



About the Appalachian Trail

The Appalachian Trail is one of the longest continuously marked footpaths in the world, measuring roughly 2,190 miles in length. The Trail goes through fourteen states along the crests and valleys of the Appalachian mountain range from the southern terminus at Springer Mountain, Georgia, to the Trail's northern terminus at Katahdin, Maine.

Known as the "A.T.," it has been estimated that over 3 million people visit the Trail every year and about over 4,000 people attempt to "thru-hike" the entire Trail. People from across the globe are drawn to the A.T. for a variety of reasons: to reconnect with nature, to escape the stress of city life, to meet new people or deepen old friendships or to experience a simpler life.

The A.T. was completed in 1937 and is a unit of the National Park System. The A.T. is managed under a unique partnership between the public and private sectors that includes, among others, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), the National Park Service (NPS), the USDA Forest Service (USFS), an array of state agencies, and 31 local Trail-maintaining clubs.

FUN FACTS

- The Trail is about 2,190 miles long, passing through 14 states.
- Thousands of volunteers contribute roughly 220,000 hours to the A.T. every year.
- More than 250 three-sided shelters exist along the Trail.
- Virginia is home to the most miles of the Trail (about 550), while West Virginia is home to the least (about 4).
- Maryland and West Virginia are the easiest states to hike; New Hampshire and Maine are the hardest.
- The total elevation gain of hiking the entire A.T. is equivalent to climbing Mt. Everest 16 times.
- The A.T. is home to an impressive diversity of plants and animals. Some animals you may see include black bears, moose, porcupines, snakes, woodpeckers, and salamanders. Some plants you may encounter include jack-in-the-pulpit, skunk cabbage, and flame azalea.

HIKERS

- Over 3 million visitors walk a portion of the A.T. each year.

- The A.T. has hundreds of access points and is within a few hours drive of millions of Americans, making it a popular destination for day-hikers.
- “Thru-hikers” walk the entire Trail in a continuous journey. “Section-hikers” piece the entire Trail together over years. “Flip-floppers” thru-hike the entire Trail in discontinuous sections to avoid crowds, extremes in weather, or start on easier terrain.
- 1 in 4 who attempt a thru-hike successfully completes the journey
- Most thru-hikers walk north, starting in Georgia in spring and finishing in Maine in fall, taking an average of 6 months.
- Foods high in calories and low in water weight, such as Snickers bars and Ramen Noodles, are popular with backpackers, who can burn up to 6,000 calories a day.
- Hikers usually adopt “trail names” while hiking the Trail. They are often descriptive or humorous. Examples are “Eternal Optimist,” “Thunder Chicken,” and “Crumb-snatcher”.