

Appalachian Trail

National Scenic Trail/ Maine to Georgia
National Park Service/U.S. Department of the Interior

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is a public footpath across 2,144 miles of Appalachian Mountain ridgelines from Maine to Georgia. Roads that cross it for all but its northernmost 100 miles give ready access. The Trail is protected along more than 96 percent of its course by federal or state ownership of the land itself or by rights-of-way. It was designed, constructed, and marked in the 1920s and 1930s by volunteer hiking clubs joined together by the Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC). Formed in 1925 and now a nonprofit organization based in Harpers Ferry, W. Va., the ATC had the National Park Service, Forest Service, states, and local communities as active partners in the trail project from the beginning. The Forest Service and states acquired much of its land and administer 850 and 420 trail miles, respectively. A "super trail" was much talked about in turn-of-the-century hiking circles of New England. "The A.T." evolved from the 1921 proposals of Massachusetts regional planner Benton MacKaye to preserve the Appalachian crests as an accessible, multipurpose wilderness belt—a retreat from Eastern

urban life. (Two-thirds of the Nation's population lives within 550 miles of it.) The old clubs that united behind MacKaye, plus the new clubs formed specifically to advance the A.T. idea, concentrated on the hiking aspects of his vision, under the leadership of Myron H. Avery, ATC chairman from 1931 to 1952. The clubs, the two federal agencies, states, and the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps combined forces to open a continuous trail by August 1937. Hurricanes, highway construction, and demands of World War II undid those efforts until 1951 saw all sections finally relocated, opened, and marked for hikers and nature lovers. The 1968 National Trails System Act made the A.T. a linear national park and authorized funds to surround the entire route with public lands, either federal or state, protected from incompatible uses. The goal is to maintain the entire Trail environment as a place for everyone to hike, backpack, or otherwise enjoy the Appalachian mountains and wildlands, while at the same time conserving the natural, scenic, historical, and cultural resources of this one-of-a-kind park.

Cover photo by Dr. James Hank Horak

The Appalachian Trail by States

A Footpath in Nature

From Maine's Katahdin to Georgia's Springer Mountain, this footpath winds through the scenic, wooded, pastoral, wild, and culturally resonant lands of the Appalachian Mountains. The Appalachian Trail is primarily used for walks and day hikes by all manner of nature enthusiasts from birders to wildflower photographers. Backpackers make weekend escapes to it from heavily urbanized areas. The ancient, worn-down, and forested Appalachians stretch from Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula in Canada to Georgia's northern mountains. Along their backbones, arctic plants—paper birch and black spruce—penetrate deeply into southern ecosystems.

Maine In its 275 miles across Maine, the Trail, marked throughout with vertical white-paint blazes, passes through an extensive wilderness at a great distance from towns and cities. The Katahdin region at the northern terminus is outstanding. The Trail in Maine may be roughly divided into three segments: 1. The 120-mile eastern segment from Katahdin to Monson is characterized by disconnected mountains, lakes, ponds, streams, and pleasing forest growth. Easy to

travel, it is the most isolated except at the terminus. 2. The second segment, from Blanchard to Mt. Bigelow, is of historic interest. The first part involves more exertion, but the remainder affords the easiest travel in Maine. 3. The western segment is an area of rugged, steep, 4,000-foot mountains with many ascents and descents. Opportunities for canoeing and swimming are features of the Trail in Maine.

New Hampshire Much frequented and well known, the White Mountain region is the main feature of the Trail in New Hampshire. Trails of the Appalachian Mountain Club are followed for the most part. Much of the trail is above timberline, where temperatures may change suddenly. A trip here requires intelligent planning and you

should allow ample time. The connecting link between the Green and White mountains, the Dartmouth Outing Club section of the Trail, passes through broken terrain of alternating mountains and valleys east of the Connecticut River.

Vermont West of the Connecticut River to the Green Mountains, the route is through high, rugged country of abandoned and overgrown farmlands and woodlands. From Sherburne Pass south, the Trail follows the

lower 101.3 miles of the Green Mountain Club's famed Long Trail along the crest of the Green Mountains.

Massachusetts The Trail here leads through a series of wooded areas and valleys in the Berkshire Hills. Mts. Greylock

and Everett are outstanding Trail features in Massachusetts.

Connecticut The route through Connecticut meanders among the worn-down remnants of a much loftier mountain range and

presents greatly varied scenery. Main features are the Housatonic Valley and the Taconic Range.

May 8—"Reflection on my A.T. experience" Way back in May 1978, I began my first-ever A.T. backpacking trip at Delaware Water Gap, heading north in a pouring rain. Five cold wet days later, I limped off the Trail near Greenwood Lake, N.Y., aching and discouraged. But something about the A.T. kept luring me back, and now—9 long years later—I have just completed the entire A.T.! The Trail has given me some of the best experiences of my life. I have enjoyed some spectacular views, met many really great people, had a few close animal encounters, and saw a much of the beauty of nature. Even though my long-awaited goal of completing the A.T.

is now reached, I will return. The A.T. has brought me riches that no amount of money could ever buy. Many thanks to the ATC, to all the clubs and individuals who maintain the Trail, and to everyone who has been a part of my A.T. experience.

—M.B., A.T. 1987-87



Frank Logue



National Scenic Trails System

Commercial-development threats to the Appalachian Trail and concern for outdoor recreation opportunities prompted Congress to pass the National Trails System Act in 1968. The National Trails System now includes 8 national scenic trails and 8 national historic trails (not shown here). Generally, the scenic trails are hiking trails and historic trails are roads. Many are far from complete. National Recreation Trails, also in the system, are named trails within states and are managed locally.

National Scenic Trails and mileages: (1) Appalachian Trail, 2,100; (2) Pacific Crest Trail, 2,600; (3) Continental Divide Trail, 3,100; (4) North Country Trail, 3,200; (5) Ice Age Trail, 1,000; (6) Potomac Heritage Trail, 700; (7) Natchez Trace Trail, 700; and (8) Florida Trail, 1,300. **National Historic Trails and mileages:** Iditarod Trail, 2,000; Oregon Trail, 2,000; Lewis and Clark Trail, 3,700; Mormon Pioneer Trail, 1,300; Overmountain Victory Trail, 270; Cherokee Trail of Tears, 800; Nez Percé Trail, 1,170; and Santa Fe Trail, 780.

A footbridge takes hikers over this stream west of the Taconic Parkway in New York. Mike Warren

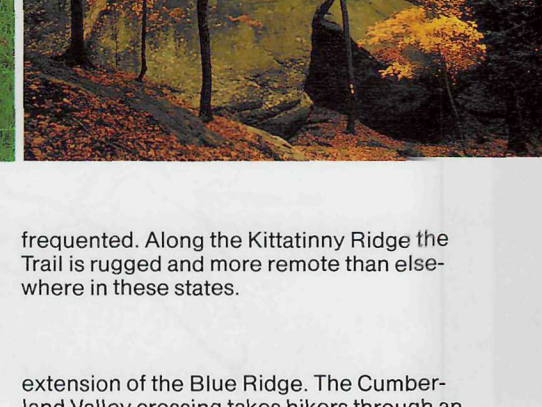
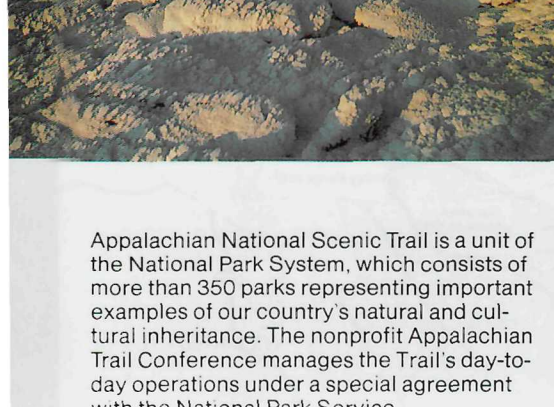
Below: Winter can come early and stay late in New Hampshire's Presidential Range. Albie Pokrbc

Catawba rhododendron brighten spring hikes in the Trail's southern reaches. Mike Warren

Below: Fresh fruit! A hiker picks wild strawberries at roadside in Vermont. Allen de Hart

Hikers enjoy moments of reverie on Charles Bunion in the Great Smoky Mountains. V. C. Chew

Below: Fall foliage in New York frames a Trail rock formation called the lemon squeezer. Mike Warren



Appalachian National Scenic Trail is a unit of the National Park System, which consists of more than 350 parks representing important examples of our country's natural and cultural inheritance. The nonprofit Appalachian Trail Conference manages the Trail's day-to-day operations under a special agreement with the National Park Service.

New York and New Jersey From Connecticut to the Kittatinny Ridge in New Jersey, the Trail's terrain is less wild than to the north. Palisades Interstate Park is much-

frequented. Along the Kittatinny Ridge the Trail is rugged and more remote than elsewhere in these states.

Pennsylvania As far west as the Susquehanna River, the Trail in Pennsylvania follows the rim of the east range of the Alleghenies. Beyond the Susquehanna, after some 10 miles, it crosses the Cumberland Valley and follows the northernmost

extension of the Blue Ridge. The Cumberland Valley crossing takes hikers through an interesting cultivated region.

Treat Ethics
Treat the land the Trail crosses and its neighbors with respect and care. Keep to the Trail's defined footway: shortcuts cause erosion, damage endangered plants, confuse other hikers, and may violate property rights. Use log walkways, steps, rock treadway, and other protective trail construction. Do not walk—or camp—on balds or fragile tundra vegetation in areas above treeline. Ask for information and water from homes along the Trail only when they are really needed. Respect the privacy of Trail neighbors: some get more hiker-visitors than they enjoy. Travel in groups of 10 or fewer if backpacking; 25 or fewer on day trips. Dispose of human waste at least 50 feet from the Trail and 200 feet from water. Dig a shallow hole and cover it afterwards. Do not wash in lakes or streams. Use a camping stove instead of building fires. Leave your campsite cleaner than you found it. By leaving little or no trace, your presence, you help preserve the Trail for future enjoyment. And remember: millions of hours have been donated by volunteers to build and maintain the Trail, most at their own expense.

"Thru-Hiker's Lament"
Some days I get lost in thinking
while my legs walk steadily on.
Other times I soar with my spirit
and my feet quietly tag along.
But today all I am is a body
hauling this big heavy pack.
And although I keep trying
there just ain't no denying
that 40 pounds sit on my back!
Walk on, A Cosmic Yankee



Frank Logue

Maryland The 40 miles of Trail in Maryland are characterized by a 38-mile walk along the ridge crest of South Mountain. This offers a good choice for a three- or four-day trip with good views that is never too far

from towns and highways. The Trail joins the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal towpath at the Potomac River.

West Virginia The Trail crosses the Potomac River into West Virginia at Harpers Ferry on a new footbridge built onto a railroad bridge. ATC headquarters is at the corner of Washington and Jackson Streets, uphill from Harpers Ferry National Histori-

cal Park. The Trail soon leaves West Virginia across the Shenandoah River opposite Harpers Ferry. It will briefly touch this state again near Pearisburg, Va.

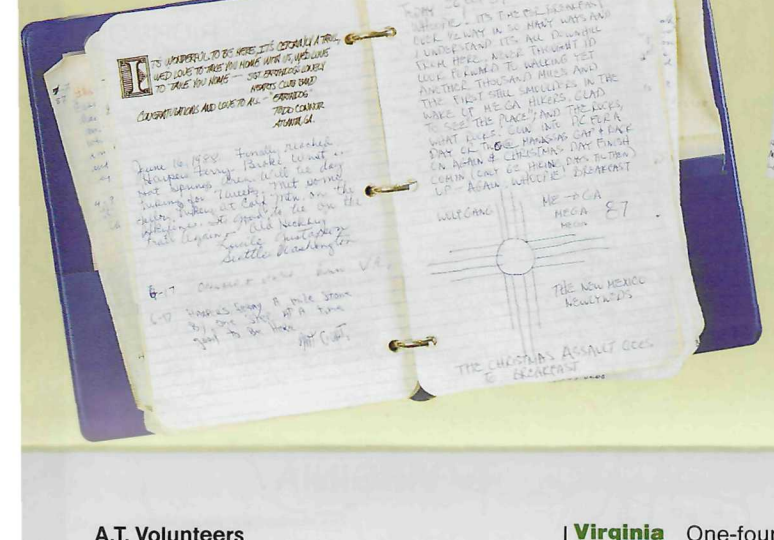
A.T. thru-hikers stop at ATC headquarters in Harpers Ferry, W. Va., to write in the A.T. log book (below), to have their picture taken (right), and just to say they did. Most thru-hikers have sought advice from here before they took the first of the 5,000 steps between Georgia's Springer Mountain and

Maine's Katahdin. They hope to be back in touch before long to tell ATC their completed the entire Trail—and that they now qualify as 2,000-milers. Two excerpts from the log book—whose entries range from good trail gossip to lucid wilderness philosophy—appear above.

ATC Headquarters at Harpers Ferry Appalachian Trail Conference headquarters is located in Harpers Ferry, W. Va., near the Trail's halfway point. From here, the ATC coordinates maintenance of the Trail through 31 affiliated clubs and 4 ATC field offices. At headquarters you can get Trail and ATC membership information and purchase guidebooks, maps, and other publications

about the Trail and its uses. Ask about volunteering, too!

Appalachian Trail Project Office The Appalachian Trail Project Office of the National Park Service is also located in Harpers Ferry. ATPO is responsible for the Trail's overall administration and oversees its operations and land acquisition program.



Who could hike 4 to 6 miles a day? Not a nickname? From the A.T. log book: Tenderfoot, The Dynamic Duo, The

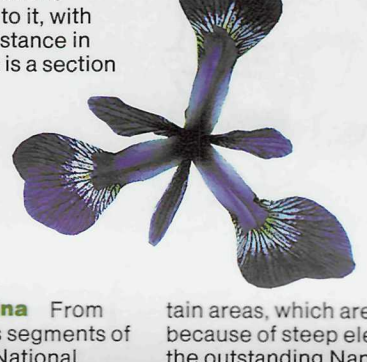
Happy Feet, Hungry Dave, Stork, and Jumpstart, Willie from WISCO, The Umbrella Lady, The Jersey Devil, The Crusin' Canadian,

The Lost Wave, and need a permit to walk the A.T. However, overnight camping permits are necessary in Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains national parks and parts of the White Mountain National Forest. For permit and camping regulations information write to: Shenandoah National Park, Luray, VA 22835; Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Gatlinburg, TN 37733; and White Mountain National Forest, P.O. Box 638, Laconia, NH 22835.

A.T. Volunteers
Describing the pivotal role of volunteers, former ATC Chairman Myron H. Avery wrote that the Trail might well have been called "the Anonymous Trail." Volunteers, he wrote, "have asked for no return nor recognition nor reward. They have contributed to the project simply by reason of the pleasure found in trail-making and in the realization that they were, perhaps, creating something which would be a distinct contribution to the American recreational system and the training of the American people." Today's volunteers monitor and maintain the Trail and its shelters and help with day-to-day operations at headquarters. Most volunteers are associated with one of the 31 ATC-member organizations—hiking, mountain, and outdoor clubs—that have been assigned responsibility for specific sections of the Trail. For information about volunteering on the Trail, write or call Appalachian Trail Conference, P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425, (304) 635-6331.

Virginia One-fourth of the Appalachian Trail lies in Virginia. Shenandoah National Park has 100 miles of graded Appalachian Trail and many side trails. The proximity of Skyline Drive—the trail crosses it 32 times—and connecting links offer endless varieties of trips never too far from a potential base of supplies. Views here are extraordinary. The trail continues roughly parallel to but generally many miles removed from the Blue Ridge Parkway. It crosses the Parkway two times in one 70-mile stretch. It is then close to it, with several crossings, for a short distance in Jefferson National Forest. This is a section

of mature timber and wilderness with high summits, more impressive, perhaps, than any region to the north. From here the Trail route crosses west of the Shenandoah Valley. The portion in southwest Virginia affords a splendid wilderness trip. In both Jefferson and George Washington National Forests, the floral displays in June and July of rhododendron and azalea are outstanding.

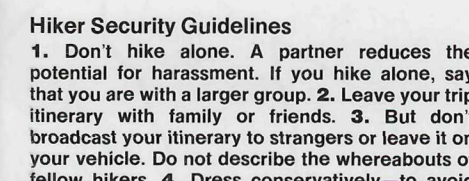
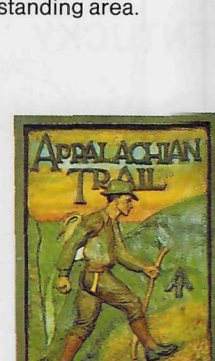


Blue flag (wild iris) Mike Warren

Tennessee and North Carolina From Damascus, Va., the Trail follows segments of mountain ranges in Cherokee National Forest to the North Carolina-Tennessee line above the famous Roan Mountain, noted for its rhododendron gardens and far-ranging views. From here along the two states' boundary and beyond through Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina, the Trail provides a most rewarding introduction to the majesty of the southern Appalachians. Great Smoky Mountains National Park, with 70 crest-line Trail miles, is a most primitive section and the highest of the entire route. Beyond the Great Smokies comes the Yellow Creek-Wauchechea-Cheocha Moun-

tain areas, which are difficult to traverse because of steep elevation changes. Next is the outstanding Nantahala section, with 4,000-foot gaps and 5,000-foot peaks, but most rewarding in its views, culminating in Standing Indian, the "Grandstand of the Southern Appalachians." The variety of forest growth and the beauty of the flowering shrubs, as well as the spectacular views, make the entire Trail from the Virginia line a most outstanding area.

Cast in metal, this 50-pound plaque, measuring 2 feet by 4 feet, was never mounted on the Trail. It was designed by one of the original builders of the Trail in the Allegheny, Pa., area. Another plaque mounted at the Georgia terminus of the Trail at Springer Mountain is much photographed by thru-hikers, either aspiring or finishing.



AT shelters are spaced roughly a day's hike apart along the Trail for the convenience of overnight hikers. Sam Abell/National Geographic Society

Hiker Security Guidelines

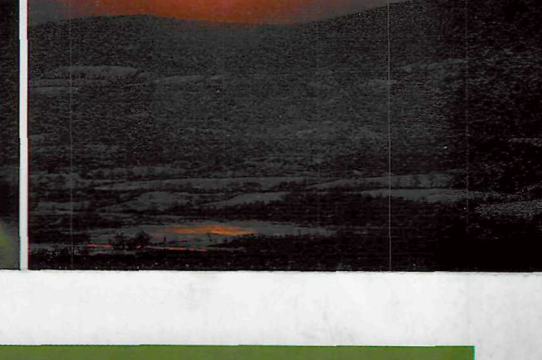
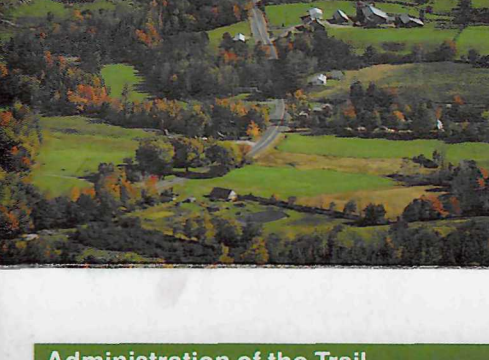
1. Don't hike alone. A partner reduces the potential for harassment. If you hike alone, say that you are with a larger group. 2. Leave your trip itinerary with family or friends. 3. But don't broadcast your itinerary to strangers or leave it on your vehicle. 4. Describe the whereabouts of your hiker. 5. Dress conservatively—to avoid unwelcome attention. 6. Avoid provocation. 7. Be cautious with strangers. 8. Camp away from roads. Harassment is most likely in areas accessible to motor vehicles. 9. Don't carry firearms. 10. Don't leave your pack unattended. Don't leave cash, cameras, or expensive camping equipment in cars parked at remote trailheads. 11. If you witness or are the victim of harassment, promptly report the incident to local law enforcement authorities and to the ATC so that steps can be taken to prevent recurrence.

A cardinal flower adorns Garden Mountain in Virginia. Spring flowers persist at higher Trail.

elevations after spring has vanished in the lowlands. Mike Warren

Hikers often miss camouflaged trailside critters, such as this stock-still rabbit. Gerald Eastwood

Below: Sunset reflects off a frozen Vernon Valley landscape below the Trail in New Jersey. Mike Warren



Administration of the Trail

The National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, has overall responsibility for the Trail through its Appalachian Trail Project Office. Actual operations affecting use of the Trail are shared responsibilities of the National Park Service, the Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, various agencies in the 14 states through which it passes, the Appalachian Trail Conference, and dozens of hiking organizations and clubs. Private citizens had built and maintained the Trail since its beginnings and the principle of cooperative management had linked private clubs, federal agencies, and

state governments together for 60 years. Recognizing this, the National Park Service in 1984 delegated to the ATC the day-to-day responsibility for managing the lands through which the Trail is routed. The nonprofit ATC, formed in 1925, also supports a private land trust to acquire and protect additional land adjacent to the publicly purchased trail corridor. The ATC does all this from four field offices and its headquarters in Harpers Ferry, W. Va.

Publications. The ATC is the central clearinghouse for information on the Appalachian Trail. It distributes and publishes guidebooks

and maps covering every section of the Trail, manuals to assist volunteers in carrying out trail design and maintenance, educational brochures for trail users, a monthly newsletter for trail workers, and a general interest magazine, the Appalachian Trailway News.

For information and a list of publications write to: Appalachian Trail Conference, P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425-0807, or telephone (304) 635-6331.

Trail Markers The Appalachian Trail is marked with 2-inch by 6-inch vertical white paint blazes. A double blaze—one above the other—is placed before turns, junctions, or other areas that require that hikers be alert. Blue blazes mark A.T. side trails. Usually, these lead to shelters, water supplies, or special view-points.

Motor Vehicles, Horses, and Dogs Motor vehicles are illegal on all sections of the Trail. Horses are prohibited except where expressly permitted. Dogs are prohibited in Great Smoky Mountains National Park and must be leashed in Shenandoah National Park. Dogs are best left at home. If you take one, keep it on a leash. Dogs can get you into trouble with bears and other hikers.

Safety Walk with at least one companion. If a mishap occurs, one of you can go for help. Poisonous snakes are not common along the Trail and avoid human contact if they can. Black bears in search of food may bother hikers, particularly in Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountain na-

Permits You do not need a permit to walk the A.T. However, overnight camping permits are necessary in Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains national parks and parts of the White Mountain National Forest. For permit and camping regulations information write to: Shenandoah National Park, Luray, VA 22835; Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Gatlinburg, TN 37733; and White Mountain National Forest, P.O. Box 638, Laconia, NH 22835.

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