. About 2 ½ mile past the shelter, turn left on the Beartree Gap Trail. Follow it across Rte. 58, turning left at the lake, and continuing through the anglers' parking lot to follow the trail across the campground road and on to its turn (left) toward the Iron Mtn. Trail at Shaw Gap (3.3 miles). Take the yellow-blazed IMT westbound past the Beech Grove Trail and on to the short spur trail (left) to the A.T. (6.7 mile); then the A.T. southbound (right) back to Damascus (3.5 miles).

## **3. Damascus/Comers Creek Loop (72.2 miles)**

From Damascus, take the A.T. northbound (The AT ascends a set of stairs from Rte. 58.) to the connector to the Iron Mtn. Trail (3.5 miles). Continue on the IMT east (right turn) to the Comers Creek Falls Trail (20.4 miles). Take the Comers Creek Falls Trail down to the A.T. (0.3 mile), and the A.T. southbound (left) back to Damascus through the Scales and the scenic Mt. Rogers high country (48.0 miles). Nine shelters are on route.

Comers Creek  
Falls and bridge



## **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 when it turns left, then sharply right in about 3 miles. 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 past Thomas Knob 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 to Grindstone (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, take the A.T. southbound. You will pass through the scenic Scales and Mt. Rogers high country areas and the short spur trail to the summit of Mt. Rogers, then descend, then ascend again to the magnificent views from Whitetop Mtn. Reach the Feathercamp/U.S. 58 crossing (35.2 miles). After crossing Feathercamp Creek in 1/10 mile, go straight on the blue-blazed Feathercamp Trail north to the IMT (1.9 miles). Then take the IMT eastbound (right) to Chestnut Flats (13.0 miles) and the A.T. southbound back to Fox Creek/VA 603 (2.3 miles). You will pass eight shelters on route.

*Mt. Rogers high country with wild ponies*



### **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 (11.2 miles):**

From Beartree Lake anglers' parking lot, take the violet-blazed Beartree Gap Trail across a dam and U.S. 58 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.) to its junction with the short, blue-blazed connector to the Virginia Creeper Trail (4.1 miles). Turn left and follow the Creeper through the Taylor Valley hamlet and up Whitetop Laurel Creek gorge to the 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) and follow that trail back to the anglers' parking lot (0.5 mile).

### **Three hikes from Damascus:**

#### **1. Damascus/Feathercamp Branch Loop (15.4 miles):**

From Damascus, take the A.T. northbound (The AT ascends a set of stairs from Rte. 58.) to its junction with the blue-blazed Feathercamp Branch Trail (5.5 miles) on the left. Follow Feathercamp Branch Trail upstream (north) 1.9 miles, crossing the branch several times, to the IMT. (A side trip on the IMT (right turn) to Sandy Flats Shelter would add 0.6 mile to the hike.) Take the IMT westbound (left) to the connecting spur trail (on left) to the A.T. on the south slope of Feathercamp Ridge (6.7 miles) and the A.T. (right turn) southbound back to Damascus (3.5 miles).



*Sandy Flats Shelter*