

Part Two Damascus VA to Harpers Ferry WV

How much you carry out of Damascus depends on whether or not you wish to leave the Trail and roadwalk/hitch; there are many options for light re-supply almost every day after you leave town.

*It is possible get limited re-supply in Whitetop, VA about 24 miles north of Damascus (The road crossing is VA 600 at Elk Garden). I have never been to this store.

*At Dickey Gap (VA650/16) one can hitch into Troutdale. There is a church hostel with an excellent reputation if you wish to overnight; there's also a B&B. Limited re-supply, as well as cooked meals, are available at the Troutdale Trading Post; be aware that both the store and the cafe are closed on Sundays; you'll most likely get here 3-4 days after leaving Damascus, so if you have mail being sent here, or plan to buy food here, plan accordingly so you arrive on the right day. If you anticipate arriving when either the store or Post Office is closed, I'd advise either spending an extra day in Damascus, or slowing down and doing smaller mileage days between Elk Garden and Old Orchard shelter, as this is one of the loveliest stretches of the entire Trail. As stated earlier, if you plan to do this here, i.e. slow down your daily miles, you'll obviously need to bring extra food.

Note: If you plan to send mail to TroutDALE, check your mailing label and zip code carefully, as there is also a TroutVILLE, VA several weeks further North.

*At VA16 (about 64 miles from Damascus) it is possible to have food (pizza, subs) delivered to the Visitor Center. Most folks who stay at the adjacent Partnership Shelter take advantage of this. From this road crossing, one can also hitch to nearby Marion, which has large supermarkets and lodging options; it is also possible to hitch to nearby Sugar Grove, which is closer, but has a much smaller market. I have never re-supplied in either location.

*11 1/2 miles further north, at US11/VA683, there is a good-sized convenience store directly on the Trail. Many hikers also overnight at the friendly Relax Inn Motel, which will hold mail for guests. It is also possible to hitch a few miles to nearby Atkins, which has a market; hikers should note that this market, which I've never visited, is CLOSED on Sundays.

Note: It is about 75 miles from Damascus to US11/83. If you do not plan on stopping to re-supply at Whitetop, Troutdale, Marion, or Sugar Grove, I'd bring 5-6 days worth of food from Damascus. I usually make it at the end of the fifth day, but a little extra couldn't hurt.

*About 45 miles north is Bland, which has a good market, as well as several small restaurants and a motel. There may also be a new hostel there for 2007. The miles in this stretch are fairly easy; most folks will arrive in Bland late in the afternoon of their third day from US11. Hikers who stay at the Relax Inn and get on the Trail late in the morning and have a shortened first day out, may wish to bring a bit more.

Note: The town of Bastian is a closer hitch to the Trail, but don't bother going there, as there is nothing there for hikers.

*Hikers that plan to skip Bland can get light re-supply at VA608; there's a small market less than a mile from the Trail. I've never been there. A much better bet would be to go to Trent's Store, about half a mile from the Trail crossing at VA606, about 18 1/2 miles past Bland. It is possible to tent near the store, tho a better idea would be to re-supply, and then hike the easy two miles to Dismal Falls, a

wonderful place to camp and swim. In any case, you won't need to get much here, as you're less than 25 miles from Pearisburg, a major Trail town.

*Woodshole Hostel, about 10 miles south of Pearisbug is a wonderful place to overnight. Other than sodas and candy bars, there is no re-supply here; the first eight hikers who sign up can pay a nominal fee for a wonderful breakfast.

*Pearisbug is very popular with hikers. Like Erwin, it's fairly spread out, but excepting an Outfitter, it's got just about everything you'll likely need. There are all sorts of lodging options, tho hikers should remember that the church hostel is quite a ways from the Trail. There are several motels, and while most folks seem to stay closer to the town center, I've always opted for the Rendezvous Motel, which is directly at the Trail crossing as you enter town. The proprietor, Brenda, has been a great friend to hikers for many years, and may be available if you need a shuttle, a ride to the clinic, etc. (Hikers needing more services than Pearisburg offers may want to hitch or catch a shuttle to Blacksburg, a large university town with all services. Brenda may well be able to help you with this).

For re-supply, there's a large Food Lion in the center of town. For other shopping needs, there's a Wal-Mart, tho it's a bit further out. There are all sorts of places to eat, with the All Sports Bar next to the Holiday Motor Lodge being favored by hikers. Lastly, there is another large supermarket called Wade's directly on the Trail as you are leaving Pearisburg, which is very useful if you realize you've forgotten something. Fuel is available at the hardware store and some of the motels.

*There's a small market at Newport VA (at VA42, about 40 miles north of Pearisburg); I've never been here. About 27 miles further, at VA624, there's a good-sized convenience store .4 from the Trail. About five miles after that, you'll reach VA311, where most hikers hitch into Catawba, where there is a small market next to the Post Office.

If you arrive in town on the right day, don't skip the wonderful Homeplace Restaurant, which many hikers consider to be one of the best on the whole Trail. Catawba is around 73 miles from Pearisburg; you'll likely get there in 5-6 days. When leaving Catawba, you won't need much as it is only 20 miles to the next major re-supply point.

Note: For many hikers, this 20-mile stretch is a long twenty; plus it contains two very scenic spots, McAfee Knob and Tinker Cliffs, where many hikers spend a good deal of time. I would advise bringing more than one day's worth of food here unless you KNOW you'll be hiking this stretch in one day. Personally, I'd bring a bit extra and slow down a bit here.

*US220/Daleville - This isn't really a "town" stop, but there is a great deal for hikers. The largest supermarket on or very near the Trail is the 24-Hour Kroger Superstore just under half a mile to your left. There are all sorts of restaurants and shops in this mall, including a coffeehouse and a small, but quite friendly Outfitter. Motels and other restaurants are found close to the Trail crossing, or about half a mile away, to your right, uphill. Hikers should use caution here, as it's a VERY busy road. Because of the closeness and size of the market, I wouldn't send food here; also, the Post Office, in nearby Troutville, is over a mile's walk off the Trail. The motels at the 220 crossing will hold mail for guests. It is just under 93 miles from Pearisburg to Daleville; if you elect NOT to re-supply before Rt220, this stretch will likely take you about a week, or just under.

*21 miles after Daleville, there is a small market in nearby Buchanan; I've never been, and have been told by some that this can be a tough hitch. Shortly after that, at VA614/Jennings Creek, there's a

campground with a small store. Also, at the Buchanan crossing (Bearwallow Gap/VA43) one can go five miles on the Blue Ridge Parkway to the Peaks of Otter recreation area, which has lodging, restaurant meals, and a very small store. If you do this, you'll most likely be walking, as hitching is both difficult here as well as illegal.

*At US501, about 86 miles from Daleville, there is re-supply in both Glasgow and Big Island, with the better market being in Glasgow. There are restaurants in both small towns, and lodging in Glasgow. Better shopping is available in Buena Vista, but this can be a rough hitch. Daleville to Glasgow takes most folks 5 days, or they stay at pretty Matt's Creek shelter and go into town the morning of the sixth day.

*Hikers can also hitch to Buena Vista from US60, about 22 miles north of the Glasgow crossing.

*Just under 40 miles from Glasgow/Rt 501, there is limited re-supply at the Montebello Camping and Fishing Resort; also, many hikers stay at the popular Dutch Haus B&B, where you can get mail, or pay for a shuttle to a store. I have never been to either place, but have heard great things about the Dutch Haus.

Note: If you plan to go into Montebello, be prepared to hoof it, as the road gets very little traffic; you'll likely be walking, unless you catch a ride from the Dutch Haus folks.

*At VA56, you can hitch to a small camp store at Crabtree Falls campground, 4 miles from the Trail. I've never been there, but I plan to go this year, as the waterfall is reputedly spectacular.

Note: the store may be open only on weekends.

*Rockfish Gap/Interstate 64 (About 77 miles from Glasgow; 6 days hiking for most folks). Nearly every hiker will want to go into nearby Waynesboro, a large and friendly town with great services. All sorts of lodging options exist, including a church hostel, tenting at the YMCA, or several motels, of which the Quality Inn is the most popular. The best supermarket is in the center of town; best meal is the amazing Chinese Buffet next to the market. The Outfitter is several miles from the town center; you should either hit it as you are entering town, or go on your way back to the Trail.

While there are indeed several camp stores in Shenandoah National Park, the food is mostly snacks, or tinned stuff for car campers. I would NOT plan on re-supplying solely from these stores; I would bring at least 3-4 days of food from the supermarket in town.

*It'll take most folks about 5-7 days to get thru Shenandoah Park. If you need to leave the Park for any reason, one can hitch to Luray from Thornton Gap (about 81 miles from Rockfish Gap). Luray has all major services including an Outfitter, tho unless it's an emergency, you'll most likely want to wait til you get to the outfitter in Front Royal, or the superb outfitter in Harpers Ferry. At Compton Gap, just before leaving Shenandoah, many hikers in recent years have spoken well of Terrapin Station hostel, which holds mail and offers shuttles to nearby Front Royal. However, hikers should note that this place will most likely be CLOSED for the 2007 season; if it is open, there will most likely be signs ahead of time telling you so.

*US522 Many hikers hitch into the large and spread out town of Front Royal here, which offers all services. Hikers should use extreme caution here; this is a VERY busy highway.

Hikers that don't want to deal with this hitch should be aware that just five miles after the 522 crossing, just past the Jim and Molly Denton shelter, it is possible to walk to Linden VA via a side trail that cuts off of the A.T. about 150 paces North of the shelter. (Follow this Trail down- hill for about five minutes; you'll hit a road. Continue straight ahead, follow this road for 7-10 minutes, you'll hit a "T" intersection. Go left for a few minutes; this will bring you to the center of Linden, right by the store. The new Post Office is a short walk. To get back to the Trail, reverse your steps. One can also, of course, get to Linden from VA55, a few Trail miles AFTER the Denton shelter). The Linden store is small, but has enough to get you the 45-odd miles to Harpers Ferry.

*About 34 miles North of 522/Front Royal, light re-supply is available at the very nice Bear's Den Hostel. Some camp fuels are available here.

*Just past Bear's Den, at VA7/679, at Snickers Gap, one can walk about a mile to a small market. I've never been here.

*Hikers that overnight at the ATC Blackburn Center, about 12 1/2 miles south of Harpers Ferry, can't re-supply there, but guests will in all likelihood be cooked dinner by the caretakers!

*Welcome to Harpers Ferry WV, the un-official halfway mark of the Trail. When you arrive in town, you'll have completed 1009 miles of hiking! There is very little in the way of re-supply in Harpers Ferry itself, other than a 7-11 in nearby Bolivar. There is a town bus, which will get you to Charles Town, which has restaurants, supermarkets, and a Wal-Mart. You will NOT want to hitch there, tho. Occasionally, there are friendly locals who might be offering shuttle rides; you can check for this at the ATC Headquarters. For most folks, a food maildrop is an excellent idea here, and I'd ship it to the ATC office instead of the Post Office, as the ATC office is open 7 days a week in the summertime, including the July 4th weekend, which is when a lot of folks hit town. There is an excellent Outfitter just off the Trail in the town center; in addition to gear, they also have a small selection of snacks and hiker food. There are several lodging options, including a very nice hostel across the Potomac in Maryland. If possible, try and spend a bit of time here, as there's a lot to see, especially for those interested in American history. And when you drop by the ATC office to check in and get your picture taken, ask the staff if there are any volunteer projects going on; it's a great way to give a little back to the Trail.