

Take the Long Way



Images courtesy Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Up and down mountains from Georgia to Maine snakes a 2,190-mile-long path known as the Appalachian Trail. Winding through 14 states, it is the longest marked hiking-only footpath in the world.

Each year, more than 3 million people hike part of the trail. Hiking the entire trail in one trip is called a “thru-hike.” As many as 3,000 people try to do this each year. Only about 700 make it. This hike can take from five to seven months!

Trail history

The idea to build a trail began with a man named Benton MacKaye. He was a forester and planner. In 1921, he dreamed



Benton MacKaye

of a trail stretching the entire length of the Appalachian Mountains. These mountains are one of the oldest chains in the United States. The trail took 15 years to build.

A group called the Appalachian Trail Conference helped plan and build the trail. Today called the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, this group helps protect and take care of it,



working closely with local clubs, the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service.

Hiking the trail

Most hikers who try to walk the entire trail start at Springer Mountain in Georgia.

Along part of the trail, hikers can have one foot in Tennessee and one in North Carolina. The trail reaches its highest point at Clingmans Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

One-fourth of the entire trail, about 550 miles, lies in Virginia. Only about 3 miles of the trail lie entirely in West Virginia.

Along some sections, hikers can find rocks with fossils, or skeletons of plants or animals that have been dead for more than 400 million years.

The trail reaches its lowest point near Bear Mountain in New York. In Maine, Mount Katahdin marks the end of the trail.



Along the trail, hikers might see deer, bears or moose.

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Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of the Appalachian Trail are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

APPALACHIAN, BEARS, CHAIN, CONSIDERATE, DEER, FOOD, FOSSILS, GEORGIA, HIKING, HOSTEL, MACKAYE, MAINE, MOOSE, MOUNTAINS, SHELTER, STATES, TENT, TRAIL, TRASH, WATER, WILDLIFE.

S L I S S O F D G A B E A R S
E T R A I L P E M O O S E D E
Y W A T E R O S T L E T S O H
A F O O D R E S H E L T E R C
K Y W E G T N E T F E N I A M
C S N I A T N U O M H S A R T
A A A T A P P A L A C H I A N
M U S C H A I N G N I K I H G
L W I L D L I F E W A R E E D
G C O N S I D E R A T E M O B



Mini Spy Classics

Mini Spy and her friends are hiking the Appalachian Trail. See if you can find the hidden pictures. Then color the picture.



Mini Spy Classics appear in the first issue of each month.

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- frog
- duck
- pumpkin
- strawberry
- cat
- snail
- mushroom
- two fish
- man in the moon
- word MINI
- whale
- number 6
- letter A
- heart
- lemon slice

Along the way

If you're on the trail for several months, where do you sleep? Hikers have three choices for sleeping:

- **Shelters** — There are more than 250 shelters on the trail, about one every 10 miles. Most have three sides, with one side open to the outdoors. There are also cabins that can be rented.

- **Tents** — Hikers can sleep in tents they carry with them. They can pitch a tent at a shelter or campground.

- **Hostels and inns** — When hikers get tired of being outdoors, they can stay in a **hostel**, motel, inn or bed-and-breakfast in towns along the trail. (Hostels are like bunkhouses set up mostly for hikers.)

Leave No Trace

1. Plan ahead. If you're prepared, you're less likely to need help.
2. Stay on the trail and camp in places set aside for that purpose.
3. Carry out all trash and food waste.
4. Leave what you find.
5. Make sure campfires are cold before leaving them.
6. Don't feed or disturb wildlife.
7. Be considerate of others.



Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/MAppTrail
- bit.ly/MAppTrailMap

At the library:

- “Grandma Gatewood Hikes the Appalachian Trail” by Jennifer Thermes
- “All About the Appalachian Trail” by Leonard M. Adkins and Kirsten Halvorsen

Mini Jokes



Adam: What do you get when you cross a rooster and a wolf?
Anna: An animal that howls when the sun rises!

Eco Note



When we think of ways to reuse our stuff or collect it for the recycling bin instead of throwing it in the garbage can, we help keep our air, water and soil healthy. In addition, when we reuse our old things instead of buying new products, like reusing an old jelly jar as a pencil holder, we help keep the air clean. In other words, because we're reusing our old products, factories don't have to make as many new products, which will save energy.

adapted from epa.gov

For later:

Look in your newspaper for popular hiking trails near your home.

Teachers: For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bit.ly/MPstandards. And follow The Mini Page on Facebook!



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