

Appalachian Trail



Background

Benton MacKaye is credited with originating the idea for a scenic trail running the entire length of the Appalachian Mountains. Volunteers developed the trail, and in 1937, MacKaye's dream was realized. In 1968, the A.T. was declared the first National Scenic Trail under the National Trails System Act of 1968. Currently, the Appalachian Trail is protected by federal or state ownership of the land it traverses or by rights-of-way. Every year, organizations such as the Appalachian Trail Conference and the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club provide over 175,000 hours of service to help maintain the trail.

The Appalachian Trail (A.T.) is a 2,167-mile scenic trail that follows the Appalachian Mountains from Springer Mountain in north Georgia to Katahdin in Maine. The trail traverses the states of Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. The A.T. is used for more than just thru hiking, everything from day-hikes to weeklong expeditions takes place on the Appalachian Trail. This trail, marked with white blazes, has given many a backpacker an incredible experience.



AT in Tennessee

The section of trail that runs through Tennessee is very close to the border between Tennessee and North Carolina as well as one portion that runs along the Virginia border. The first section of the A.T. in Tennessee runs from the border between Tennessee and Virginia to the eastern border of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This section is 216.5 miles long, has an elevation range of 1,326—6,285 feet, and features grassy summits that provide hikers with 360° views of the mountain range. Hikers are exposed to the elements at high elevations on these bare summits and fog, thunderstorms, and lightning are common. The best time to hike this section is from late May through October; at other times of the year, the weather is unpredictable with varying temperatures and sudden snow showers.

The second section of the A.T. in Tennessee runs through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This section is 71.2 miles, has an elevation range of 1,730—6,625 feet, and features the highest point on the Appalachian Trail at Clingman's Dome. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park has the most rainfall and snowfall on the A.T. in the South and has lush forests and the greatest species diversity. Permits and reservations are required for overnight stays, and hikers are required to spend the night in a trail shelter.

Note: No map provided on this page because a representation of the eastern border of Tennessee would not fit in the allotted space.

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