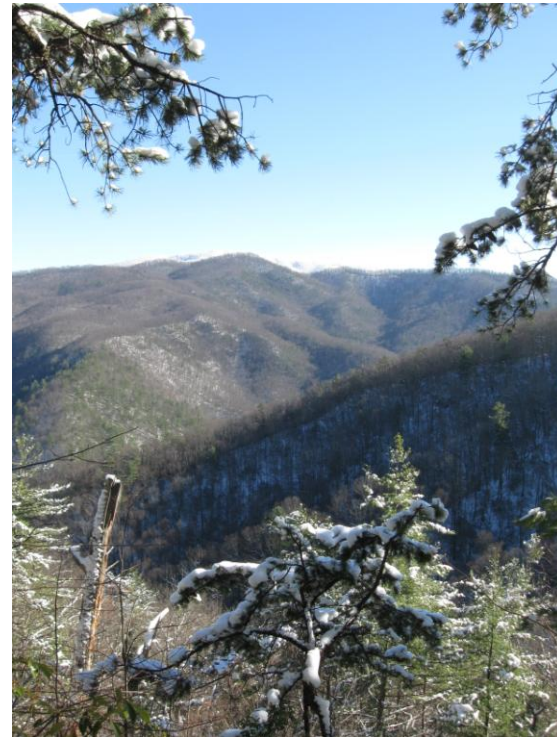


A Visitor's Guide to Short Day Hikes near Damascus, VA



View from the Appalachian Trail just north of Damascus

1. Loop hike on Appalachian and Iron Mtn. trails (4 mi., moderate):

Beginning in Damascus, walk east on E. 4th St. to reach the Iron Mtn. Trail. Follow yellow blazes for about 2 miles. Trail crosses a few small streams on stepstones, winds uphill, then turns left. At sign, turn right on short blue-blazed connecting trail, then right again onto the Appalachian Trail (white blazes). For the next 2 miles, the AT crosses a ridge overlooking Damascus, descends, turns left, and reaches a set of steps, crossing Rte. 58 to join the VA Creeper Trail and return to Damascus.



2. Loop hike on the Appalachian and VA Creeper trails (8 mi. easy to moderate):

Beginning in Damascus, walk east on the Appalachian and VA Creeper Trails (white blazes). At the "Appalachian Trail" sign, turn left, cross Rte. 58/91 and ascend a set of steps, following the white blazed A.T. four miles, across ridges with views. Cross a small log bridge and turn right on the Beech Grove Trail (unblazed woods road) to reach Rte. 58 in ¼ mile. Cross and descend to the Straight Branch VA Creeper Trail parking lot. Turn right on the Creeper and walk four miles, with views of the creek, to return to Damascus.

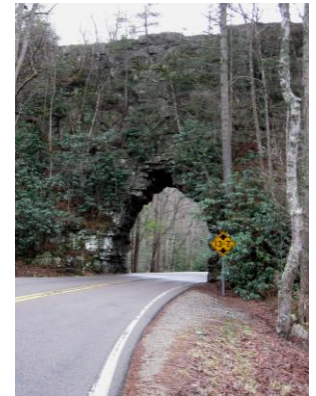
3. Loop hike on the Iron Mtn. and Feathercamp trails (6 mi., moderate):

Park at the upper Straight Branch parking lot above the VA Creeper Trail, about 5 miles east of Damascus on Rte. 58. Cross 58 and hike north on the Beech Grove Trail (woods road), ascending 1 mile. At the sign at the top, turn right to the Iron Mtn. Trail (which begins as a woods road for about ¼ mile, then turns right on yellow blazes into the woods). After about 2 miles, continue through a signed trail intersection and hike another mile to a hiker trail on the right to Sandy Flats. (Optional side trip: continue on the I.M.T. ¼ mile farther to

Sandy Flats Shelter and back.) Turn right at Sandy Flats onto the blue-blazed Feathercamp Trail. Descend 2 miles to Rte. 58. (The last ½ mile has several crossings of Feathercamp Creek on stepstones.) At 58, turn right and walk ¼ mile to your car.

4. Appalachian Trail to TN/VA state line and Backbone Rock (7 mi., moderate):

Beginning at the Damascus Town Park, follow white blazes south. Cross Beaverdam Rd. at Water St. and ascend on the AT between two houses. Trail ascends on switchbacks, reaching a woods road in about ¾ mile. Continue past a campsite with a blue-blazed spring trail at 2 miles; then ascend 1 ½ more miles to the sign at the TN/VA state line. Retrace back to Damascus, or if a car has been left at the Backbone Rock parking lot on Rte. 133, just under the tunnel on the right, hike just over a mile farther past the state line to the Backbone Rock Trail and descend 2 miles to the parking lot.



5. Loop hike on Appalachian and VA Creeper trails from Straight Branch (4 mi., easy):

Park at the pull-off at the Appalachian Trail sign at the Straight Branch Bridge about 5 1/4 miles east of Damascus on Rte. 58. Follow the AT north across the bridge and through a rhododendron forest, ascending slightly with views to the right over Whitetop Laurel Creek and the VA Creeper Trail. After 2 miles, go straight on a blue-blazed side trail at a sign where the AT turns left. Reach the VA Creeper Trail on the blue blazed trail in 1/3 mile. Turn right and follow the Creeper along the creek and over several trestles 2 miles to the Straight Branch Creeper Trail parking lot. Ascend the parking lot road, turn right, and walk up Rte. 58 ¼ mile to reach the car at the Straight Branch Bridge.

Recommended map for these and other hikes in this area: National Geographic map #786 of the Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area. This map is available for sale at the following outfitters in Damascus: Mt. Rogers Outfitters, Adventure Damascus, and Sundog Outfitters.