



POTOMAC APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

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Mr Edwin R. Page
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Dear Ed:

Scott Johnson has passed along to me his copy of a round-robin letter you sent out January 27; and by now you must have received a copy of my letter to Reese Lukei, sent January 22. I apologize for sending it by relay, but Craig Evans of the American Hiking Society, to whom I turned for information because his was the sponsoring organization, didn't seem to know your address.

The schedule outlined in your January 27 letter is markedly different from what Mr Lukei forecast in his December 15 letter. I do not doubt its accuracy: Jim Kern told me last evening it is about what he is currently forecasting. However, the slippage of more than a month -- ETA Damascus changed from March 1 to April 3 -- is bound to raise difficulties.

It seems likely the group will take another month to cover the 332 miles from Damascus to Rockfish Gap, arriving in our territory on or about May 8. This will put them in direct competition with the first wave of northbound long-distance hikers on the AT.

To the extent possible, we will of course be glad to accommodate the Hikanation members in the huts that we maintain in Shenandoah Park, but there are strict limits that must be observed. Maximum space in the huts is 11 persons per hut per night. In many cases your hikers are bound to find others already in residence when they arrive; they should therefore be prepared for back-country camping -- which means each member of the party should obtain a back-country camping permit from the National Park Service beforehand.

Trailside Shelters

There are seven huts, spaced at intervals of 8 to 20 miles, in Shenandoah Park. Their locations along the AT (miles from Rockfish Gap) and the nearest access from Skyline Drive (mileposts, north to south) are as follows:

	<u>AT Mileage</u>	<u>Skyline Drive Milepost</u>
Rockfish Gap	0.0	-
Blackrock Hut	20.0	87
Pinefield Hut	32.9	75
Hightop Hut	41.1	68.6
(Swift Run Gap entrance station)	44.3	66
Bearfence Hut	53.5	57
Rock Spring Hut	65.0	48
(Thornton Gap entrance station)	78.5	31.5
Pass Mountain Hut	79.9	31.5
Gravelly Springs Hut	93.1	17.5
Floyd Wayside (just north of Shenandoah Park boundary)	103 approx	10.5

A fee of \$1 per person per night is charged to those staying in the huts in Shenandoah Park; there is no fee for shelters north of the Park.

Shelters other than those specified are not to be used for overnight accommodations. Many of those shown on the maps have been removed (e.g. Sawmill Run, Riprap Shelter, Big Run); three are now restricted to use by trail maintenance crews (Ivy Creek, South River, Indian Run); others like the four "Byrds Nest" shelters are for day use only. Park Rangers regularly check these shelters; violators receive heavy fines.

The locked cabins which PATC maintains in the Park are not well adapted to the needs of the Hikanation group or other long-distance hikers, and should not be relied upon. Most accommodate a maximum of 12 persons, one (Range View) only 8. Instead of being open to all on a first-come, first-served basis, like the huts, they must be reserved in advance for the specific nights desired, and are generally booked solid weeks in advance.

Campgrounds and Lodges

A partial alternative to the hut system is the public accommodations maintained by Shenandoah Park and its concessionaire, the ARA Virginia Skyline Co., along Skyline Drive. From south to north these are as follows:

	<u>AT Mileage</u>	<u>Milepost</u>
Dundo group campground	23.0	83.5
Loft Mountain campground	26.9	79.3
Lewis Mountain campground	52.6	57.5
Big Meadows campground <u>a/</u>	61.4	51
Skyland <u>b/</u>	69.2	42
Panorama <u>c/</u>	78.5	31.
Mathews Arm campground <u>d/</u>	86.8	22

- a/ There is a lodge and restaurant as well as campground at Big Meadows.
- b/ Skyland has lodgings and a restaurant but no campground.
- c/ There is a restaurant but no overnight accommodations at Panorama. There is a shower at the gas station.
- d/ Elkwallow Wayside and access trail.

When Reese Lukei wrote me, the hikers were expected to pass through the Park in April. That might have made mass camping possible. Under the revised schedule, however, the group is likely to find the campgrounds full of spring campers. Much the same applies to the more elaborate facilities at the lodges at Lewis Mountain, Big Meadows and Skyland, which are almost always heavily booked in season.

I strongly recommend that the hikers plan to break up into small units as they go through the Park, and do not try to reassemble until they are well beyond it -- perhaps even as far as Harpers Ferry. Not only is there space for only a few persons in the shelters in the Park and elsewhere along the Trail, but even where a large assembly is feasible (as at Big Meadows), the result would necessarily be a delay as the last hikers waited for the leaders to get several days' march ahead before they started off again. Also, large groups congregating around trailside huts could cause irreparable damage, especially in wet weather.

(We had a fairly thorough discussion of this problem yesterday with Bob Jacobsen and other representatives of the Shenandoah Park, Bob Proudman of the AT Project Office, and Ruth Blackburn, ATC chairman.

(Bob Proudman will try to find an area fairly close to Harpers Ferry which the hikers can use for mass camping and as a staging area for the final push from Harpers Ferry to Washington. If he is successful, such a campsite would be a good place for the johnny-come-latelys to join the march on Washington.)

Shenandoah Park Camping Permits

These must be obtained by each hiker. They can be applied for ahead of time by writing to the Superintendent, Shenandoah National Park, Luray, VA 22835 (tel. (703) 999-2243). But since they should show specific dates, routes and places where it is intended to stay overnight, Hikanation members might be well advised to wait until they reach the Park or are close enough to gauge their pace accurately. Permits can be obtained from Rangers at the southern (or other) entrance station or from Ranger stations within the Park.

Logistic Support

None of the scattered letters I have seen dealing with Hikanation plans contains much information about their logistic support or needs. I have heard that they have a truck and a trailer accompanying them. This should be useful in the Park, for the AT runs close to Skyline Drive and crosses it frequently.

PATC does not have any vehicles to put at the disposal of the group, or to use in helping ferry them to and from trailheads.

Shenandoah Park to Harpers Ferry

Between Shenandoah Park and Harpers Ferry, a distance of about 50 miles, there are only three trailside shelters. One is the Tom Floyd Wayside already referred to, which is located just outside the northern boundary of the Park. The other two are Three Springs (24 miles, between Ashby Gap and Snickers Gap), and Keys Gap Shelter, at 41.5 miles, just south of Route 9 on the Virginia-West Virginia border. Two other shelters shown on the map, Mosby Shelter (2.5 miles) and Wilson Gap Shelter (34 miles), have been destroyed.

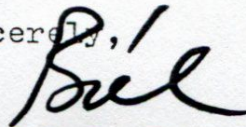
Food and other supplies can be obtained at Linden (5.5 miles, in Manassas Gap) and Bluemont (Snickers Gap, 28.5 miles).

Harpers Ferry and Beyond

From Harpers Ferry onward, there should be no difficulty in the way of a mass hike. Tom Floyd and Ed Garvey will, I am sure, give you good advice on all this. The C+O Canal towpath is sufficiently hardened to withstand a crowd, and mass hikes have been a regular event ever since Justice Douglas' first end-to-ender more than 20 years ago.

Good luck with the hike. If it would serve any useful purpose, I would be glad to be on hand at Rockfish Gap when the first hikers come through. However, I expect that they are too independent-minded to want much pampering. In any case, try to keep Shenandoah Park Superintendent Bob Jacobsen and me informed of the hikers' precise arrival time as soon as you can get a fix on it. You would also be well advised to inform John Miller (293 Norfolk Drive, Warrenton, VA 22186, tel. 703/347-7990) about your plans. John is head of our Appalachian Trail Patrol and also supervises the hut system within Shenandoah Park. He is thus the nearest thing we have to an operational "key man" for the Rockfish Gap/Harpers Ferry section.

Sincerely,



William E. Hutchinson
President

301/926-0272

Copies:

ATC : Ruth Blackburn
Larry VanMeter
ATPO : Dave Richie
Bob Proudman
SNP : Bob Jacobsen
Bill Loftis
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Craig Evans
Reese Lukei
Tom Floyd
Ed Garvey
PATC : Bob Davis
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