

THE 2017 APPALACHIAN TRAIL EXPEDITION

To be an expedition member, one must fully understand, accept, and honor the two expectations below:

EXPECTATION #1 – Everyone will walk the entire Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine.

The Appalachian Trail is the second longest continuously marked footpath in the world. There are white blazes the entire distance marking the official route of the trail. No one in the expedition will consciously take another route. Even if someone inadvertently takes a wrong turn, they will have to backtrack and make up the missed section that day or early the next morning. There are several blue blaze routes that are generally shorter and easier. We are not interested in people taking the easy way out in this regard. All expedition members are expected to honor this (*The only exception to this expectation is the fording of the Kennebec River in Maine which may be done by canoe ferry for those individuals who have an unreasonable fear of fording it by foot.*)

EXPECTATION #2 – Everyone will start and finish the trail at the same time.

We will all start together on Springer Mt. during the early evening of Saturday April 29, 2017 and end all together on Katahdin on Saturday morning, September 15, 2017.

The second expectation implies that a 140-day schedule will be planned out and accepted by the group by April 3, 2017.

During the expedition, the only changes in the schedule will be very few, and minor in scope, due to recent, unforeseen trail relocations and/or severe weather conditions (*i.e., severe, long-lasting thunderstorms; actual tornadoes; flash flooding; active, on-the-trail forest fires; and, snow and/or icing above timberline*).

Note: The 1975, 1977, 1980 AT Circle Expeditions (mostly college-age folks) had 109-day schedules. The 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, and 2010 Circle Expeditions had 127-day schedules.

The 2017 Expedition will have a 140 –day schedule.

They also will be the second expedition not to have to do backpacking for their preparation hikes. Although we won't have to walk all together during the day since each individual will have their own hiking pace, there will be minimum miles to do each day. You can walk ahead of schedule if you like but without the use of the support van, because the van serves the people who are following the schedule. However, you cannot fall behind schedule. You have to make it to the end of each day by at least 8am the next morning. The only reason to fall behind schedule would be an injury which is being rehabilitated while walking or a death/serious injury/illness in the immediate family back home.

If you have a wedding, job obligations, etc. to attend during the spring/summer of 2017, you can leave the group only under one of the two following conditions:

1) You hike ahead of the group, unsupported by the van, to gain extra 'rest days' to go home and then to come back to join the group at the point you left; or,

2) You hike that section of trail you have to miss during the actual expedition *before* the actual expedition starts (4/29/17). You also have the opportunity to 'bank' up to at least fifteen additional days depending on how many preparation hikes you complete. We have 14-15 days of practice hikes planned on the Appalachian Trail.

These fifteen days of practice hikes will cover the following two time periods of the expedition:

Tuesday May 31 - Wednesday June 7, 2017

Monday July 3 – Saturday July 8, 2017

The only times **all** expedition members have to be together is when we have our scheduled meetings (we will have from 12-14 of these during the expedition).

There is a difference in this expedition compared to the other eight I have organized and led (1975-2010). The other expeditions had a third expectation that “everyone who starts, will finish”. The success/failure of the expedition depended on a 100% completion rate of all the members who joined the circle. Amazingly, seven of the eight expeditions had 100% completion rates (i.e., unbroken circles at the end).

The 2017 AT Expedition will not have a third expectation, and like the 2015 AT Expedition, there will be no circle. However, all decisions resolve around the task-oriented two expectations. This group will walk the entire trail on a 140-day schedule regardless of the pain/discomfort/illness of its individual members. The support van will be used only for temporary emergency situations. It will **not** be used to transport hikers who ‘don’t want to hike that day’. The support van driver is neither your maid/butler/gofer/or servant.

Expedition members also have the option of having their own personal vehicles with their own personal drivers or by making out arrangements with other expedition members. It is logistically possible to do this but it takes good planning beforehand.

By the end of March 2017, when we have a better idea of how many people are participating, a donation will be requested from expedition members to cover the costs of the support van and other group costs (i.e. some campground fees and other user fees).

Expedition members are expected to hike smart by **not**: carrying too much weight; walking too fast; running downhill; rock climbing without proper safety lines; jumping/diving/sliding into shallow water; knocking down a dead tree on another expedition member; indulging in common horseplay; playing rough Frisbee/football; fighting; hiking too far/too fast; being clothed improperly for the weather; playing practical jokes; disclosing/recognizing a pre-expedition illness/injury; walking while intoxicated, high, or numbed by medication; getting sick from overeating; doing anything illegal that would prevent you from walking freely and on schedule (i.e., *getting arrested*).

To be an expedition member, one must:

- 1) Attend one of the two orientation sessions (Sept. 26-29, 2014; or, March 20-23, 2015).
- 2) If unable to attend one of the two orientation sessions, and you a relatively new hiker, one must enroll in an Appalachian Trail Institute session before they go on their first preparation hike.
- 3) Attend at least 12 of the 20 days of group preparation
- 4) Complete two, three-day preparation day hikes with the group between October 2, 2015 and April 3, 2017.
- 5) Start the preparation period no later than Sept. 30, 2016

Please do not hesitate to ask Warren about anything you don’t understand on this sheet. There is too much at stake to not know what is expected. Thank you!

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