

The Long Distance Hiker



Special Edition for the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association

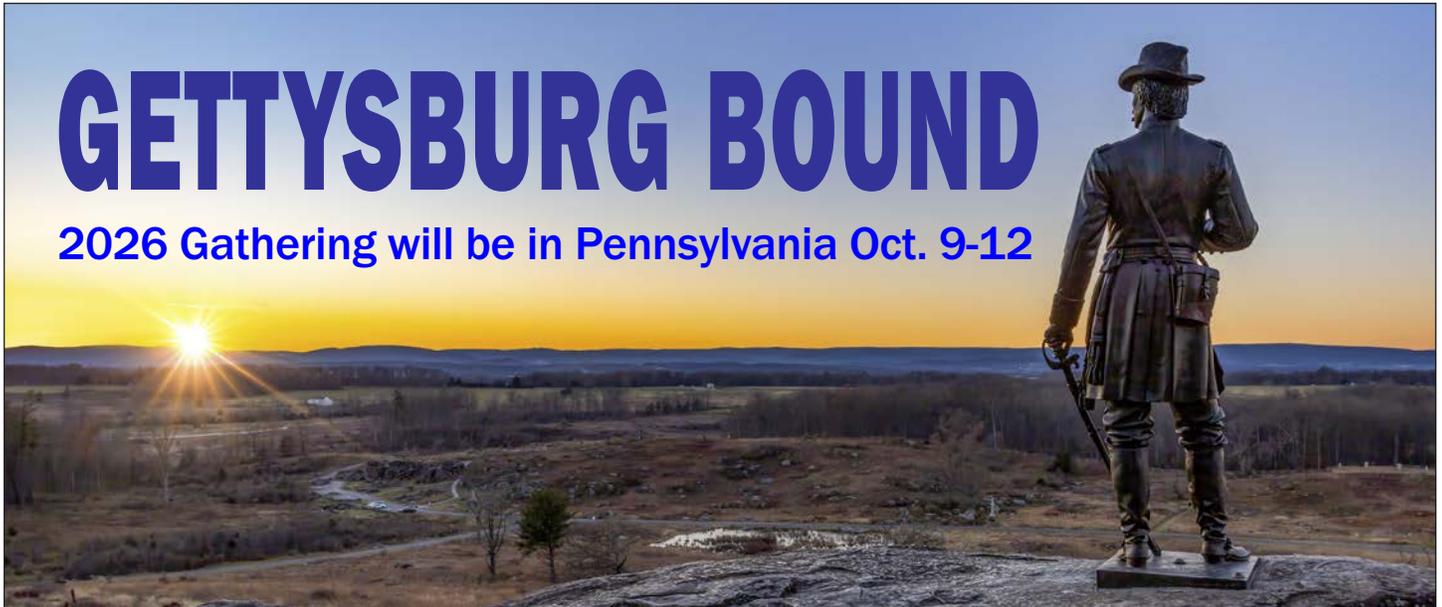
Vol. 37, No. 1

'ALDHA News That Fits We Print Since 1983'

Spring 2026

GETTYSBURG BOUND

2026 Gathering will be in Pennsylvania Oct. 9-12



JOHN TYNUM / ISTOCK

The statue of Gen. Warren looks out over the sunset from Little Round Top on the Gettysburg Battlefield in Gettysburg, Pa.

BULLET POINTS

WHEN AND WHERE

- Oct. 9-12 — Columbus Day holiday weekend
- Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pa.
- See directions on Page 4

REGISTRATION FEE

- Before May 31: **\$30**
- June 1 onward: **\$40**

MEAL TICKETS

- Breakfast: \$11
- Lunch: \$16
- Dinner: \$17
- Deadline: Sept. 28.

SIGN UP ONLINE AT

aldha.org/the-gathering
or scan the code below:



THE 44th GATHERING

Past thru-hikers urged to hold class reunions

The fall Gathering is the perfect time and place for a reunion of members of your thru-hiking trail family from the year you hiked. And if you were on the AT during the years ending in a 6, this year especially would be good.

If you hiked in **1986**: it's your 40th anniversary.

1996: Your 30th anniversary.

2001: Hey, happy 25th anniversary!

2006: It's your 20th.

And **2016**: Happy 10th anniversary.

You may still have contact emails for your past trail friends, or you can use the ALDHA Directory that's available online for members at aldha.org.

Failing that, there's always Facebook, where you can post a message to members of your class year on our public and private pages asking them to join you for a toast to your respective anniversary during this year's Gathering in Gettysburg. At the Friday night roll call of class years, stand up as a group and make some noise. Have a celebratory dinner in town, go for a dayhike on one of the many battlefield hiking trails, or put on a slideshow during one of our workshop time blocks to share photos and memories of your special year on the AT. It's all up to you.

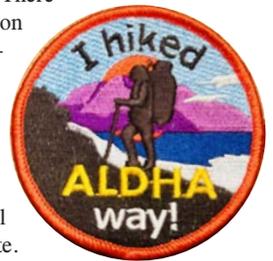
AT Class of 2026 can attend event for *free!*

For the first time, anyone who has hiked the whole AT during the course of the current calendar year is entitled to attend the Gathering for free. There you will not only be called up on

stage on Friday night to receive special recognition on your achievement, but you will also receive the "I Hiked ALDHA Way" patch seen at right. Then, after we get your address, we'll mail you a completion certificate.

During the Gathering you'll be able to reunite with fellow 2026 hikers, and attend numerous workshops about how to hike other long-distance trails in case you're itching to get back out there again.

We also offer a workshop for folks who are dreaming about thru-hiking the AT. Remember what that was like? Well, here's your chance to give them the advice you might never have gotten yourself. During this session, you can help answer all the questions they have. You'll be the newest AT experts, so please pass along your expertise.



Follow news of ALDHA's Gathering at aldha.org

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This special edition of *The Long Distance Hiker* is published by ALDHA, the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association, a 501(c)(3) registered in New Hampshire at 10 Benning St., PMB 224, West Lebanon, NH 03784, for the express purpose of publicizing ALDHA's 44th Gathering, set for Oct. 9-12, 2026, in Gettysburg, Pa.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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2026 GATHERING TEAM

Program: Bill O'Brien, Brian O'Malley and Penny Vann

Registration desk: Brian O'Malley

Meal ticket managers:

Mike and Martha Wingart

Campsite coordinator: Mark Hudson

Hiker Fair director: Marlene Simpson

Post-Gathering work trip coordinator: TBD

Earl Shaffer Memorial Photo Contest:

Sanne Larsen and Mary Lou Lester

Campfire crew: TBD

Official photographer: H. Dean Clark

Gathering games: John Jordan

Signature banner: TBD

Friday night orientation: Joe Gleason

Membership in ALDHA is open to all. To sign up, go online to aldha.org.

To register for the 2026 Gathering and purchase meal tickets online, go to aldha.org/the-gathering

Email us at gathering@aldha.org if you have questions about the Gathering.

Workshops, day programs being sought

Help us put on a great lineup of offerings

One of the most valuable strengths of an ALDHA Gathering is the sharing of expertise by our individual members who've gone out over the past year or more to tackle some amazing hiking trails or other adventures. They bring their experiences in the wild back to the Gathering in the form of a workshop and/or slide show in hopes of inspiring the rest of us to follow in their footsteps.

We aim to have workshops on popular trails like the PCT, CDT, John Muir Trail and Long Trail, but also less well-known but equally challenging long-distance trails like the Benton MacKaye Trail and others, especially those in the Eastern part of the country. If workshops on some of those trails catch your fancy, you can try hiking them after you get home. Then, if you chalk up 500 miles worth of those Eastern trails, you can earn ALDHA's new hiking award, dubbed the Eastern Trails 500.

Pennsylvania, where the Gathering will take place, is home to numerous good hiking trails. We hope to have the Keystone Trails Association conduct workshops on some of those trails.

If you wish to put on a workshop, please visit aldha.org/the-gathering, where you'll find an online form to fill out. Pick the length of time you'll need and provide a description of your workshop, and we'll get it in the schedule.

Event and meal prices reflect rise in inflation

The cost for this year's Gathering is a bit higher than the past three years at Abingdon, but it's the nature of the world these days. We tried to get sponsored by a student organization, as we have been on previous college campuses, like Williams. But that didn't work out. So by going through the outside conference office, we had to pay outside rates. We worked hard to keep the total expense down, and in the end, it came out only slightly higher than what we would've paid at Abingdon.

Helping with the total cost was a deal we got on the tenting field, which is being provided to ALDHA for free. We'll only be responsible for the port-a-johns and campfire firewood. (We won't be renting a "water buffalo," so bring your own water if you're camping out.)

RECAP OF RATES

REGISTRATION FEE

- Before May 31: \$30
- June 1 onward: \$40
- You can register for the Gathering online at aldha.org/the-gathering

MEAL TICKETS

- Breakfast: \$11, from 7:30-10 a.m.
- Lunch: \$16, from 11:30-1:30
- Dinner: \$17, from 5-7:30 p.m.
- Pay for your meal tickets no later than Sept. 28 at aldha.org/the-gathering

The cost of the meals might also be surprising, but we haven't had on-site meals for the past three years, and this year's prices are comparable with those at Williams College four years ago if you take inflation into account. In fact, if you were at the first Gathering in 1982, the cost of the meals today is similar to those 44 years ago when you factor in four decades of steadily rising prices. As mentioned earlier, this is a sign of the times, and the board has responded with a modest \$5 increase in the registration fee for those who sign up before May 31. From June 1 onward, the fee will be \$40.

— Bill O'Brien

Tentsite 3.5 miles away; Hotel group rate sought

Camping will be included in your registration fee. We will be pitching our tents on a remote field that's almost a straight shot of 3.5 miles from the center of campus. Port-a-potties will be provided, along with firewood for a community campfire each evening.

The campsite will be marked to indicate where parking is permitted, where RVs can go, and where the quiet area is located, farthest from the campfire.

A few things you should bring along include:

- Trash bags and jugs of water, since there won't be any garbage cans or water available.
- All the comforts of car camping, since going lightweight doesn't matter here.
- A camp chair if you'd like to sit around the campfire instead of stand.
- Earplugs to block the noise from tentsite neighbors who snore all night.

For those who do not wish to camp out, we are compiling the phone numbers, addresses and emails for a host of area hotels. We are also exploring the possibility of getting a group rate at one of these establishments. Gettysburg is a huge tourist mecca, and the Columbus Day weekend will likely be crowded in many places. So if you're intending to book a hotel room or an RV park, you might want to start now.

WELCOME TO GETTYSBURG

By **BILL O'BRIEN**

Gathering Planning Committee

If you've never visited Gettysburg, now is your chance to take in this amazing town, steeped in American history.

And if you've been there before, chances are you never got to see everything that's there. Yes, the commercial aspect that has grown up around the Gettysburg Battlefield can be a bit off-putting, but when you're on the Gettysburg College campus, where ALDHA's Gathering will take place, you'll be insulated from all that activity.

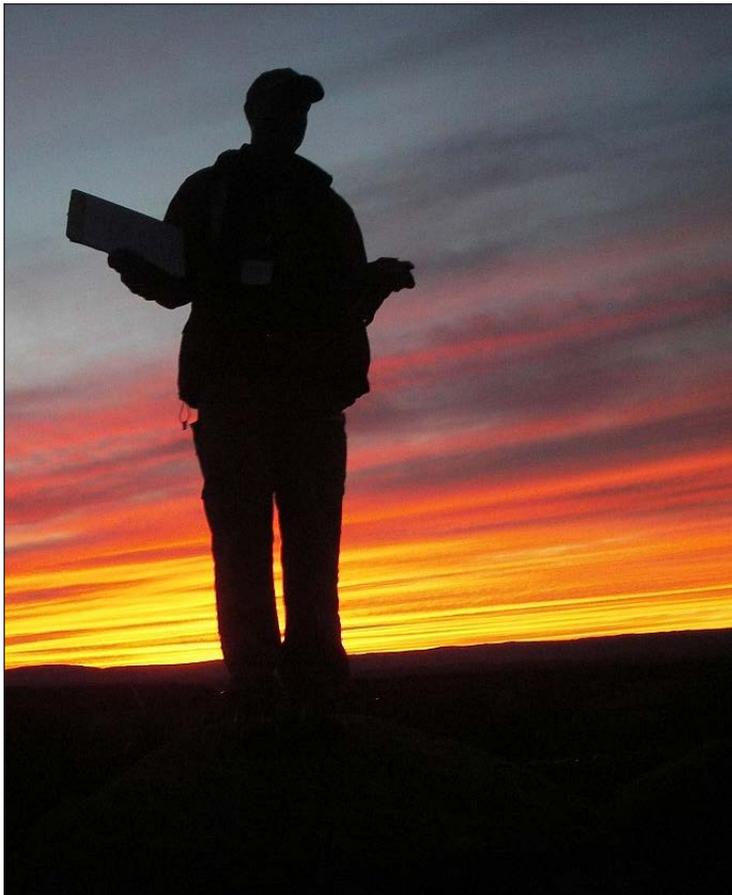
It's a beautifully landscaped oasis with a mix of historic and modern architecture set amid open expanses of green lawns and walkways. The five buildings we are using are all within easy walking distance.

And closeby, of course, is the battlefield, one of the most hallowed grounds in the U.S. And we're only a half-hour away from the AT, as well as the AT Museum.



ALTHOM / ISTOCK.COM

Pennsylvania Hall, iconic centerpiece of Gettysburg's campus, was used as a hospital in the Civil War.



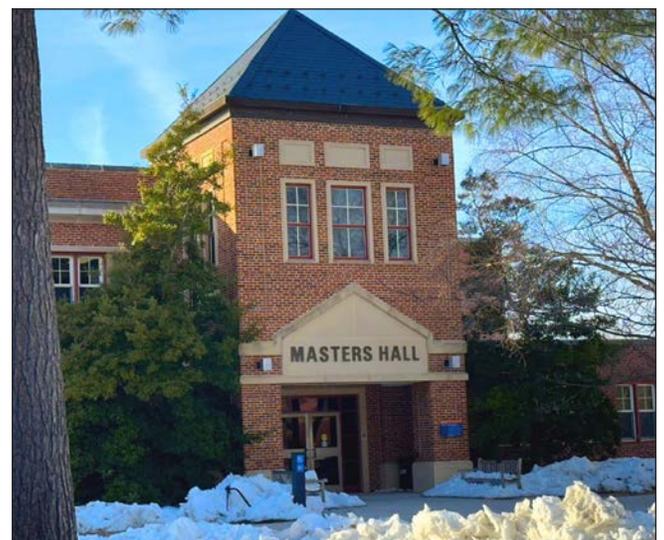
RYAN HAMLER

Shane O'Donnell, aka 'Jester,' leads a sunset hike on the battlefield during the 2009 Gathering, the last time we were at Gettysburg.

A half-hour drive up the road will take you to the Appalachian Trail and the AT Museum. The museum will be open all weekend for tours. And our Monday work trip will be at the hiker hostel nearby.

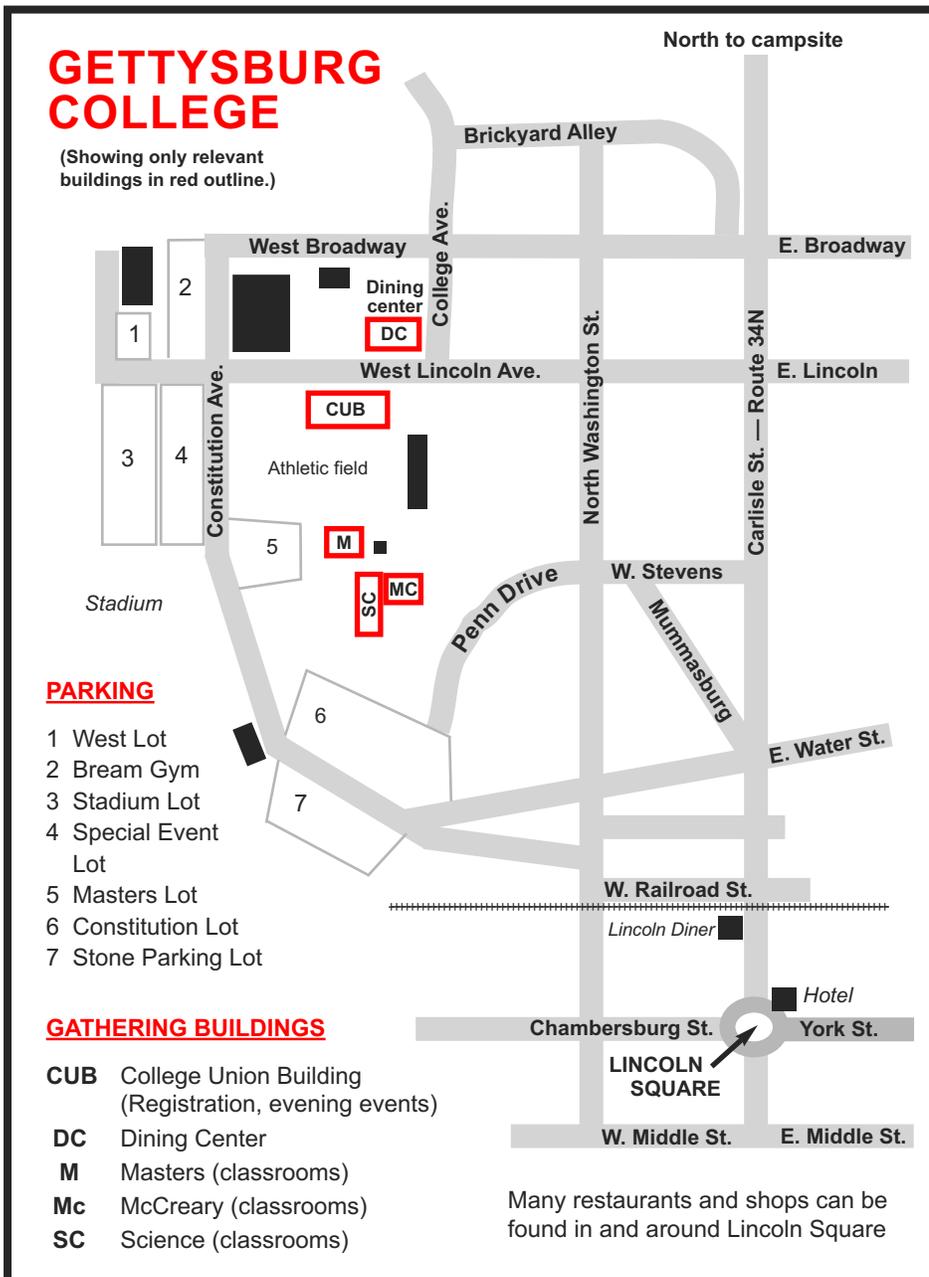


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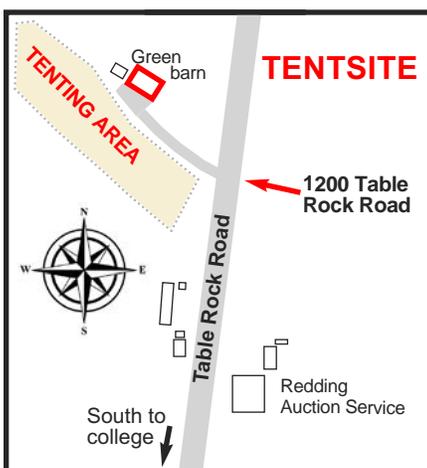
BILL O'BRIEN

One of the classroom buildings we'll be using for workshops during the Gathering on Saturday and Sunday.



HOW TO GET THERE

- **By car:** Set your GPS for the College Union Building, or CUB, 242 W. Lincoln Ave., Gettysburg. Park in one of the lots at left.
- **By plane:** The closest airports are Harrisburg (MDT), a 1-hour drive; Dulles (IAD), a 1.5-hour drive; and Baltimore-Washington (BWI), 1.5 hours.
- **By train:** The Harrisburg Amtrak Station is a 1-hour drive from campus. Baltimore Washington Amtrak is a 1.5-hour drive away.
- **Registration desk:** inside the CUB, near the information desk in the main hallway on first floor. Meal tickets can be picked up here.
- **CUB Ballroom:** site of Friday and Saturday night programs.
- **Hiker Fair:** the open area behind the CUB's info desk.
- **Dining Center:** The college dining hall is across the street from the CUB. It's open for dinner Friday and for all three meals Saturday and Sunday. *No cash or credit cards allowed.* Instead, meal tickets must be purchased by Sept. 28 at aldha.org/the-gathering. Pick them up at the registration desk.
- **Other food:** Gettysburg has lots of restaurants featuring an extensive variety of cuisine, but parking is tight on weekends.



TO THE CAMPSITE FROM COLLEGE

Set your GPS to 1200 Table Rock Road, Gettysburg, Pa.

Follow Carlisle Street (Route 34N), heading north for about 1 mile.

At the fork where Route 34N continues, leave Route 34N by turning right onto Table Rock Road.

Redding Auction Service is about 2 miles ahead on the right.

Our campsite is about 1/4 mile farther ahead, on the left. Look for ALDHA signs for parking and accessing the camping area.

Campers, RVs and heavy vehicles should park in designated area.

Reminder: The campsite is not equipped with trash receptacles. Drive it in, drive it out. And please, no smoking at or near the barn.

