

INN-TO-INN HIKING on the APPALACHIAN TRAIL

The Appalachian Trail (A.T.) is rugged backcountry footpath, routed along some of the most magnificent mountains and ridges of the Appalachian Mountain chain. It is a national scenic trail, designed to offer a reprieve from civilization. It is generally well-marked, but in many areas it can be challenging, with strenuous climbs and occasionally rocky footing. As a long-distance trail, the A.T. provides hikers the opportunity to walk in the woods for days on end. The A.T. allows hikers to be deeply immersed in nature, free from commercialism and development, as a true retreat from the pressures of fast-paced modern life.

The A.T. intentionally is routed away from towns, usually high on the mountains above. The A.T. does pass through a few small towns, but not even a dozen in its almost 2200-mile span. The trail may cross paved roads at intervals that are typically 5 to 20 miles apart, but in a few remote areas may be as much as 30 or more. At those road crossings, the nearest town is two, five, ten or more miles away at road crossings.

That means that motels, inns and B&Bs are seldom found right along the A.T. There are a few notable exceptions. Lodging and meals or resupply can be found right along the A.T. a day's hike apart in three locations along the A.T. With careful planning you can hike these areas and just carry a day-pack.

There are also some other areas where B&Bs are clustered not too far from the A.T., and with some resourceful logistical planning, you plan a multi-day hike without having to schlep a heavy backpack. Here is information about a variety of options.

INN-TO-INN HIKES

4-day inn-to-inn hike in Shenandoah National Park in north/central Virginia offers an opportunity for four days of continuous hiking, with lodging at convenient intervals along the A.T. (which roughly parallels and frequently crosses the scenic Skyline Drive.) Although there is some elevation gain and loss, the footpath here is well-graded. Climbs and descents are seldom steep. Rewarding views from 3-4,000' mountains and an abundance of flowers and wildlife make this a popular destination. For four days and three nights, you can plan to walk 8-10 miles a day with no more than a day pack if you make reservations ahead of time to ensure a spot. Here is the day-by-day itinerary, listed south to north. The hike can also be walked in the opposite direction.

Starting point/Destination	Day's Mileage	Cumulative Mileage
Swift Run Gap/U.S. 33 to Lewis Mountain	8.3	8.3
Lewis Mountain to Big Meadows	8.7	17.0
Big Meadows to Skyland	8.1	25.1
Skyland to Thornton Gap/U.S. 211	9.5	34.6

All three overnight destinations have either camp stores and/or restaurants (food options at Lewis Mountain are limited to a small camp store). Big Meadows and Skyland both have restaurants offering lovely views, and taverns where you can grab a cold beer after your hike. For a true inn-to-inn hike, eliminate the first day between Swift Run Gap and Lewis Mountain, as there are no meals available at Lewis Mountain, just a camp store. This hike traverses the central section of Shenandoah National Park, starting at Swift Run Gap (U.S. 33) and ending 34.6 miles north at Thornton Gap (U.S. 211). Listed south to north (below) are relevant facilities:

- Lewis Mountain - Furnished cabins (no kitchen), camp store.
- Big Meadows – Lodge and motel rooms, dining room, tap room camp store, boxed lunches
- Skyland – Motel-style accommodations, cabins, suites, dining room, tap room, boxed lunches.

To get a clear sense of the topography, elevation gain and loss, and other features of this hike, order the map for the [Central Map of Shenandoah National Park](#) or the [complete map and guide package for the entire Shenandoah National Park](#).

Facilities start opening in the park in late March, but not all are open until May. They stay open the end of October or sometime in November. A listing of all facilities in the park (lodges, restaurants, camp stores, etc.) and the dates they are open through the year can be found at nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/facilities-opening-schedule.htm. For more information about lodging and to make reservations, visit www.goshenandoah.com or call (800) 778-2851. To arrange shuttles back to your car, download the shuttle list from our website at www.appalachiantrail.org/shuttles. Unless you are doing the full 4-day hike that begins and ends at the highways that cross Skyline Drive (Swift Run Gap/US 33 to Thornton Gap/US 211), however, you may need to bring at least one cars to park one at either end of your hike. At times, there are no businesses with permits to shuttle within Shenandoah National Park on Skyline Drive. Shuttle service providers without permits to shuttle in the park may take hikers to the park entrances. Addresses and GPS for driving purposes can be found at www.nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/using-gps-and-mapping-services.htm.

The Charlottesville Albemarle Airport is the closest to the southern end of the hike, about 23 miles southeast. It is also the closest to the northern end at US 211/Thornton Gap (about 45 miles north). Dulles International Airport (in Chantilly, Virginia, 25 miles west of Washington, DC) is about 85 miles northeast of the northern end of the hike, but may offer cheaper airfare.

An article, "Hike In Comfort" from the November/December 2007 issue of ATC's member magazine, *A.T. Journeys*, outlines the pleasures of this hike and can be found <http://tinyurl.com/AThikeInComfort>.

4-day inn-to-inn hike in Massachusetts

The northwest corner of Massachusetts in the Berkshires offers the opportunity for four days of "inn-to-inn" hiking without having to go far from the A.T. Here is an itinerary that allows you to sleep under a roof four nights in a row, with the majestic Mt. Greylock the highlight of this hike. The hiking here is strenuous; day 3 involves a climb of approximately 2,500 feet up Mt. Greylock (but spread over almost 8 miles), and day 4 involves the same amount of descent, but at a steeper grade. It would be difficult for anyone with knee issues. Some may prefer to simply end their hike atop Mt. Greylock.

Start at Blotz Road, between Becket and Dalton, MA

Day 1 - 6.4 miles to motel in Dalton, MA www.shamrockvillage.webs.com

Day 2 - 9.3 to B&B in Cheshire, MA www.masonhilllife.com or www.harbourhouseinn.com

Day 3 - 7.7 to Bascom Lodge on top of Mt. Greylock www.bascomlodge.net

Day 4 - 6.3 to various motels in Williamstown, MA www.williamstownchamber.com

The A.T. technically passes through the town of North Adams, but the closest motels are in Williamstown, which is ½ mile west of the North Adams city line.

For more information about the terrain and other aspects of planning your hike, the [A.T. Guide to Massachusetts/Connecticut](#), (which also includes maps) can be ordered on-line at www.atctrailstore.org or by calling 1-888-AT-STORE (1-888-287-8673).

Up to 9 days of hiking inn-to-inn in alpine-style huts of New Hampshire's White Mountains

For the hiker ready for the challenge of climbing steep mountains with highly exposed sections above treeline—in exchange for thrilling views (when the weather cooperates)—the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) offers a unique system of eight full-service huts in the White Mountain National Forest. These facilities provide full-service accommodations (dinner, lodging, breakfast) in the summer months, so you need carry only a day-pack with raingear, lunch, and the other “10 essentials.” Many places are steep enough to require the use of hands. This section is not recommended for hikers with a fear of heights those or who lack agility; hikers should be experienced and in good physical condition before contemplating a journey in this area. Advance reservations are essential; reservations for the most popular huts fill up months in advance. For additional information visit the AMC website at www.outdoors.org or call the AMC office at Pinkham Notch (603) 466-272.

INN-TO-INN HIKES UTILIZING SHUTTLES EACH DAY

With some planning, the following areas can be hiked inn-to-inn, but require shuttles of up to about five miles at the end of each day, and in a few cases, a shuttle back to the same B&B, motel, or inn two nights in row. Many of the establishments may offer only breakfast or dinner, but not both. Not all have laundry. No formal packages are available, but in some areas a local shuttle driver may be able to work with you on this. The terrain in all three areas ranges from moderate to challenging, with some rock scrambling.

- Vernon, NJ to Bear Mountain, NY
- All of Connecticut and Massachusetts
- Killington, VT to Glencliff, NH

MULTI-DAY HIKES USING A BASE CAMP AND SHUTTLES

Almost all parts of the A.T. are accessible for day-hiking; some areas are harder to reach than others. More than 200 roads (paved and unpaved) cross the A.T. at intervals ranging from as little as one mile to over 30 miles. Some road crossings offer designated trailhead parking; others do not. Successive multi-day hikes can be arranged out of a motel, hotel, or B&B by planning shuttles of increasing mileage each day from a designated “base camp.” Generally speaking, lodging is located closer to the Trail and at more frequent intervals in the mid-Atlantic than in the deep South and far North; the terrain is also somewhat less difficult in these states. Southern Pennsylvania and Massachusetts offer lodging at the most frequent intervals (other than in Shenandoah National Park in Virginia and in New Hampshire, as noted above).

GUIDED HIKES

Commercially guided hikes are generally not allowed on most areas of the Appalachian Trail. Some of the 31 local non-profit A.T. maintaining volunteer clubs offer group hikes (usually day-hikes, but sometimes longer) often open to non-members. A listing of these can be found on our website at www.appalachiantrail.org/volunteer. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee & North Carolina does give permits to companies providing guided hikes on the A.T. there. You can call the park at (865) 436-1297 for more information. The [Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont](#) also issues permits to companies offering guided hikes.

PLANNING RESOURCES

[The A.T. Thru-Hikers' Companion](#), updated annually, provides information about all services along the A.T., including lodging, restaurants, grocery stores, laundromats, and more. It is somewhat geared to long-distance hikers on a budget and may not list all B&Bs, but is a useful resource for any hiker. It covers the entire A.T. and includes data about all significant points along the Trail.

Official A.T. Guidebooks and maps – Guidebooks offer information about terrain, points of interest, road access, water sources, shelters (lean-to), and other safety and planning information; the maps show the topography, water sources, shelters and campsites, road crossings, nearby towns, emergency phone numbers, are GPS and feature an elevation profile.

www.bedandbreakfast.com Lists some B&Bs that may not be in the *A.T. Thru-Hikers' Companion*. It takes some research to determine which will be close to the A.T.

[Terrain by State](#) – This page on ATC's website provides information on weather, terrain, difficulty ratings, and recommended times to hike each section of the A.T.

Shuttle List - Used in combination with maps and guidebooks and a copy of ATC's shuttle and transportation providers list (www.appalachiantrail.org/shuttles) you can plan successive day hikes of almost any section of the Trail except for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina and Tennessee.

Social Media - Sites such as www.TripAdvisor.com or www.Yelp.com can be helpful for finding reviews of lodging options.

[Ultimate Appalachian Trail Store](#) – In addition to official maps and guides above, offers a wide variety of publications and merchandise related to the Appalachian Trail, such as *Wildflowers of the Appalachian Trail*.