



Suggestions for Providing Trail Magic



Trail Magic, defined as an unexpected act of kindness, is a quintessential part of the Appalachian Trail experience for many long-distance hikers. The suggestions below incorporate *Leave No Trace* practices (www.LNT.org) to help those providing trail magic have the most positive impact on hikers, the Trail, its plants and wildlife, and the volunteers who maintain and preserve it. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association endorse these suggestions.

Help conserve and maintain the Trail. The most essential service you can perform is to volunteer to maintain the Trail and overnight sites, or to monitor boundaries and resource conditions. Visit www.appalachiantrail.org for more information, or check with your local trail-maintaining club to find out how or where you may assist.

Locate events in developed areas on durable surfaces. Large gatherings in the backcountry can lead to trampling of plants, soil compaction, and disturbance of wildlife habitat. Trail towns and local parks are better locations. Keep events small. Consider whether your event may be contributing to an overabundance of trail feeds in the local area or region. Some hikers come to the Trail to seek solitude and contemplation.

Prepare and serve food safely. If you will be cooking or preparing food, check with the landowner to find an appropriate area and learn what food-safety or other regulations apply. Permits may be required. Charging a fee or asking for donations may not be allowed.

Be present if you provide food or drink. Unattended items—including their packaging—can harm wildlife that consume them, or hikers, when unrefrigerated products grow bacteria or become contaminated. Unattended items are considered litter and their presence detracts from the wildland character of backcountry environments. Dispense food and drink in person, and carry out any trash or leftovers.

Restore the site. Leave the site as you found it—don't create a burden for Trail volunteers whose time is better spent in other activities.

Advertise off-trail. Advertising—even noncommercial—is prohibited on the A.T. Publicizing a “feed” in advance can lead to clumping of long distance hikers, causing overcrowded conditions and avoidable impacts at shelters and campsites.

Forgo alcoholic beverages. Don't risk the legality and liability associated with serving minors, over-serving adults, or the safety issues associated with intoxicated hikers.

Be hospitable to all. While many long-distance hikers will likely appreciate trail magic, be sure to make all trail users and volunteers feel welcome.

For more information, visit ATC's Web site at www.appalachiantrail.org.