



## **Backpacking 201: Appalachian Trail Backpacking Adventure, Grayson Highlands (18 miles)**

*Wednesday, May 26 at 6PM through Saturday, May 29 at 2PM, \$350*

Put your boots on America's most famous scenic trail. This trek will take you to new heights in the Grayson Highlands where we will spend three nights on or near the Appalachian Trail and climb Mt. Rogers—Virginia's highest peak. There are stunning views from the treeless balds and if we are lucky, we may catch a glimpse of the local herd of wild ponies.

The hike will involve some rock scrambling and constant changes in elevation. Some previous backpacking experience recommended.

Backpacks, tents, sleeping bags, pads, stove and cook sets available to borrow.

Program fees include all equipment and camping permits. Meals are not included. Entry to Grayson Highlands State Park not included.

Attendance at the pre-trip informational meeting is required (Wednesday, May 19, 6-8PM, Oak Openings Lodge). We will check and fit gear, talk about the trip, and answer any questions.

Attendance is also required at the Backpacking 101: Are You Ready for the Trail? program (Thursday, April 1, 6-8PM, Blue Creek Conservation Area Sledding Hill).

All participants and staff must wear masks and abide by proper social distancing guidelines for the duration of the program. Mask breaks are allowed when appropriate. Participants must bring their own masks.

Because of the intense planning for this trip, 50% of the fee is considered a non-refundable deposit per the refund policy. If you need to cancel for any reason, please call Ashley Smith at 419-265-2920. Anyone who would like to cancel their trip due to concerns related to COVID-19 may do so with no financial penalty.

The following packet contains information and resources you need to prepare for the trip including the trip agenda, packing list, and food suggestions for the trip. Please feel free to reach out with any additional questions.

Jake Willing: 419-277-0107 or [Jake.Willing@MetroparksToledo.com](mailto:Jake.Willing@MetroparksToledo.com)

One of the best parts of your trek will be the anticipation. The other is the preparation. We have listed resources for you to research food and gear options. Enjoy the process! Although most of the needed equipment is available to borrow, some participants prefer to purchase their own.

## Travel Plan

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we will not be offering transportation for this adventure to limit potential exposure. Instead we are asking that participants transport themselves to a meeting location near our backpacking adventure. Meet us at Grayson Highlands State Park Visitor Center 829 Grayson Highland Ln., Mouth of Wilson, VA 24363 at 6PM on Wednesday, May 26. The drive to this location from Toledo takes about 9 hours with stoppage time utilizing the advised route through West Virginia that does include a section of toll road. Please give yourself ample time to reach the meeting location by 6PM.

## Tentative Schedule

This is our desired plan, however it could be subject to change, particularly due to COVID-19. We ask for your understanding and flexibility. We will keep you updated if changes occur, and you will be advised of the final schedule at the mandatory pre-trip meeting.

Please note that daily mileage is approximate.

Wednesday, May 26th	6:00 PM: Meet with staff/group members at Grayson Highlands State Park Set up camp, prepare dinner, eat, evening share, fill water bottles/hydration packs
Thursday, May 27th	7:00AM: Wake, break camp Breakfast Pack up and head to the trail head Hike from trail head to Mt Rogers (6 miles) Hike back to Thomas Knob Shelter, set up camp in open campsites nearby (2 miles) Prepare dinner, eat, evening share
Friday, May 28th	7:30AM: Wake, break camp Breakfast Hike from Thomas Knob to Wise Shelter (8 miles) Set up camp Prepare dinner, eat, evening share
Saturday, May 29th	7:30AM: Wake, break camp Breakfast Hike out from Wise Shelter to trail head. (2 miles) Change into travel clothes, travel home <b>Total mileage: 18 miles</b>

Our days will start early, but it takes on average 1.5-2 hours to break camp, eat breakfast, and hit the trail. There are several scenic stops along the way to stop and take photos. This is YOUR trip, so please make sure you let leaders know when you want to stop for photo ops!

## Hike Profile

The terrain on this trek will vary. Some sections are relatively flat; some sections have near constant elevation changes, both uphill and downhill. For those of us who live in flat NW Ohio it will be totally different from what we are used to and therefore more strenuous. The terrain is rocky and rooty. However, if we take our time this should be doable for all participants.

## Food Plan

Pack snacks for the trip down and back. Pack a lunch for the trip down to speed up drive time. Bring a refillable water bottle for the ride.

### Trail food

Participants will need to bring their own food. Generally speaking you want to select food items that are calorie dense and high in complex carbohydrates and protein. We will have no access to refrigeration or coolers so please avoid foods that will spoil. Avoid foods that will squish or crumble easily.

*For the trek you will need to pack:*

3 dinners – Wednesday, Thursday, Friday

3 lunches – Thursday, Friday, Saturday

3 breakfasts – Thursday, Friday, Saturday

### Pro Tips

- Pack trail snacks between breakfasts and dinners and to supplement meals. Food for a typical day on the trail usually involves breakfast, morning snack, lunch, afternoon snack, and dinner.
- We will take the time to boil water in the mornings for coffee/tea/oatmeal/dehydrated meals, but please plan for a relatively quick breakfast. Lunches should be ready to eat and require no cooking. We'll have time to cook for dinners.
- Consider repackaging anything with a lot of packaging to save weight and space. Space is limited, so opt for lightweight, low bulk foods. Calorie needs vary per person, but plan for somewhere between 2500-4000 calories per day.
- Many sources quote that backpackers usually carry 2 pounds of food per person per day. That is a ballpark number and not a hard fast rule, but if your food bag weighs more than 6 pounds you should consider more calorie dense, lighter weight foods.
- Many backpackers opt for light-weight freeze dried meals. There are several brands to choose from, and meals can typically be found at Bass Pro, Cabelas, REI, Walmart, or online. Freeze dried meals typically just require adding boiling water. Pre-packaged varieties usually come sized for 1 or 2 persons/servings, or you can purchase bulk canisters that you can control your own portions by portioning into freezer strength zip-lock bags. For those that do not wish to purchase freeze-dried meals please see the sample meals section below for other trail-friendly meal suggestions.
- For more information on meal planning please see REI's expert advice: <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/planning-menu.html>

## Sample Meals

**Breakfast:** select 1 or more, supplement with bars, trail mix, dried fruit, jerky etc.

- Cold cereal with dehydrated milk (add water at breakfast)

- Bagel or tortilla with peanut butter
- Instant oatmeal (two packs for most people)
- Tea, instant coffee, hot coco
- Dehydrated meals

**Lunch:** select 1 or more, supplement with bars, trail mix, dried fruit, jerky etc.

- Bagels or tortillas with peanut butter and jelly or honey
- Tuna or chicken packets with crackers

**Dinner:**

- Dehydrated or freeze dried meals (Mountain House, Backpackers Pantry, etc.)
- Any combination of quick-cook pasta, dehydrated potatoes, instant rice, or pasta and rice sides with chicken or tuna packets, canned beans, or nuts for protein. For example:
  - Mac and cheese with chicken or tuna packets
  - Ramen noodles with chicken and instant mashed potatoes
  - Mexican rice with tortillas and chicken packets or beans
  - Thai noodles with peanuts and peanut butter

**Snacks:** Plan for a morning snack between breakfast and lunch, and an afternoon snack between lunch and dinner. Snacks also make good supplements to meals. Many people find they prefer to bring a mixture of both salty and sweet snacks. Popular snacks include: goldfish, Cheez-its, chips, jerky, granola bars/protein bars/energy bars, dehydrated fruit, trail mix, fruit snacks, teddy grahams, cookies, nuts.

**Water:** Plan to carry 3-4L of water a day. We will filter along the trail and in-camp. All water on the trail must be filtered.

Resources for purchasing backpacking food:

<https://www.alpineaire.com/us/us>

<https://www.backcountry.com/backpacking-food>

<https://www.mountainhouse.com/>

<https://www.backpackerspantry.com/>

<https://goodto-go.com/>

<https://www.rei.com/>

## Packing List

*All items need to be packed in zip top bags or dry bags to keep them waterproof.*

Your pack should be trail ready – except for water bottles/hydration packs. Keep these empty until we fill at the state park.

### Backpack (available to borrow)

- Internal frame (60-80 liters recommended)
- External frame (65+ liters recommended)
- Pack Cover – waterproof nylon pack cover or extra 30 gallon trash bag (Metroparks packs come with pack covers if you are borrowing)

### Sleep systems

- 1 person backpacking tent (available to borrow)
- Packable sleeping bag (available to borrow) in stuff sack lined with 30 gallon trash bag. Must be rated to 20 degrees or lower and made of down or synthetic down. We do not want oversized “sleepover bags” that are bulky and heavy. Bags should weigh less than 4 lbs.
- Sleep pad (available to borrow)
- Inflatable pillow (optional) or stuff a jacket into a stuff sack

### Clothing

**NO COTTON, PLEASE. Cotton does not insulate if it gets wet. Opt for synthetic materials such as nylon, polyester, spandex, or wool. Fleece is good.**

- 1 clean mask per day. All participants and staff must wear masks and abide by proper social distancing guidelines for the duration of the program. Mask breaks are allowed when appropriate. Participants must bring their own masks.
  - We will adhere to any recommendations or requirements that come from the state during the time of the trip.
- 1 pair good hiking shoes/boots, well broken in.
- Camp shoes (optional but recommended to let feet breathe.) Crocs or light tennis shoes or sandals.
- 2-3 pair medium weight wool hiking socks.
- 1 set clean underwear per day
- Sports bras x2 (women)
- Hiking shirt and pants/shorts: 1 set, quick dry, non-cotton required
- Sleep Clothes – these are only for inside the tent. Depending on how cold or warm you sleep you may want a tee-shirt/shorts or long johns. Non-cotton.
- Packable rain gear such as Frogg Toggs (\$40 at Walmart or online). Jacket and pants. If you opt to use an emergency poncho, make sure to bring rain pants as well for your lower half.
- Wool sweater or down or fleece jacket (when paired with your rain suit this should be suitable for most weather conditions). No cotton jackets.
- Wicking base layer (tops/bottoms): Optional but recommended
- Hat, gloves, buff (optional)

### Camp Kitchen

- Bowl/plate depending on what you are eating. Light-weight and not glass.\*

- Cup/measuring cup\*
- Spoon\*
- Food bag: medium stuff sack that can be clipped to a carabiner \*
- 2-3 gallon zip top bags for garbage\*
- Cook kits\* (available to borrow)
- Backpacking stove (available to borrow)
- Food\* (see Food Plan for meal planning suggestions)

### Miscellaneous

- Pocket knife or multi-tool.
- Waterproof matches or lighter\* (a few cotton balls or small candle piece for fire starters.)
- Headlamp or lightweight flashlight (extra batteries)
- 2-3 bandanas/hankies
- Lip balm (with sunscreen recommended)\*
- Toothbrush\*
- Travel tube toothpaste\* or baking soda in a small bottle
- Personal first aid items\*: Staff will have a full first aid kit, but we cannot administer medications. Please bring a personal supply of your pain reducer of choice in case of sore muscles, headache, etc. (a small supply of ibuprofen, antacids such as Tums, Tylenol and aspirin should cover most inconveniences that may occur). Also include band-aids, antiseptic wipes, and foot care kit- Moleskin, foot powder.
- Sun protection: hat with brim, sunscreen\*, long sleeves, sunglasses
- Feminine hygiene items\*
- 3 or 4 large rubber bands (optional but helpful in compressing trash and other uses)
- 2-3 extra gallon size zip top plastic bags
- ½ -1 full roll toilet paper – each person will need to provide a minimum of half a roll. Think of your own needs.
- Hand sanitizer\* or small bottle Dr. Bronner’s soap (scent free if possible)
- Several yards of duct tape (wrap around a water bottle or hiking poles or keep a small spool in your first aid kit.)
- Repair kit: Needle and dental floss, repair kit for inflatable sleeping pads if applicable, stove repair kit if applicable
- Hiking poles strongly recommended (available to borrow) or ski poles
- A ditty bag or stuff sack that can clip to a carabiner for scented items to bear bag

### Water

- Water bottles that add up to 3-5 liters.
- **OR** 1 bladder water system and at least one water bottle (for ease of drinking in camp/ when your pack is off). Together these should add up to 3-5 L.
- Water treatment system: due to COVID-19 we will not be sharing water treatment systems this year. Please bring your own. There are many options to choose from.
  - Very popular: squeeze filtration system such as the Sawyer Squeeze regular or mini. Light weight and inexpensive.

- Popular: Pump filtration system. Heavier and more expensive than a squeeze system, but some find these more convenient and faster to use. Work better in shallow water than a squeeze system.
- The following treatment options will purify your water (kill bacteria, viruses, and protozoa), but they will not filter out sediment. These work best in places where you are guaranteed to have relatively sediment-free water sources. We cannot guarantee these sources on our hike, so these options are not recommended, but are available.
  - Micropur tabs (very light, relatively inexpensive). Must carry enough to clean 6-8 L per day. It takes a minimum of 30 minutes to 4 hours to work, so require proper planning.
  - Aquamira tabs- work similarly to micropur tabs
  - Potable Aqua tabs- work similarly to micropur and aquamira tabs
  - Steri Pen: uses UV light to kill bacteria, virus and protozoa.

### Optional

- Camera
- Note pad/pencil
- Whistle
- Watch

### Group gear

*Group gear will be provided for you by Metroparks.*

- Camp Suds\* provided
- 100 ft. nylon rope- provided but each hiker will carry their own (For hanging bear bags)
- Carabiners provided (for hanging bear bags)
- Group first aid kit\* provided (you still need to bring your own first aid basics listed above)
- Camp shovel/trowel provided

***\*Items that will be stored in bear bags at night.***

### For travel

We recommend packing a travel bag separate from your backpack to leave in your car. In this bag you will want to pack:

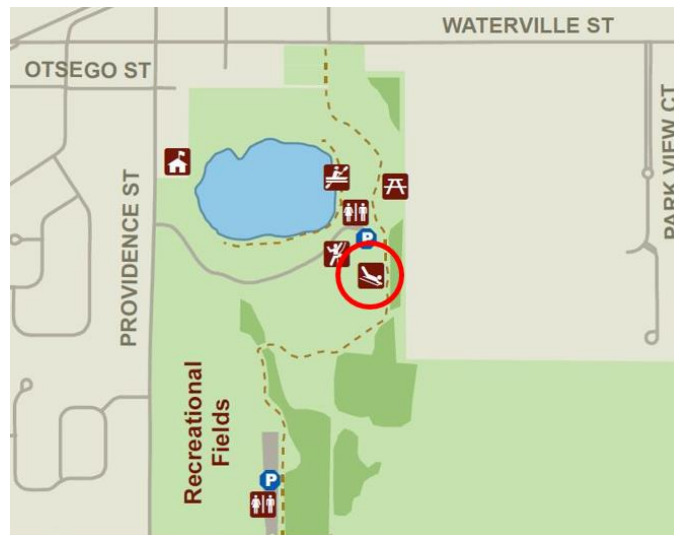
- Clean travel clothes for the ride home
- Wet wipes and deodorant to freshen up (optional, but you'll feel better after!)
- A water bottle separate from your hiking water
- Snacks

### Frequently Asked Questions

1. What do I do with my trash on the trail? Will there be garbage cans?
  - a. We will pack in and pack out all trash and practice Leave No Trace on the trail. For an overview of Leave No Trace (LNT) outdoor ethics: <https://lnt.org/>

2. What if I am a beginner?

- a. This trip is not a beginners trek, but geared to those who have some backcountry backpacking experience. If you have never backpacked in the backcountry, please sign up for one of our local Backpacking 101 or 201 overnight experiences to gain some experience and decide if this activity is right for you.
  - Training in advance will be key to a successful trek.
  - Blue Creek Sledding Hill is an excellent training location and where we will meet for the Backpacking 101: Are You Ready for the Trail? program.



- <https://goo.gl/maps/ocKGK5HqquxaGUrB9>
  - Look for the sledding hill at the far east end of the Nona France Drive.
3. What will the campsites be like?
- a. There should be tent platforms, shelters, privies, fire pits, and occasionally picnic tables on the trail. We will use a trowel/cat-hole system for bathroom purposes on the trail.



4. Not to get into the dirty details, but what does trowel/cat-hole system mean?

## Going in the Woods

Please follow these simple steps when nature calls:

1. Find a spot at least 200 steps from any water source
2. Dig a hole 6-8 inches deep and bury human waste
3. Pack out used toilet paper



When people are not responsible going in the woods they contaminate the water you swim in, fish from, and drink. Bacteria and viruses found in human feces are known to cause hepatitis, blue baby syndrome, salmonella, giardia, and other gastro-intestinal diseases. Remember, the water in the rivers and lakes you visit may flow into your own drinking water supply.

5. Ok, now that I know that, what if I am on my period?
- a. Similarly, all products, before and after use, will need to go in your bear bag. You cannot bury any products. Multiple zip-top bags are recommended for this.
6. Why all the info? This is overwhelming.
- a. None of this information is intended to scare off potential participants but it is very important to make sure you have a full understanding of this trek. We are very excited about the planning and execution of this trip and hope to fulfill some hiking dreams!