

# 240316 BRA Creeper Lone Bike Trail Damascus Virginia

Located in the very southwest corner of the state of Virginia is a unique biking experience. The town of Damascus Virginia would be unknown today if it were not for this unique bike trail. In fact, it is a bike trail that is downhill for 17 miles.



Not surprisingly the town exists primarily to serve the recreational, biking tourist. There are half a dozen or more bike shops in town. Adventure Damascus is the vendor that we have used for our last two trips.



The biking centers are well stocked with rental bikes, most are standard cruiser models, with multiple change gear set up. You can rent bikes with helmets and any other accessories you would want. For families with small children you can even rent Burley buggers, a type of bike trailer you can pull behind the bike.



Damascus Virginia caters to the outdoor tourist. There are plenty of activities in this area besides biking, but it is mainly the bike trail which brings the majority of tourist to town.



Once you rent a bike and are set up, then they will assign you to different van and trailer drivers depending on the package you purchased. Your car will be left at the bike rental facility, and the trailer will take you upcountry to where you will start your

tour.



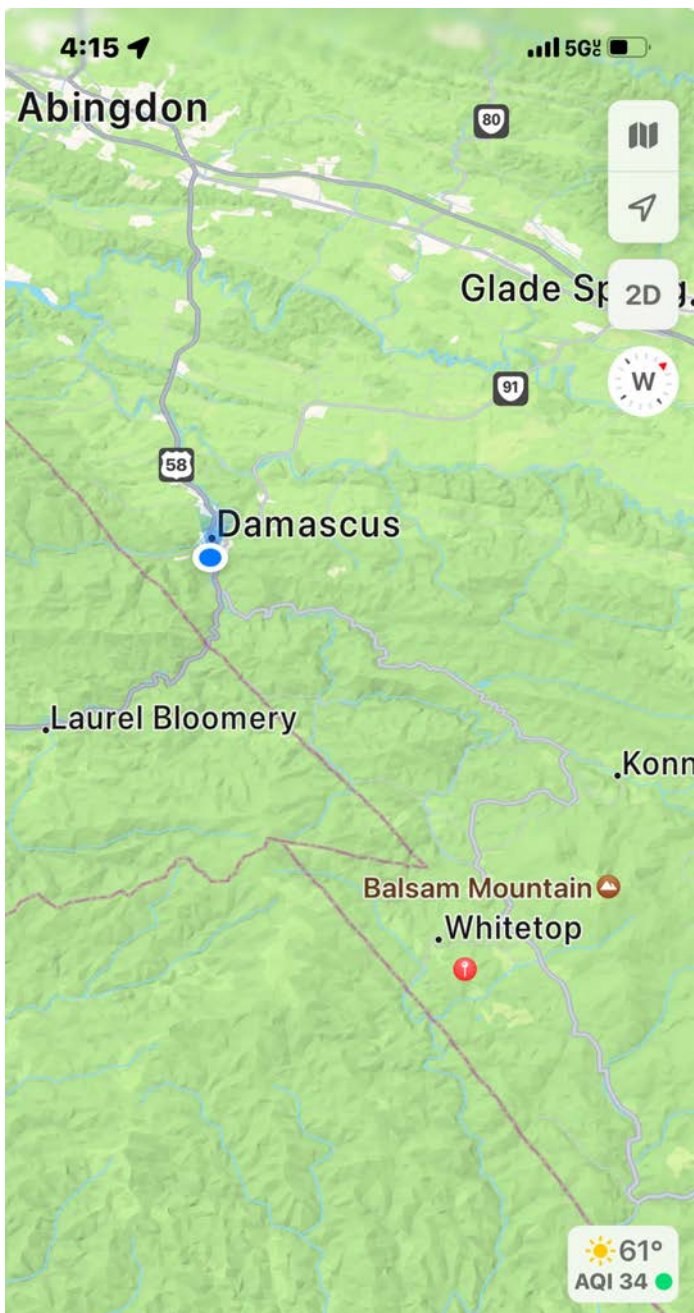
There are three drop off locations and a color tag will be issued to you depending on how far up the trail you want to be taken. You can ride as little as 6 miles or as much as 17 miles depending on your desires or timeframe.



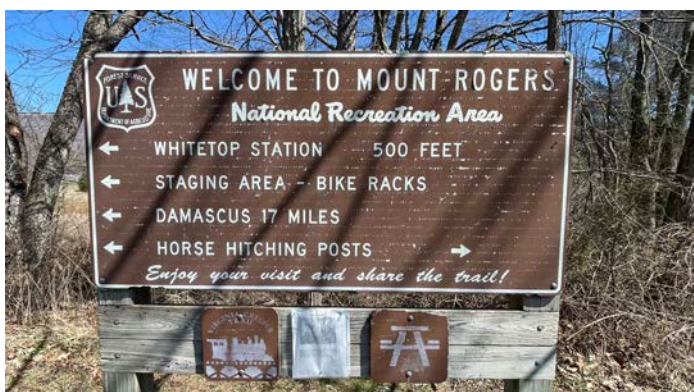
The full 17 miles can easily be completed within three hours. The travel to the 17 mile drop off point is a leisurely ride through backcountry and crosses thru Mount Rogers, national recreation area.

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The farthest you can ride is from Whitetop Mountain back to Damascus. This is a total of 17 miles. To reach Whitetop from Damascus with the van and trailer takes approximately 45 minutes. It is a 25 mile drive to reach this location because of the winding roads.



The drop off location is a well organized affair. The different vendors will pull up and

offload their bikes to the renters. This was a beautiful day and we had at least three or four vendors arrive simultaneously. In total there must have been close to 100 or more bikers.



There are upgraded, developed stops on the way down hill. Each of these have clean and well-maintained bathrooms. Two formal stops are available one at Whitetop and the other at Green Cove. Both of these were train stations at one time. At Taylors Valley you will find a small community that can also provide services. How old is communities were once serviced by the Creeper train line.



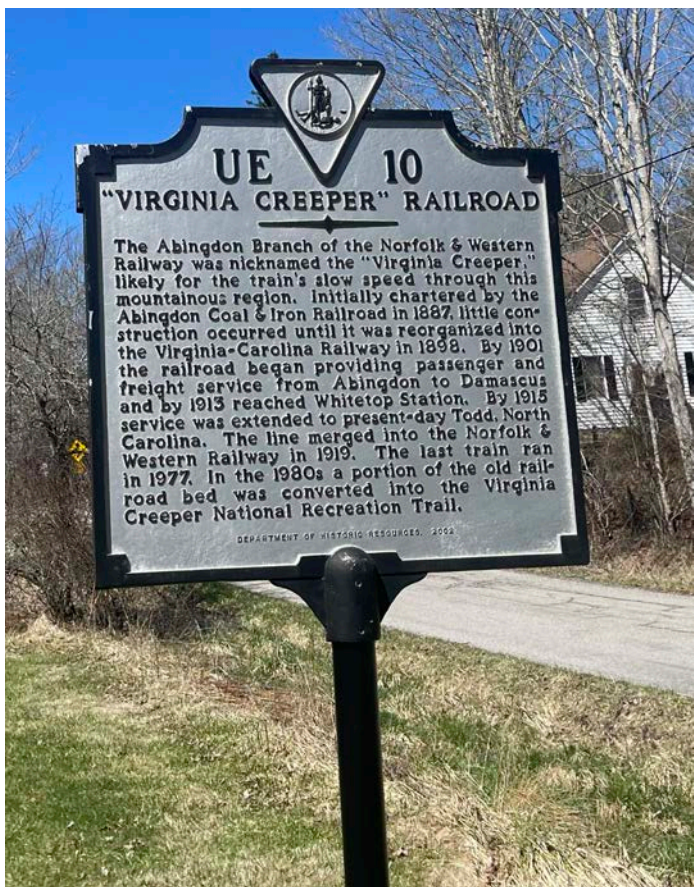
In fact, this is the secret and beauty of this bike trail. The creeper bike trail runs along what used to be called the Creeper train rail line. They call it the creeper line because astonishingly it is downhill for 17 miles. Of course, back in the day for trains this meant that they had to go uphill the same distance. So at times the train would barely creep along. Thus the name stuck.

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For bikers of course this is a dream come true (as long as you're going downhill). In fact, I do not know of many or any other bike trail that you can go on which is downhill for 17 continuous miles. If you think about it as long as you can ride a bike you can ride this trail. Pretty unique.



Amazingly as the historical placard records, the last train ran in 1977. And it was only in 1980 that the organizers saw the value of this line along this stretch of mountain. The railway line, instead of being cut up and sold off to the various land owners that abutted the line, was maintained. Along this rail line path we now have the national historic creeper line recreational area. How cool is that?



And it is a stunning, beautiful bike ride. This was a spectacular crisp spring day. The temperature was in the low 60s and the sun was bright with a brilliant blue sky. According to our bike rental business staff, this was the first good clear spring day of the season. We were very lucky.



You ride along what used to be the bed of the railroad track. The railway sleepers and rails have long been removed. There are many Railroad bridges and embankments that span the gulches and low areas. These have now all been converted to bike bridges and paths.



Someone in our van as we were going to the top of the trail made a joke that you only have to touch your petals twice on the way downhill. I think he was wrong. You don't have to touch your petals at all. Well, at



least for the majority of the upper trail.



On your way down, you will go past quaint historic railway depots. These served the local communities until 1977. It's great to see that this historical preservation is followed.



At the Green Cove rail station the railroad track was preserved for a small section. This is the only part of the original railroad that remains. The rest of the railroad was removed for the creation of the bike trail.



The small towns along the way are as pretty as you would expect. This part of Virginia is classic in its quaintness. The homes are all well preserved, and the area is spotless in its beauty.

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Along the bike trail there are now three restaurant and cafés where you can stop (one is shown here). This is of course a developing service that will only grow as time proceeds. It's March and the start of the tourist season in this area. Two of the three locations were still closed, but will be open during the summer season.



Enjoy the ride on the way down. You can imagine sitting in a rail car as you are gliding down the trail on your bike. You can see the beauty of the countryside. Many of the older barns and the homes are still there. Very picturesque.



You wonder sometimes why these old buildings are not just torn down. But I think they are heirlooms in a way for the families that own them. I am sure each one of them has its own unique story. Who knows what

family members lived there? But I am sure the individual owners have long tales to tell of each structure.



As if the 17 miles of a idyllic bike trail and the scenery were not enough, the railroad line follows a stream. This stream meanders back-and-forth along the entire trail. The sound of the water over the rapids and the picturesque scenes you can see of the stream as you glide down the path, make for a perfect combination.



There are dozens of bridges that you have to pass as you go down the bike trail. They are all well maintained. The only alert you need to have is at each end. Erosion will have lowered the bike trail sometimes up to 6 inches from the edge of the bridge. There is either a sudden drop or a bump as you go up on the bridge deck planks. But these low spots are easy to succumb.

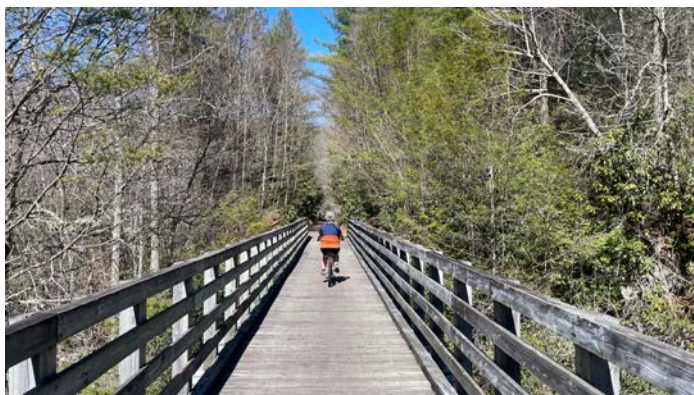




Along the trail, you see more than one instance of trout fishing. The stream is in full flow at this time, and the rapids crash along the path of water. This makes for an ideal place to fish for trout.



You can really lose yourself in this environment, simply gliding along as the wind rushes past your helmet. You can't help but look up at the sky and tree line only to suddenly remember you need to also pay attention to your bike and its route down the path. It's a great balancing act and a fantastic way to relax on a beautiful spring day.



The trail is marked all along the path. You will come to many road crossings, and the other diversions. The trail is established, and marked by this iconic state signage.



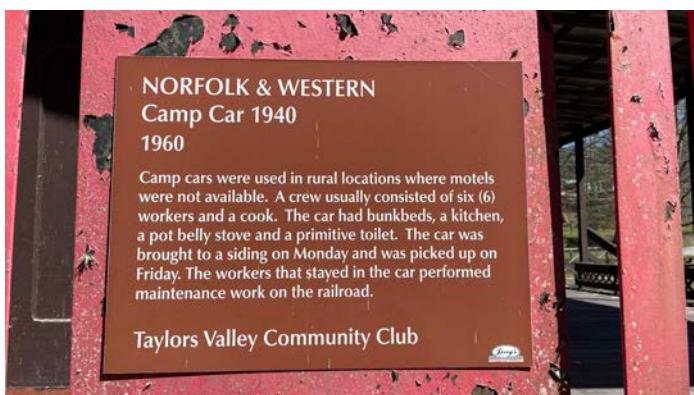
It's great to stop on the way down. You can't count the number of places that you will want to pause and look. There are also lookouts that are well marked that you can walk to and observe the classic Appalachian scenery.







At Taylor's Valley there is a community center which is constructed from an older caboose. In fact, as the signage states, this was a old camp car. They served as traveling hotels in their day. This was a great place to have a picnic, soak up the sun rest, and then prepare for the remaining trip.

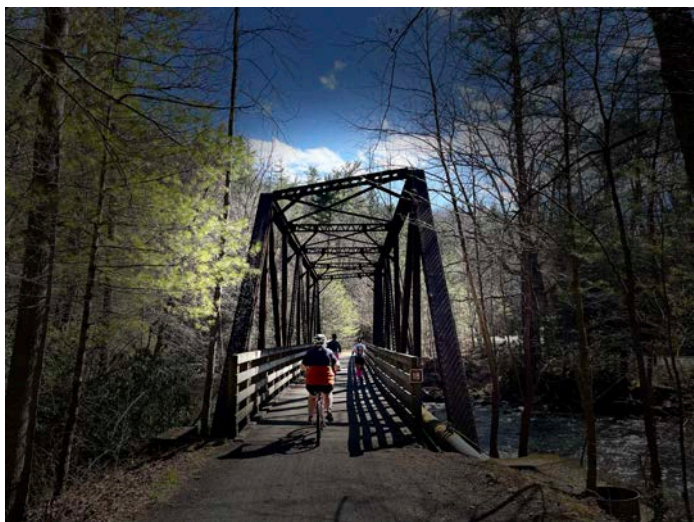


I am not sure that anyone was really tired from riding for 17 miles. The vast majority of the trail is downhill and the slope is 3-5% so there is very little strenuous paddling to do.

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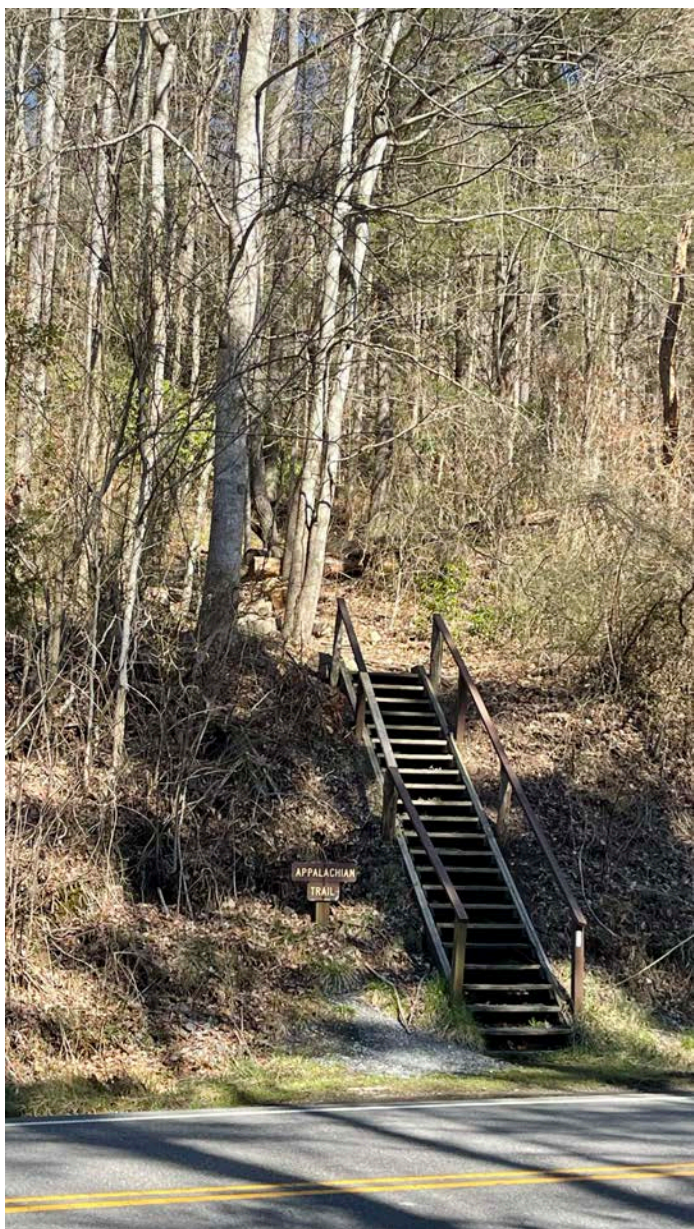


This is one of the remaining iconic iron railroad bridges. There are not many of these left, but this bridge was a beauty. Most of the bike path bridges have been built on top of the old bridge piers and abutments.



At least twice, the bike path crossed the Appalachian trail. You really begin to understand how pristine and remote this area is. You are at the top of the Appalachian mountain chain and the bike path cuts through this area.

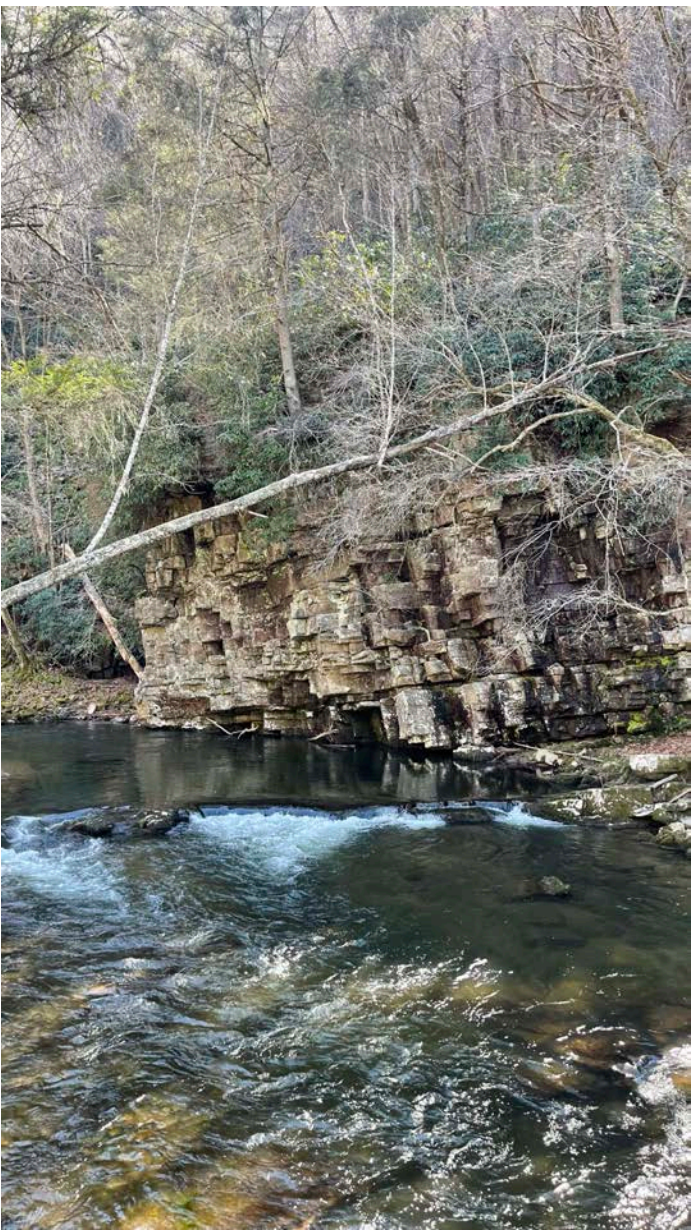




This is our second time back to the creeper Trail. I would come back a third time. The next trip would ideally be in the middle of the tourist season.

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Next trip I would like to stop and walk off trail to some of the lookout posts. I would also like to stop and have a snack or coffee at one of the cafe locations.



It's sad that any of these trips you always see things that you regret not stopping and experiencing. But maybe that's the beauty of a place that calls for you to return for a second and maybe third time.

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**It's nice when you can visit a place twice and still want to come back. The creeper Trail is a unique place. There are not many locations where you can ride a bicycle for almost 20 miles and not pedal hard, even once. Enjoy.**



**Very peaceful. Just a great time in the great outdoors. You really should do this trail if you ever get close to this part of the US. Well worth your time.**



**Keep smiling!**