

Appalachian Trail

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



National Scenic Trail
Maine to Georgia



The trail atop Moxie Bald in Maine offers spectacular views.
©ALEXANDRA C. DALEY-CLARK

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail (A.T.) is a public footpath that follows more than 2,100 miles of Appalachian Mountain ridgelines between Maine and Georgia. Roads that cross it at varying intervals give ready access. The Trail is protected along more than 99 percent of its course by federal or state ownership or rights-of-way. It was designed, constructed, and marked in the 1920s and 1930s by volunteer hiking clubs brought together by the volunteer-based, nonprofit Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). Formed in 1925 and based in Harpers Ferry, W. Va., ATC works in partnership with the National Park Service (NPS), USDA Forest Service, states, and local communities.

A Footpath in Nature

Between Maine's Mount Katahdin (northern terminus) and Georgia's Springer Mountain (southern terminus), this footpath winds through the scenic, wooded, pastoral, wild, and culturally resonant lands of the Appalachian Mountains. The Appalachians—ancient, worn-down, and forested—stretch from Québec's Gaspé Peninsula in Canada to Alabama's northern mountains. The Appalachian Trail is used for walks and day hikes by all manner of nature enthusiasts, from birders to wildflower photographers. Backpackers make weekend escapes from urbanized areas or take long-distance "thru-hikes" for months at a time.



National Trails System

Threats of commercial development and concern for recreational opportunities prompted Congress to pass the National Trails System Act in 1968. The National Trails System now includes eight national historic trails and more than 900 national recreation trails (not shown here).

National Scenic Trails and approximate mileages: (1) Appalachian Trail, 2,170; (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.

For more information about the National Trails System and a list of all national and historic trails visit: www.nps.gov/nts.



White blazes mark the route of the 2,170-mile Appalachian Trail (top).
©NPS/DAVID RUSSELL



Thomas Knob shelter near Mount Rogers, Va. (above).
©NPS



Rattlesnake
©NPS/JOHN PALMER

Leave No Trace

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy, in partnership with Leave No Trace, asks you to help take care of the Appalachian Trail and the wild country it passes through. Please do your part by following the Leave No Trace principles of low-impact use while in the backcountry:

1. Plan ahead and prepare.
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
3. Dispose of waste properly.
4. Leave what you find.
5. Minimize campfire impacts.
6. Respect wildlife.
7. Be considerate of other visitors.

Please travel in groups of 10 or fewer if backpacking; 25 or fewer on day trips. By practicing Leave No Trace you help preserve the Trail for future enjoyment. Remember: millions of hours have been donated by volunteers to build and maintain the Trail. To learn more about Leave No Trace visit: www.lnt.org.

A.T. thru-hikers stop at ATC headquarters in Harpers Ferry, W.Va., to write in the log book (below) and to have pictures taken (right). Most thru-hikers sought advice from ATC before they took the first of

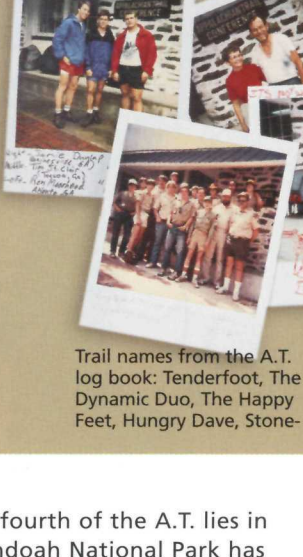
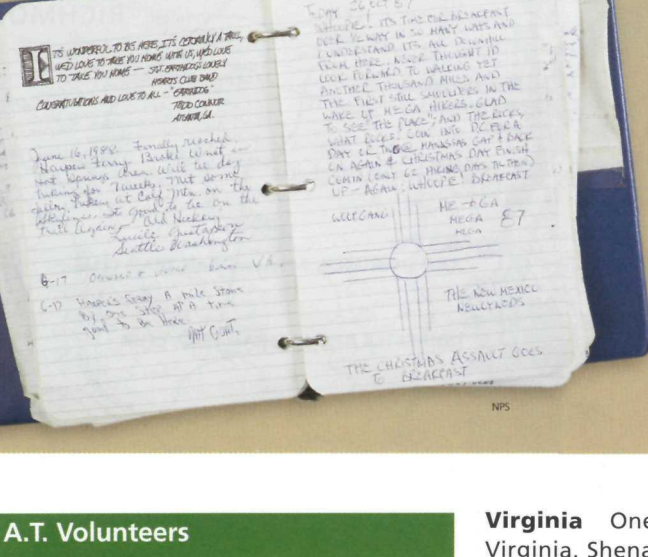
the five million steps between Georgia's Springer Mountain and Maine's Mount Katahdin. They hope to be back in touch soon to report completing the entire Trail—and that they now

qualify as 2,000 milers. Excerpts from the log book range from good trail gossip to lucid wilderness philosophy.

Headquarters is near the Trail's halfway point. From here, ATC coordinates maintenance of the Trail through 30 affiliated clubs and four ATC field offices. At headquarters you

can get Trail and ATC membership information and buy guidebooks, maps, and other publications. Ask about volunteering too!

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



Trail names from the A.T. log book: Tenderfoot, The Dynamic Duo, The Happy Feet, Hungry Dave, Stone-

fish Jumpstart, Willie from WISCO, The Umbrella Lady, The Jersey Devil, The Crusin' Canadian, The

Lost Wave, and Dee Bloody Gimping Marshmallow Monster Hiker.

A.T. Volunteers

Chairman Avery wrote "[they]... 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 volunteers monitor and maintain the Trail and its shelters and help with operations at headquarters. Become an Appalachian Trail volunteer! Opportunities range from one-day worktrips to week-long trail crews. Contact: Appalachian Trail Conservancy P.O. Box 807 Harpers Ferry, WV 25425 304-535-6331 www.appalachiantrail.org



Volunteers repair a section of trail in Maryland.
©NPS

Hiker Security Guidelines

- Don't hike alone. A partner reduces the potential for harassment. If you hike alone say that you are with a larger group. Even with a partner heed your instincts about strangers. • Leave your trip itinerary with family or friends. Don't reveal your itinerary to strangers or leave it on your vehicle. Do not describe the whereabouts of fellow hikers.
- Dress conservatively—avoid unwelcome attention.
- Avoid provocation.
- Camp away from roads. Harassment is most likely in areas accessible to motor vehicles.
- Don't carry firearms.
- Discourage theft. Don't leave your pack or gear unattended. Don't leave cash, cameras, or headlamps.
- If you witness or are the victim of harassment report the incident to local law enforcement authorities and to ATC.



Clearing mist reveals an expanse of the Great Smoky Mountains (top).
©NPS



White blazes mark the trail at Walker Mountain, Va. (above).
©NPS

Virginia One-fourth of the A.T. lies in Virginia. Shenandoah National Park has 107 miles of graded A.T. and many side trails. The Trail crosses Skyline Drive 32 times and offers side trips never too far from a base of supplies. Views are extraordinary. The A.T. 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. This is a section of mature forest and wilderness with high summits, as impressive as any region south of New England. From here the A.T. route crosses west of the Shenandoah Valley. The portion in southwest Virginia affords a splendid wilderness trip. In the George Washington and Jefferson national forests the display of rhododendron and azalea in June and July is beautiful.

Tennessee and North Carolina From Damascus, Va., the Trail follows segments of mountain ranges in Cherokee National Forest to the North Carolina-Tennessee border and over Roan Mountain, noted for its rhododendrons and far-ranging views. From here along the two states' boundary and beyond through Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina, the Trail provides a rewarding introduction to the majesty of the southern Appalachians. Great Smoky

Mountains National Park, with 70 crest-line Trail miles crossed by only one road, is the highest section of the route. Beyond the Great Smokies come the Yellow Creek and Cheoah mountain areas. Next is the Nantahala section, with 4,000-foot gaps and 5,000-foot peaks, but rewarding in its views, culminating in Standing Indian, the Grandstand of the Southern Appalachians. The variety of forest growth, beauty of the flowering shrubs, and views make the Trail from the Virginia border an outstanding area.

Georgia The Trail in Georgia lies entirely within Chattahoochee National Forest. The wilderness, elevation, and ruggedness of the area are decidedly unexpected. Because highways cross the Blue Ridge at intervals of a moderate day's journey, the A.T. here is readily accessible and offers many options for splendid trips. Springer Mountain marks the southern terminus of the Trail.

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A footpath for those who seek fellowship with the wilderness.

These words adorn this metal 50-cent plaque that measures 12 by 20 inches. Mounted at the Trail's southern terminus at Springer Mountain, Ga., it is much photographed by thru-hikers, either aspiring or finishing.



Crested dwarf iris
©NPS



Family hiking at Charles Bunion in Tennessee (top).
©ALEXANDRA DALEY-CLARK/AURORA

Taking a break at Humpback Rock, Va. (above).
©PAT & CHUCK BACKLEY



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Taking a break at Humpback Rock, Va. (above).
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Administration of the Trail

The National Park Service has overall responsibility for the Trail through its Appalachian Trail Park Office. Operations affecting Trail use are shared responsibilities (described above). Private citizens have built and maintained the Trail since its beginning, and cooperative management has linked hiking clubs and federal and state governments for 60 years. In 1984 the National Park Service delegated to ATC the day-to-day responsibility for managing the lands through which the Trail is routed. The nonprofit ATC, formed in 1925, includes a private land trust to acquire and protect land adjacent to the publicly purchased Trail corridor. ATC does this from four field offices and its headquarters in Harpers Ferry, W.Va.

Publications The ATC is the clearinghouse for information on the Appalachian Trail. It publishes or distributes guidebooks and maps covering every section of the Trail, manuals to help volunteers with Trail design and maintenance, educational brochures for Trail users, a newsletter for Trail workers, and a magazine for members.

Information and List of Publications Contact: Appalachian Trail Conservancy, P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425; 304-535-6331; info@appalachian-trail.org; www.appalachiantrail.org

Trail Markers and Blazes The A.T. is marked with two-inch by six-inch vertical white-paint blazes. A double blaze—one above the other—is placed before turns, junctions, or other areas that require hikers to be alert. Blue blazes mark A.T. side trails. These lead to shelters, water supplies, or views.

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 Maine's Baxter State Park and must be leashed on all NPS lands. Dogs can get you into trouble with bears and other hikers. If you take a dog keep it on a leash.

Safety Please observe these precautions. • Walk with at least one companion. If a mishap occurs, one can go for help. • Poisonous snakes live along the

Trail; do not approach them. • Black bears in search of food may bother hikers, particularly in Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains national parks and in New Jersey. • Purify all water.

Permits You do not need a permit to walk the A.T., but overnight camping permits are required in Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains national parks, Baxter State Park, and parts of White Mountain National Forest. For information on permits and camping regulations, contact: Shenandoah National Park, Luray, VA 22835, www.nps.gov/shen; Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Gatlinburg, TN 37733, www.nps.gov/gsm; Baxter State Park, 64 Balsam Dr., Millinocket, ME 04462; and White Mountain National Forest, 719 N. Main St., Laconia, NH 03246-2772, www.fs.fed.us/r9/white.

National Park Service Trail Office Appalachian Trail Park Office Appalachian National Scenic Trail Harpers Ferry Center, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425 304-535-6278; www.nps.gov/appa

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