South Mountain

August 20-25, 2015
$330

Included in price: four on campus meals; Ascent group reading and gift; five days of backcountry food, permits and equipment; six days of guided activity; transportation for duration of trip.

Trip Overview

Activity: Backpacking  Difficulty Level: ⭐⭐⭐⭐

Offered by the Office of Experiential Education, this student-led wilderness program provides incoming first-years the opportunity to connect through a novel, shared experience. Though it has evolved in the twenty years since its inception, Ascent continues to be a favorite tradition at the college—and for good reason. Students often enter this program surrounded by new faces, but return to campus five days later with meaningful friendships, a strong support network, and a better understanding of what they can accomplish at Gettysburg College.

Spanning nearly 2200 miles of woodlands, reservoirs, streams and waterfalls between Georgia and Maine, the Appalachian Trail is one of our country’s most beloved long distance hiking trails. The beautiful section of trail selected for the South Mountain Ascent trip covers roughly 40 miles between historic Harpers Ferry, WV and a scenic overlook on the Pennsylvania border. On this program you will cover topographic map navigation, Leave-No-Trace ethics, and backcountry living skills. This is a great trip for those looking to try something different and make new friends during their transition to Gettysburg College.

General Schedule:

Wednesday, August 19
- Move into your residence hall (no planned Ascent activities)

Thursday, August 20
- Ascent registration 9:00am
- Family welcome luncheon from 11:00am-12:30pm
- Farewell to families following lunch
- Workshops on campus and group Ascent dinner

Friday, August 21-Tuesday, August 25
- Breakfast in Gettysburg’s dining hall
- Depart for the Appalachian Trail and start your adventure!
- Backpacking on the Appalachian Trail

Tuesday, August 25
- Return to campus, sort gear and take a long-awaited shower
- Ascent celebration BBQ

Wednesday, August 26
- Gettysburg College First Year orientation begins
Backpacking South Mountain
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The Trek: Trekking distance ranges from 5-8 miles a day. Average time hiking daily will range from 3-5 hours, which includes stops for lunch & breaks and enjoying our surroundings.

Group Size: The trip consists of two GRAB staff members from the Office of Experiential Education and 6-8 first year participants.

Accommodations: You will move into your residence hall on Wednesday, and can either spend the night in your room or with your parents. You will sleep in your new residence hall on Thursday after your family leaves campus. You will spend the next four nights in a tent with your group mates.

Meals: Before trips depart, all participants will enjoy a family reception luncheon on Thursday, a group dinner on Thursday night, and breakfast in Gettysburg College’s dining hall Friday morning. Meals for the duration of the trip will be prepared by participants on backcountry stoves. Once we return there will be a celebration barbecue on campus for all Ascent participants.

Weather: The weather can be variable during this time of year, but expect average temperatures ranging from the 60s at night to the high 80s during the day. Please bring the recommended clothing to layer and protect yourself from the elements regardless of conditions.

Physical Preparations: The best way to prepare for this trip is to stay active. Jogging, sports, or walking 3-5 miles a few times a week will all increase your enjoyment once in the field.

Communication & Emergencies: Our trip locations often have cell service, but some sections may be spotty. The staff will carry a cell phone in the event of an emergency, however we will not completely rely on the service, and the group needs to know they may be without communication at times. We develop contingencies and have specific information for emergencies, but we are also aware that based on location and access it may take time to contact or reach definitive medical care, should the need arise. Although participants are permitted to carry phones, most choose to leave technology behind to more fully immerse themselves in the experience.

Health and Medical & Release of Liability: Each participant is asked to fill out a Health and Medical form for this trip. We request that you are truthful with your medical information and speak with your GRAB staff facilitator about any concerns or pre-existing conditions. In addition, we want to inform you that you will be asked to sign our indemnity form, and that you are aware that all Gettysburg College policies and procedures apply to this trip.

Medical Kit and Medicine: It is our top priority to mitigate risk on these experiences, but we need your assistance to inform us about your background, so we can properly prepare together. While in the field, we carry a medical and trauma kit. The medical kit has basic bandaging and wound care items, whereas our trauma kit has basic splinting and medicines such as aspirin, anti-diarrheal, epinephrine, Benadryl. We ask that you have with you your prescription medicine that you need on a daily/weekly basis, and that you transport it in its original container/bottle with your name and dosage. It is your responsibility to manage your own medication. For those with strong allergies that require medication, it is very important that you bring extra epinephrine or necessary medication in the event that yours becomes lost or broken.