
Hiking the Appalachian Trail

One wonderful ability that people have always been able to do is walk thousands of miles through tough terrain to get where they want/need to go. The exercise known as hiking was practiced all over the world, including the famous Appalachian Trail, approximately 2,184 miles long. The A.T. was “Conceived in 1921, built by private citizens, and completed in 1937, today the trail is managed by the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, numerous state agencies and thousands of volunteers”, as stated on the National Park Services website. The trails path runs along the Appalachian Mountains and through 14 different states stretching from Maine to Georgia. The formation of the trail went through several stages beginning with Benton MacKaye’s idea and planning of a super trail in late 1921. A committee was formed, followed by a conference which years later became the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. The A.T. is a great trail to hike for the courageous individuals that are looking for a great time and adventure.

With the A.T. running through fourteen mountains, the landscape alters and so does the experience. The degree of difficulty ranges from flat and smooth to rough and rocky, requiring a lot of hand use for hanging, feet for stability, and jolting movements for the more physically fit hikers. The A.T. can be broken into five sections: Northern New England, Southern New England, Mid-Atlantic, Southern Appalachians, and The Virginias. To find out more about each section, a hiker would want to refer to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy website under the “About the Trail” module. According to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, “Each year, thousands of hikers attempt a thru-hike; only about one in four make it all the way”. (ATC) Hikers have an option of thru hiking, which is one long journey, or section hiking, which is more than one journey over a period of time. Hikers are advised not to start nor end their hike around New Hampshire and Maine because the two states hold the greatest challenge of the entire A.T.

The A.T. has a profound beauty about it. “The Appalachian National Scenic Trail may contain the greatest biodiversity of any unit of the National Park Service.” (ANST) On the trail a hiker may run into plants and shrubs like Maples, Serviceberry, Fir Trees, and Catawba Rhododendron. Some of the wildflowers travelers may run in to might be Jewel Weed, Columbine, Bluets, and Trillium. During hiking journeys, travelers may come across big animals such as deer, bears, bobcats, coyotes, and so on. There are small animals along the trail as well, such as mice, chipmunks, rabbits, foxes, skunks, bats, etc. Birds like scarlet tanagers, bluebirds, bald eagles are found somewhere along the AT. The A.T. also has frogs, salamanders, turtles and even a couple different types of snakes. Hikers have to be cautious of animals like snakes, bears, and even porcupines. The ATC list several animals and insects that

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

could be of danger as well as some endangered plant and animal species. Hikers have to have the mindset that any animal that is wild can have an unexpected reaction to people. In an article written by Marcus Wolf on WhiteBlaze.net, “The USDA Forest Service announced this month that hikers must store their food in a bear canister—rather than just hang food in a bag—if they camp along this five miles of the AT from March 1 through June 1”. (Wolf) Hikers are also warned about the increase of bears in some areas of camp like Jarrad Gap and Neels Gap. Judy Topppins, a public affairs officer for the USDA Forest Service, encouraged hikers to avoid camping in that area and to plan for the five miles ahead so hikers do not have to camp there. Travelers have to remember the wild is not considered safe if they are not prepared.

The preparation process involves a deal of research and time. It is not in a hiker’s best interest to start without properly preparing. First, hikers should want to plan their journey and take several things into consideration like their job, family, and finances to determine whether to choose a thru or section hike. Once hikers have decided what type of hike, the next would be to pick a place to start the hike. Helpful sites like Appalachiantrail.org give a description of the hikes in each state as well as information about the closet towns, difficulty level, distance, features, description, and directions. In preparing, taking walks and day hikes to strengthen the body before the journey can be quite helpful. Backpackers get used to the walks after so much preparation is done. Packing for hikes really depends on the longevity of the hike. Sites like Appalachian Trail Conservancy suggest for a day hike backpackers would need a map, compass, water, warm clothing, rain gear, a hat, food, a trowel, first-aid kit, a whistle, a garbage bag, sunglasses and sunscreen and even more for longer hikes. The website has a lot more information on camping equipment and specific clothing and footwear that a hiker should use and wear. It is recommended that hikers practice spending the night in camps until they become use to camping. The more practice, the better experiences hikers have along the trail.

Food and water is also essential for hiking no matter the distance. Hikers are recommended to pack food for the appropriate time. Foods that spoils quickly would not be suggested for the longer journeys. Snacks and dried foods like pasta are typical. Canned foods and high water weight foods are to be avoided. Hikers should consume about one half to two pounds of food per day, dehydrate their own food, and in the result of cold weather, carry enough food for being stranded. The A.T. has resupply methods in which hikers can have food mailed as they go or buy food on the way. Water sources can be found along the trail but should be treated by boiling, water filtering, disinfectant tables, etc. Short trips would allow backpackers to have water from places like home instead of the trail. Shelters are not the cleanest and are not guaranteed safe because hikers are not alone. Staying in a shelter or pitching a tent depends on the hiker’s preference. Emergencies happen whether prepared or not. Crime, weather conditions, illnesses, attacks, poisons and more can cause for emergency assistance. Cell phones do not always have signal so it is important that hikers no how to send a distress call. There are rules and regulations listed on the A.T. Conservancy website that should be

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

understood by hikers.

Once a hiker has completed a trail as such, the feelings on taking on another challenge is acquired. Through out the A.T. backpackers experience wildlife and challenges that help them in various ways. Self-confidence is a great skill accomplished as well and self discovery and commitment. The time it takes gives travelers a time to discover themselves while walking the beautiful trail. The hikers who hike for a hobby and/or exercise also take away experiences from a trail traveled by many. Whether traveled non stop or by sections, the Appalachian trail is a great adventure for almost any hiker to concur.

gradesfixer.com

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP