

Appalachian Trail



Take in the view from Springer Mountain, the southern terminus of the Appalachian Trail.



Stretching over 2,100 miles and spanning 14 states, this most famous footpath has its southern terminus in north Georgia. Quite a few folks hike the entire length of the Appalachian Trail (AT) each year. These rugged individuals are known as “through-hikers.” If you have only a few hours (instead of several months), a shorter hike on the trail can be very rewarding. Several good walks on the AT are accessible in this region. The trail is well marked with signs and white blazes.

LOCATION

The Appalachian Trail crosses roadways at a number of places in north Georgia. See pp. 128–129 for access points.

SEASON

Year-round

TIME ALLOWANCE

As long as you like.

COST

Free

BRING ALONG

Comfortable walking clothing, sturdy shoes, camera, sun protection, water bottle.

NOTE

The AT can provide a good break to stretch your legs during an auto tour. Just watch for the familiar green “Appalachian Trail Ahead” sign.

THE AT BEGINS (OR ENDS) IN NORTH GEORGIA

North Georgia has the distinction of being home to the southern terminus of the Appalachian Trail. This white-blazed footpath leads from the top of Springer Mountain over 2,100 miles to the top of Mount Katahdin in Maine. In Georgia, the route covers 77.5 of those miles. For the through-hikers heading north, the Georgia mountains are their proving grounds.

HIGH POINT OF THE GEORGIA APPALACHIAN TRAIL

Along those first miles are quite a few points of interest. The route crosses the tops of 30 mountains and passes through 31 gaps. Going



Plaques like this are found bolted to rocks at numerous sites.

The Appalachian Trail in Georgia

from gap to mountaintop usually means a pretty major climb. Along the way are 13 rustic shelters where hikers may spend the night. The trail passes alongside or through four wilderness areas—Raven Cliffs, Mark Trail, Tray Mountain, and Southern Nantahala. The highest point is atop Blood Mountain at 4,461 feet, and all along the way are rocky precipices affording stunning views of the surrounding Blue Ridge. Hikers get their water from small streams or springs, many of which are located just off the trail. Blue-blazed trails always lead to water.

UNCOMMON EXPERIENCES ON THE NORTH GEORGIA APPALACHIAN TRAIL

Hikers along the Appalachian Trail in Georgia may have some experiences rather uncommon elsewhere on the trail. From Milepost 8 to around Milepost 16 the trail passes above Army Ranger Camp Frank Merrill. It's not unusual to run into Rangers out on maneuvers. They'll be the ones in full camouflage and carrying rifles. At Milepost 30.6, the trail passes through Neels Gap and crosses US 19/129. Here, an outfitter shop, Mountain Crossings at Walasi-Yi Center (706-745-6095), straddles the trail. Hikers must pass through the building to continue on their path.