



ADVENTURES
in good company



BLUE RIDGE RAMBLING

TRIP SUMMARY

HIGHLIGHTS

- Hiking in crisp and cool fall air in the Blue Ridge Mountains
- Whitewater rafting on the French Broad River
- Visiting the Biltmore Estate and Antler Hill Winery
- Enjoying the very popular towns of Black Mountain and Asheville
- Relaxing in the beautiful surroundings of Montreat and the warm hospitality of the William Black Lodge

Phone: 877-439-4042

Outside the US: 410-435-1965

Email: info@goodadventure.com

TRIP AT A GLANCE

Location:	Asheville and the Blue Ridge Mountains, North Carolina
Activities:	Multisport
Arrive:	At Asheville Airport (AVL) at 2:00 PM on Day 1
Depart:	12:00 PM at AVL on the last day

TRIP OVERVIEW

The Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina are rich with scenic beauty, opportunities for outdoor adventure, and cultural traditions. Fall, with its crisp air and beautiful fall foliage, is the perfect time to sample all the possibilities, and Montreat provides a peaceful and relaxing setting from which to enjoy it. During our six days we'll combine moderate mountain hiking and whitewater rafting with visiting some of the area's iconic destinations, including the Biltmore Estate, Black Mountain, and Folk Art Center. Maximum group size: 12

RATING

This trip is appropriate for any active woman who regularly walks for exercise and wants a vacation that mixes being active in the outdoors with historical and cultural exploration. No particular experience is needed but please note that almost all the hiking involves ups and downs. The trip is rated 2. Prior to beginning the trip, participants should be walking regularly, including hills or stairs, at a **brisk** pace 3 to 4 days a week for 35 - 45 minutes. **Rating:** 1 [\[2\]](#) 3 4 5.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- 1 - 2 experienced AGC guides based on group size
- all activities on the itinerary, including whitewater rafting, ziplining, and the Biltmore Estate visit
- all meals from Sunday dinner through breakfast the next Friday with the exception of one lunch
- five nights lodging in single occupancy rooms
- transportation during the trip including round trip transfer from the Asheville airport

Not included: transportation to Asheville, alcoholic beverages, one lunch, optional activities, guide gratuities, and items of a personal nature

OUR ITINERARY

Below is the itinerary we have planned for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

DAY 1

Please plan to arrive at the Asheville Airport (AVL) by 2 PM or at Montreat by 3 PM. We'll meet you there and after brief introductions, we'll be on our way to Montreat, our home base for the trip. Located about 18 miles outside of Asheville, this small town/retreat center is known for its peaceful and beautiful setting and great hiking trails. We'll settle into our home for the week and then head out for a hike to introduce you to the area and terrain (lots of rocks and roots) and to stretch your legs. The hike is a 2.5 mile loop on part of the Greybeard trail that connects to the Harry Bryant Trail with a short detour to a small waterfall and then ends at the Wildlife Sanctuary. We return to the lodge for our first dinner together. After dinner - those rocking chairs on the front porch may be calling! D.

DAY 2

After a hearty breakfast, we drive about an hour on the famous Blue Ridge Parkway to Mount Mitchell. Mount Mitchell, the tallest peak east of the Mississippi, has an environment that is more similar to Canada than the Southeast. A road ascends to the summit where an observation tower offers panoramic views of the surrounding Black Mountains. Weather permitting our destination today will be Mount Craig, the second-highest peak in the eastern US. The trail begins from the parking lot of Mount Mitchell and trails through a lush, high-elevation forest that's home to some rare and endangered plants, shaded by sweet-scented spruce and balsam fir trees. While the destination is less than 1 mi. it takes about an hour and does require climbing (part of the way on stairs) as we descend one peak and summit another. On a clear day, however, the reward is great with wide panoramic views from the summit. On the way back we'll stop in the town of Black Mountain, known for its numerous upscale gift shops, galleries, and Appalachian style craft stores, with local craftsmen demonstrating iron works, wood bowl turning, and hand thrown pottery. We'll try not to ruin our appetite with too much ice cream that beckons before gathering for another delicious dinner. (B,L,D)

DAY 3

This morning we head west for a great half day of whitewater rafting on French Broad, the area's premiere whitewater river. Our expert raft guides will help us navigate class II and III rapids, suitable for novice and experienced rafters alike. After rafting there are several wonderful choices: zip-lining, hiking, soaking in the mineral waters of Hot Springs, N.C. and/or visiting the town of Hot Springs - all excellent choices! Zip-lining is canopy tour offered by our rafting company where you'll be zipping from tree to tree in a beautiful mountain setting. The tour is an exciting combination of zips, rappels and short hikes. Not appealing? Then join your guide for a bit of hiking. Choices abound depending on time, energy and weather. Doing a portion of Lover's Leap Ridge which is on the Appalachian Trail or possibly doing a trail that runs along the French Broad River. Hiking can be followed by a soak in the local mineral water hot springs! Regardless of your choice, the group will eventually reunite in Black Mountain for dinner at a local restaurant before heading back to the lodge and enjoying the satisfaction of another excellent day. (B,L,D)

DAY 4

We'll spend the day visiting Asheville's best-known site: the Biltmore Estate. This grand mansion (which is an understatement since, at 178,926 square feet, it is the largest mansion in America) and the 8,000-acre grounds have been impressing people since George Washington Vanderbilt built it in the late 1890s. If you've ever wondered what the Gilded Age looked like, this would be it. We'll spend the morning touring the main house and gardens.

Lunch will be on your own to allow time for exploration after our scheduled tour of the house. There is a lovely cafe next to the house, adjacent to the gardens. Following our house tour, Antler Hill Village beckons with its array of shops it's an adventure into local crafts and plenty of souvenirs. Not into shopping? Other options available: exploring the grounds on foot or by bicycle on some of the 22 miles of hiking/biking trails found on the estate, walking along the French Broad River, through lush green forest, spending more time strolling on the 2.5 miles of paths in the manicured gardens and just enjoying the feel of that glorious Gilded Age. But wait - still more to come - we'll complete the afternoon with a visit to the Antler Hill Winery, the Biltmore winery. We'll learn how the original dairy barn was converted into our state-of-the-art winery, and how they developed a winemaking philosophy. And, of course, no winery tour is complete without the opportunity to taste the product! After touring, hiking, biking, shopping and wine tasting, we'll head back to the inn for dinner and relaxing on the porch! (B, D)

DAY 5

This morning we return to the Blue Ridge Parkway, this time heading to Craggy Gardens area for a 2.5-mile hike on the Mountains to Sea trail to take in the fall foliage. We'll travel through a stunted high-elevation forest of mostly birch trees, exploring the second-highest Southern Appalachian forest community and another unique environment as well: a high-elevation heath bald. After a picnic lunch you'll have the option to go to the Craggy Pinnacle. This short, moderately steep trail ends in one of the best 360-degree summit views of the entire Blue Ridge Parkway. On the way back we'll stop at the Folk Art Center, home of the Southern Highland Craft Guild. Started in 1930, the guild is a band of artists who joined together to create a market for high quality authentic mountain crafts. Their efforts have resulted in keeping traditional crafts alive that might otherwise have been lost. Our day ends with dinner at one of the many local restaurants in Asheville before heading back to the lodge for our last night together on the porch. (B,L,D)

DAY 6

We end our time here with one final hike: Lookout Mountain. It's probably the most beloved hike in Montreat and a fitting end to our trip. The short, fairly steep, hike brings us to a view that is well worth the effort. The trail ends at a rocky viewpoint overlooking Montreat and the surrounding area, allowing us to see many of the places we've explored this week from a different vantage point. Back at the lodge, we'll have time to clean up before leaving for the airport. We'll have you there by noon and you can plan to fly home any time after 1:30 PM. (B)

ADDITIONAL TRIP INFORMATION

GETTING THERE

If you are flying, plan to fly into the Asheville, N.C. Airport (AVL) where you will be met by the guides. Our meeting time is 2 PM so plan to arrive before 1:30 PM if possible

If you are driving, you can either drive to the Asheville airport and park your vehicle in the long-term lot and meet the group; or you can drive directly to the William Black Lodge in Montreat, NC. There is parking at the lodge.

GETTING BACK

We'll have you back at the airport by 12:00 PM, plan to fly home any time after 1:30 PM.

AIRFARE

If you would like assistance with airfare, we recommend contacting our AirDesk Partner, [Exito Travel](#). Start by submitting this form: https://pay2.exitotravel.com/referral_form?affiliate_id=1090&client=1. Just fill in your dates and destinations, including any additional notes about preferred carriers, class of service, possible stopovers, etc., and an agent will typically respond via email within a few hours. If you prefer to call, the number is 800-655-4053; be sure to tell them you are traveling with Adventures in Good Company.

Please note: Most of the international airlines are in-network for Exito, so they do not charge extra for their services (and often have access to discounted rates). When necessary, processing fees out-of-network carriers are minimal at around \$35-\$50 per ticket.

ACCOMMODATIONS

We'll spend five nights at the [William Black Lodge](#) in the Montreat Retreat Center. All rooms are clean, comfortable, and have en suite bathrooms. The lodge is known for its delicious, buffet-style meals; we will be eating all breakfasts and three out of five dinners there.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We recommend that you purchase a travel protection plan to help protect you and your travel investment against the unexpected. For your convenience, we offer travel protection through Travelex Insurance Services. For more information on the available plans or to enroll, visit [Travelex Insurance](#) or call 1-800-228-9792 and reference location number 06-0331.

Travelex Insurance Services, Inc CA Agency License #0D10209. All products listed are underwritten by, Berkshire Hathaway Specialty Insurance Company, NAIC #22276.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Cancellation charges reflect the many expenses Adventures in Good Company cannot recover if you cancel, even if you must do so due to illness, injury, or personal emergencies. These fees are not meant to be punitive. The charges made reflect the expenses Adventures in Good Company has incurred in administering your reservation and planning for your participation. We recognize that the majority of those who cancel their reservations do so out of necessity. Please note that we do not make any refunds for any unused portion of your trip, not arriving, arriving late, or leaving the trip early.

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