

## **Appalachian Trail - Max Patch**

**Driving Directions:** from Asheville take I-40 west to exit 7; go right (north) on Cold Springs Rd (dirt road). At the T junction, turn left and continuing to Max Patch parking area on the right. Overflow parking is along the road. Max Patch is visible on the right.

### **Hiking Directions:**

For the Max Patch Loop, take the old road through the gate to the left of the parking lot. Due to erosion, hikers are asked not to climb or descend via the center – the most direct route to the summit. Proceed through the woods to a clearing. Continue as short way to the A.T. and turn left away from the summit. Follow the A.T. blaze through the woods and passed a small stream. There is a great place to stop and sit on logs under a large shade tree just before you turn right onto Buckeye Ridge Trail. Once on Buckeye Ridge Trail, Max Patch will be above on the right. Continue on until you come again to the A.T. where you turn right and start your climb to the summit. Enjoy a picnic lunch on the top, fly a kite or simply take in the views.

Please remember to descend one of the ways you came up. If there is any threat of lightning, it would be wise not to take the A.T. to the summit. Rather, when you get to the A.T. from the Buckeye trail, follow the trail that goes to the right around the base of Max Patch. That will take you back to the parking lot. If this is the case, you have an excuse to come back and revisit Max Patch. It is not worth the risk of hiking in lightning.

### **Information**

Max Patch has been said to be one of the most beautiful places on the A.T. with its 360-degree views. Mountain ranges can be seen for miles around. Each season offers its own beauty and discovery. The sky is never the same twice and on a clear night, the stars can be stunning. The fall boasts a stunning array of color and is often less hazy.

Carolina Mountain club has been leading this hike on National Public Lands Day since 2013. On September 26, 2015, CMC debuted the first hike of the Youth Partner Challenge.

### **History**

On March 3, 1925, roughly two dozen outdoor enthusiasts meeting at the Raleigh Hotel in Washington, D.C., formed an all-volunteer organization charged with building the Appalachian Trail...Today, an estimated 2 to 3 million visitors walk on it each year, including a few hundred who finish the entire thing, an achievement known as a “thru-hike.” Ninety years after the conference that kick-started its construction, explore some illuminating facts about the 2,189-mile footpath.

The Trail stretches across 14 states.

Running from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine, the Appalachian Trail follows the Appalachian mountain range through 14 states, including all but three of the original 13 colonies. Over a quarter of the path is in Virginia alone, prompting some exasperated thru-hikers to come down with what they call the “Virginia Blues.” West Virginia, on the other hand, hosts only four miles of the Trail, whereas Maryland contains the second-shortest segment (41 miles) and Connecticut the third-shortest (51 miles).

Flat sections are few and far between.

The Appalachian Trail’s tallest peak, Clingmans Dome in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, tops out at a mere 6,643 feet above sea level, whereas nothing in the Mid-Atlantic or southern New England states even reaches 4,000 feet. Yet because of the constant ascents and descents, a thru-hiker’s total elevation gain roughly equates to 16 climbs of 29,035-foot Mount Everest.

Its creator allegedly dreamed it up while sitting in a tree.

As hiking became more fashionable in the northeastern United States in the early 20th century, certain advocates of the hobby began supporting the creation of long-distance “super” trails. Against this backdrop, regional planner Benton MacKaye specifically proposed the Appalachian Trail in an October 1921 issue of the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*. The son of a well-known actor and playwright, MacKaye claimed to have come up with the idea while sitting in a tree atop Vermont’s Stratton Mountain. Envisioning the Trail as a utopian refuge from urban life, complete with recreational and farming camps, he tapped into his extensive network of acquaintances to drum up support for it. Yet he never ended up playing much of a role in its actual construction, particularly after a bitter falling-out with Myron Avery, the long-time chairman of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (the organization formed at the 1925 meeting).

Nobody attempted a thru-hike for many years.

Though completed in 1937, gaps in the Trail soon opened right back up again, including 120 miles displaced by a Virginia parkway and hundreds of additional miles left impassable by a New England hurricane. It remained in disrepair throughout World War II. By that point, Avery and a few others had hiked the entire Trail in sections. But no one did it in a continuous backpacking trip until 1948, when a World War II veteran from Pennsylvania, Earl Shaffer, decided it would be ideal for walking “the Army out of my system.” “I almost wished that the Trail really was endless, that no one could ever hike its length,” he wrote in a memoir. Shaffer would hike the Trail two more times over the course of his life: in 1965 and again in 1998, at age 79.

Shaffer aside, most thru-hikers don’t make it.

In recent years, around 2,500 thru-hikers set out each spring on the Trail, most going northbound from Georgia. Nearly three-quarters of them end up dropping out somewhere along the way, done in by such factors as fatigue, illness and injury. Nonetheless, thru-hikers do not have to be in prime athletic condition. Emma Gatewood, nicknamed “Grandma Gatewood,” was 67 years old, with 11 children and 23 grandchildren, when she became one of the first-ever thru-hikers in 1955. Since then, hikers as old as 81 and as young as 5 have completed the trek, as have several blind hikers and an above-the-knee amputee.

Some Appalachian Trail hikers go for speed.

The typical thru-hiker needs five or six months to complete the Trail, an undertaking that involves about 5 million footsteps, most over jagged roots and rocks. A few speed demons, however, run and power walk their way through it much more rapidly. The record holder is now ultra-marathon runner Scott Jurek who beat Jen Parr Davis record by only 3 hours, 46 days, 8 hours and 7 minutes. The past record holder Jennifer Pharr Davis, a former collegiate tennis player, who in 2011 finished the Trail in 46 days, 11 hours and 20 minutes—an average of 47 miles per day. In 2013 Matt Kirk set the record for those without a support crew, finishing in 58 days, 9 hours and 38 minutes. His record was beat in 2015 by 34 year old Heather Anderson. From Bellingham, Washington, Anderson quietly crushed the record for a self-supported through hike at 54 days, 7 hours. And 48 minutes

Trail hikers don’t necessarily need a tent.

All thru-hikers attempt to keep their backpack weight down, with some going so far as to eschew tents entirely in favor of the more than 250 backcountry shelters, or “lean-tos,” that line the Trail. During rainstorms, even tent proponents tend to shack up in these three-sided shelters, which are built and maintained by volunteers. Unfortunately, they often get crowded and infested with mice and mosquitoes.

Nearly everyone uses a nickname.

Whether going all 2,189 miles or merely a tiny portion of it, backpackers virtually never utter their real names, preferring instead “trail names” that they choose themselves or are given by others. David Miller, for example, who has authored a memoir of his time on the Trail, plus a trail guidebook, calls himself “AWOL”—a nod to his decision to quit his job in order to hike. Other trail names include everything from “Chipmunk” and “Mudflap” to “Muggle” and “Sensitive Pigeon.”

The Trail faces a number of environmental threats.

Thanks in large part to a 1968 congressional bill that named the Trail a “national scenic trail,” officials have been able to make land purchases and establish a protective buffer zone along either side of it. Today, only about 10 miles of the route are in private hands, a sea change from its earlier days. Nonetheless, the Trail corridor remains vulnerable to air pollution, invasive species, climate change, urban sprawl, all-terrain

vehicles and energy development, according to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. Fraser firs, for instance, have been dying in mass in the Smokeys as a result of an outbreak of balsam woolly adelgids, a tiny non-native insect that feeds on their sap.

<http://www.history.com/news/10-things-you-should-know-about-the-appalachian-trail>