

# Backpacking Appalachian Trail Activity Guide

## Goals

- Complete a two in one backpacking trip for both experienced and inexperienced/first time hikers
- Have scouts work together in ad hoc groups and in patrols
- Have scouts experience leading and being led.

## Achievements Satisfied

This activity satisfies the following achievements.

- A night of camping for the Camping Merit Badge
- An outing with Troop for rank advancement
- Five mile hike with map and compass requirement
- Chance to work on cooking requirements
- Chance to demonstrate lighting campfire/camp stove

## Materials

- Backpacking gear (see Troop 8 season-appropriate gear list), with special attention to the following:
  - Well broken in boots that fit
  - Rain gear (coat and pants)
  - One dining fly per patrol
  - Water 2 liters/day (cannot count on springs)
  - Bear bag rope (50 feet of orange parachute cord, small cloth bag, tennis ball)
- Map & compass
  - PATC Maps 4 and 5 Appalachian Trail (Old Forge to Wolfsville Rd)
  - PATC Map 5 Appalachian Trail (Turners Gap to Wolfsville Rd)
  - PATC Maps 7 and 5/6 Appalachian Trail (Keys Gap to Gathland SP)
  - PATC Map 7 Appalachian Trail (Snickers Gap to Harpers Ferry)

## Tips

These backpacking trips cover the AT in MD, PA, and VA. Each combines a long and short segment to accommodate experienced and inexperienced hikers. In order from north to south these are:

Old Forge Road PA to Ravens Rock Shelter to Wolfsville Road MD- experienced hikers  
PenMar to Ravens Rock Shelter to Wolfsville Road MD - inexperienced/first time hikers

Turners Gap to Pogo Campsite to Wolfsville Road, MD- experienced hikers  
I-70 Footbridge to Pogo Campsite to Wolfsville Road - inexperienced/first time hikers

Keys Gap to Ed Garvey Shelter to Gathland State Park- experienced hikers  
Harper's Ferry to Ed Garvey Shelter to Gathland State Park - inexperienced/first time hikers

Snickers Gap to David Lesser Shelter to Keys Gap- experienced hikers  
PATC Blackburn Trail Center to David Lesser Shelter to Keys Gap - inexperienced/first time hikers

- General
  - Experienced and inexperienced/first time hikers will hike separately on the first day so leaders for both groups need to be chosen. Gives the younger scouts some experience at leading. The patrols will re-form when the groups meet up in the afternoon/evening at the shelter.
  - Shelters are intended for through hikers; scouts should stay at campsites nearby.
  - Fires are discouraged or not allowed except at the shelter fire ring (made of iron), so plan on using stoves. Many unauthorized stone fire rings exist, and are periodically removed by trail crews. Fires are not allowed in Pen-Mar Park, Gathland SP, and at Keys Gap. The AT Conservancy has a PDF table with a complete set of fire and camping rules. The AT is heavily used, so practice Leave No Trace.
  - Best to carry enough water as the springs can be unreliable.
  - Use a tennis ball in small cloth bag tied to parachute cord tied to the bear bag rope to get the bear bag rope up.
- Old Forge Rd to Wolfsville Rd
  - Experienced hikers: Drop off at Old Forge Road PA and Appalachian Trail, pretty much any car will work. See PATC Map 4 Appalachian Trail.
  - Inexperienced hikers: Drop off at PenMar, see PATC Map 5 Appalachian Trail pretty much any car will work, plenty of parking.
  - Pick up for both groups is at Wolfsville Road, Smithburg MD and the Appalachian Trail.
- Turners Gap to Wolfsville Rd
  - Experienced hikers: Drop off at Turners Gap - Appalachian Trail crosses Alt 40/Old National Pike, pretty much any car will work, see PATC Map 5 Appalachian Trail.
  - Inexperienced hikers: Drop off at Appalachian Trail footbridge over I-70, parking is nearby, see PATC Map 5 Appalachian Trail
  - Use a tennis ball in small cloth bag tied to parachute cord tied to the bear bag rope to get the bear bag rope up.
  - Pick up for both groups is at Wolfsville Road, Smithburg MD and the Appalachian Trail, see PATC Map 5 Appalachian Trail.
- Keys Gap to Gathland SP
  - Experienced hikers: Drop off at Keys Gap - Appalachian Trail crosses Route 9/Charles Town Pike at Keys Gap, there is trail parking on the north side of Route 9, pretty much any car will work. See PATC Map 7 Appalachian Trail.
  - Inexperienced hikers: Drop off in Harpers Ferry at the corner of Shenandoah Street and Potomac, see PATC Map 7 inset map of Harpers Ferry, pretty much any car will work.
  - Pick up for both groups is at Gathland State Park, there is a big parking lot, see PATC Map 6 Appalachian Trail.
  - Just past Harpers Ferry the trail ascends steeply to a nice overlook that is a good place to have a snack and enjoy the view.
- Snickers Gap to Harpers Ferry
  - Experienced hikers: Drop off at Snickers Gap - Appalachian Trail crosses Route 7 at Snickers Gap, there is trail parking on the north side of Route 7, pretty much any car will work.
  - Inexperienced hikers: Drop off at PATC Blackburn Trail Center, use PATC Map 7 to get from Round Hill VA to PATC Blackburn Trail Center, map has excellent detail. The road gets steeper, narrower and rougher the closer you get to PATC Blackburn Trail Center, four wheel drive and high clearance vehicles are best.
  - Water is available from an outside tap at PATC Blackburn Trail Center.
  - Use a tennis ball in small cloth bag tied to parachute cord tied to the bear bag rope to get the bear bag rope up.
  - A good place to pick up the hikers is at the trail parking lot where Route 9/Charles Town Pike crosses the Appalachian trail at Keys Gap, see PATC Map 7 Appalachian Trail.

## Contributors

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