



Prepping for an Appalachian Trail Thru Hike... by Jon Goff

“I’m planning on thru hiking the Appalachian Trail in the next few months, how do I train for this?!?”

This is a question that many of us are going to be asking ourselves in the coming months and years. Do you need to become a workout warrior? Do you need to walk 30 miles a day on that treadmill sitting in the closet because it’s too cold outside at the moment? We’re going to go over my view of the AT training process. Hint: the key is tuning into your body and its limits...and not in an Olympic medalist kind of way.



Before my first thru hike in 2018, I still lived in my home state of WV. I wasn’t sure of what to do training wise, so a few days a week I just blindly strapped my pack on and climbed any hill I came across. When I’d go to the store, I’d park as far away as possible to get those extra steps in. If it was stairs or elevator, the answer was always stairs. Turns out, it worked out and I reached Katahdin and didn’t need those 200 leg presses a day nor did I have to run two marathons a week.



Preparing for this, my second, thru hike is a little different from a geographical standpoint. I now live in Florida. It's flat... and the one time I hit an elevation level of 70 feet above sea level while hiking...it was epic. Seriously though, if you live in a relatively flat section of the country, there are things you can do that will serve you well on the AT. When out walking, don't make it a leisurely stroll. Push yourself with that pack on. If you're hiking ten miles, try to do it in 3 hours. You might not be able to do that pace at first but push those legs to their limits. Have the mindset of bettering your time every time you hike. You'll feel your calf muscles responding each time.

Other things that are good to do before departing for the Appalachian Trail are knowing your gear. Go camping while pushing yourself on these training hikes! Learn the best way for you to load that pack. Teach yourself how to efficiently set up your tent/hammock. Hang that bear bag on the first throw or maybe, well, the second or third throw. Many that have backpacked for years haven't mastered this ninja skill. Learn what water filter works best for you. Get used to critter sounds at night when you're all by yourself. That chipmunk isn't a bear, I swear.



By doing these little things ahead of time, you'll have much more self-confidence when you set off from Springer Mountain. It is, so they say, your brain that drives your hike. Self-

confidence and a positive mindset are everything on a thru hike... That and dry socks. Happy hiking and I hope to see many of you out there this year!