

THE ALDHA GATHERING

ALDHA is a volunteer group of diverse people from all over the country — some from around the world — who share one thing in common: a desire to help preserve, promote and protect the long-distance hiking experience.



We publish a comprehensive guidebook for the A.T. called the A.T. Thru-Hikers' Companion. We help out low-cost hostels on the trail. And we educate fellow hikers about trail safety, Leave No Trace ethics and other topics.

But most importantly, every year we host what we call The Gathering where hikers, trail angels and those dreaming of doing a future A.T. thru-hike can gather to meet new and old friends, share information about the A.T. and other trails, *and* have a great time. Our evening presentations will be spectacular, and you'll hear more about them soon. We also a hiker fair featuring clubs and vendors.

As author and veteran hiker Karen Berger once observed, the Gathering “draws several hundred of America’s most experienced, trail-hardened and enthusiastic hikers. These are people who have camped next to Icelandic geysers or bushwhacked through Peruvian jungles. They’ve climbed Kilimanjaro or trekked in the Himalayas. Most have spent six months on the Appalachian Trail. And their cumulative hiking experience can be numbered somewhere in the millions — yes, *millions* — of miles.”

Your first step toward this lifetime of adventure is easy. If you want to take part in any of our activities, just show up. *No previous hiking experience is necessary.*

ALDHA

Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association

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website: aldha.org

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Bill O'Brien

Brian O'Malley

Penny Vann

Companion Editor

Mary Julian

At-large members

Andy Boyes

Tom Jenkins

John Jordan

Mary Julian

Christopher Marshburn

Key Dates in 2026

- April 24-26** Flip-Flop Kickoff, Harpers Ferry, W.Va.
- May 1-2** Trailfest, Hot Springs, N.C.
- May 14-17** Appalachian Trail Days, Damascus, Va.
- June 6** National Trails Day
- June 20** A.T. Museum Arts and Culture Festival, on the A.T. in Pine Grove Furnace State Park, Gardners, Pa.
- Sept. 11-13** Trails End Festival, Millinocket, Maine
- Oct. 9-12** **ALDHA's 44th annual Gathering at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania**
- Oct. 9-11** ALDHA-West, Camp Augusta, Nevada County, Calif.

The ALDHA Store

Find a wide variety of shirts, jackets, mugs and memorabilia, much of it embroidered, engraved or otherwise adorned with the ALDHA logo. Visit aldha.org/store.

Social Media

Keep up to date with what's going on in ALDHA by going online for updates on the fall Gathering, the Southern and Mid-Atlantic Rucks, the Thru-Hikers' Companion, etc., at aldha.org as well as on our Facebook pages (search for ALDHA).

On the cover: Gen. Warren statue on Little Round Top, Gettysburg, Pa., by John Twynam, used under standard license via iStockPhoto.com.

ALL HIKERS and LOVERS OF TRAILS...

GET YOURSELF to GETTYSBURG

The 2026 ALDHA
Gathering will be
Columbus Day
weekend at
Gettysburg
College in
Pennsylvania



Discover your next big trail
adventure at the Appalachian
Long Distance Hikers Association's
annual conference Oct. 9-12

Sign up at aldha.org/the-gathering or scan the QR code below.



Gathering and Membership Registration Fees

Membership fees

1-year household membership is \$20
2-year household membership is \$35
3-year household membership is \$45
Lifetime membership is \$600*

(*does not include yearly Gathering fee)

Gathering registration fees*

\$30 per person by May 31
\$40 per person June 1 and after

(*Children 17 and under, and members of the Class of 2026 A.T. thru-hikers get in free.)

Gathering meal tickets

\$11 for breakfast, 7:30-10 a.m.
\$16 for lunch, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
\$17 for dinner, 5-7:30 p.m.

(Meals are available from Friday dinner through Sunday dinner. The campus dining center is across the street from the College Union Building, or CUB. Other dining options are in the CUB and in town.)

Donations

Donations to ALDHA, a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, are tax deductible. A receipt will be sent for your tax records.

Where, When, How Much?

Join us over the Columbus Day Weekend this year for the 44th Gathering of long-distance hikers and friends. The four-day-long event will be at Gettysburg College in

when:
Oct. 9-12, 2026
(Columbus Day Weekend)

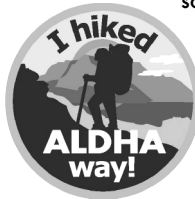
where:
Gettysburg College
in Pennsylvania

how much:
\$30-\$40 a person
(See prices at left; meals are separate)

Gettysburg, Pa., in the midst of a historic setting and just a half hour from the link that binds us in one common thread: The Appalachian Trail. Whether section-hiker or thru-hiker, the best place to plan your next hike is the fall Gathering of the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association, where fellow wanderers will share their most recent adventures on trails all around the globe, giving you great ideas and tips on where you can hike next. And if you're just getting your feet wet and dreaming of someday thru-hiking the A.T., the 2026 Gathering is the place you want to be, especially if you are planning to hit the trail in 2027. Numerous workshops are designed specifically to help you prepare, from lightweight gear to food to first aid.

2,000-Miler Recognition

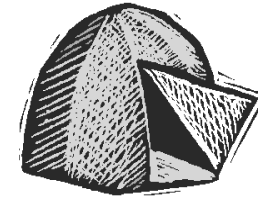
If you finished hiking the full Appalachian Trail this year, going to the Gathering is a great way to ease back into society. You'll get to reunite with your trail friends all over again, starting on Friday night at our opening session. We'll call out each year's class, one year at a time, but saving the Class of 2026 until the end. Then, we'll call you up on stage to get a colorful patch from ALDHA (see the inset photo) and the congratulations of your backpacking peers for finishing the A.T. AND, best of all, the Gathering is **FREE** for 2026 A.T. thru-hikers.



Gathering Programs

Each evening you'll be treated to a feature presentation. The rest of the Gathering weekend is chock full of trail workshops, slide shows, forums and other programs, all aimed at helping you on your next long-distance hiking adventure. And if you have a favorite trail or subject you'd like to share, by all means let us know so you can put on your own workshop. Sign up to do a workshop using the online form at aldha.org/the-gathering.

Campsite, Hotels & Meals



Your Gathering registration fee will entitle you to free camping a short 3.5 miles from the Gettysburg campus. Just bring your own tent and sleeping gear. We'll provide a list of area hotels for those who

prefer not to camp. (We are trying to get a group discount for attendees at one of the hotels.) You can buy meal tickets in advance and eat in the campus dining hall, or buy your meals at one of the many area restaurants.

How to Get There

If you're staying in a hotel or RV park, go straight to the CUB to sign in by setting your GPS to 242 W. Lincoln Ave., and park nearby. If you're camping out, set up your tent at the campsite Friday (at 1200 Table Rock Road, Gettysburg) then head for the CUB to sign in. The registration desk opens Friday at 1 p.m.



Things to Bring

- All the comforts you'll need for car camping. (Going lightweight is not really necessary.)
- Earplugs to block tentsite neighbors who snore.
- Photos from the trail for the photo contest. (Put your name on the back. See categories online.)
- Water and trash bags for the campsite, which has no water or trash cans onsite.
- A camp chair to sit in at the campfire.
- Work gloves and work clothes for the work trip on the A.T., following the Gathering. (See below.)

Giving Back to the Trail



We always have a trail work trip on the Monday after the Gathering. It allows us hikers a chance to give back to the trails we love. Also, it's the Columbus Day holiday, so many of us have the day off.

This year, we'll be a half hour up the road at Ironmasters Mansion Hostel, on the A.T., to paint and do other chores. Your overnight stay and dinner are free. Space may be limited so sign up at the registration desk.