Shenandoah National Park

August 18-23, 2016
$375.00

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.

Just under a two hour drive from the commotion of our nation's capital and Gettysburg, Shenandoah National Park is home to premiere backpacking locations and breath-taking scenery. With over 500 miles of trail, waterfalls, and scenic overlooks, this is one of the most coveted hiking locations on the east coast. Come experience "Old Rag" the Shenandoah’s most popular hike, learn to read topographic maps and practice backcountry living skills, and try your hand at scrambling up mountain peaks.

General Schedule:

Wednesday, August 17
- Move into your residence hall (no planned Ascent activities)

Thursday, August 18
- 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 19-Monday, August 22
- Breakfast in Gettysburg's dining hall
- Depart for Shenandoah and start your adventure
- Backpacking in Shenandoah National Park

Tuesday, August 23
- Return to campus, sort gear and take a long-awaited shower
- Ascent celebration BBQ

Wednesday, August 24
- Gettysburg College First Year orientation begins
The Trek: Trekking distance ranges from 5-10 miles a day. Average time hiking daily will range from 3-6 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, and spend Thursday night in your new residence hall as well. For the next four nights you’ll sleep 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 remainder 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 in the mountains, so plan for a range of temperatures. While averages range from the low 60’s through high 80’s, it is not uncommon for temperatures to drop into the 40’s at night. Please bring the recommended clothing to layer and protect yourself from the elements in all 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.