

Volunteer Vacations

An Interview with Sam and Darcy

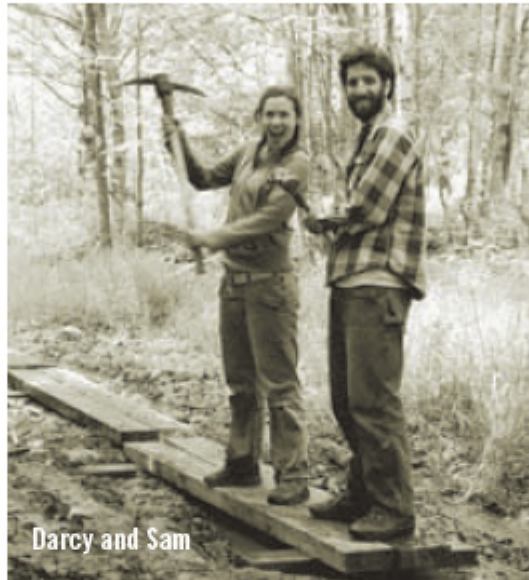
Fach week during the summer, a crew gathers at the Mount Tabor Work Center in Danby. Hailing from Rutland, China, and in between, they have all signed up to participate in GMC's Volunteer Long Trail Patrol (VLTP), also dubbed our "Volunteer Vacation." The itinerary includes forty hours of unpaid physical labor, high-fiber food, and a trench latrine; and with co-leaders like Sam "Swami" Parisi and Darcy "Duck Feet" Kimball, it's hard to think of a better way to spend time off. Here Swami and Duck Feet answer a few of our volunteer prospects' most pressing questions about VLTP:

In what sense is VLTP really a vacation?

Think of it as an all-expenses-paid trip to some of the most beautiful and pristine areas in Vermont with rustic amenities and a great cardio and weight-training program.

What can a crew member expect?

Expect to become closely acquainted with mud, bugs, sweat, blisters, tools, and trailwork techniques ... and also with a bunch of really great people who



come from all over and from many different walks of life.

Describe a typical day.

Whoever likes to wake up earliest is in charge of making the coffee. We start hiking to our work site around 9 A.M. and work until about 4, with a break for lunch and numerous snack and water breaks thrown in. The work varies depending on the project, but it usually involves digging, moving large rocks, peeling logs, and/or smashing rocks into crushed stone with a sledge hammer. We take turns cooking dinner over our trusty Coleman stove (pasta putanesca, ratatouille, and Indian curry

are standards). After dinner, it's time to relax, play cards, hang out by the campfire toasting s'mores, or go for a late night swim if we're near water. Does it sound like our entire day revolves around meals? It's important to eat as much as you want when you're in the woods.

Favorite tool?

This is something we have discussed at length. The pick-mattock is the overall winner, earning high scores for its versatility, efficiency, and ratio of weight/packability to frequency of use in the field. It's the tool you want to get the job done.

What three qualities do you most hope for in a volunteer?

Flexibility, work ethic, and most of all, a sense of humor.

Do you think you have what it takes to become the next volunteer vacationer? Fill out an application online at <https://www.greenmountainclub.org/application.php> and check the "volunteer crew member" box. To learn about our sister volunteer trail crews on other parts of the Appalachian Trail, visit the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at www.appalachiantrail.org.

—MARI ZAGARINS