

The Long Distance Hiker

Special Edition for the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association



Vol. 37, No. 3

'ALDHA News That Fits We Print Since 1983'

September 2026

YOUR GUIDE TO GETTYSBURG

In just 30 days or so, you'll be packing up to head for this year's ALDHA Gathering. To help your preparations and pique your interest, here's an 8-page guide to the weekend that's chock full of details, from workshops and forums to maps and directions. Find out how to register if you haven't already, how to submit your trail pics to the photo contest, how to take part in our annual elections, and how to find a ride or a rider if you can carpool with someone. A battlefield hike and work trip are also explained. — *Bill O'Brien*

INDEX

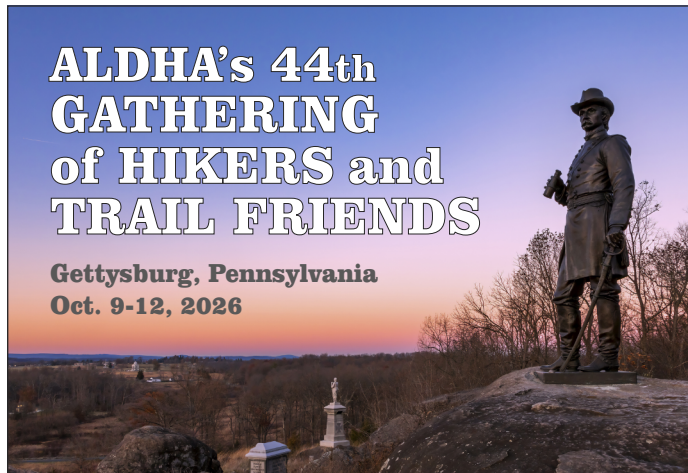
Almanac	7
Battlefield hike	6
Dedication / free mugs	7
Dining services profile	7
Directions	8
Elections	2
Hammocks	7
Hiker fair setup	7
Keynote speakers	4-5

Meal tickets	7
Meteor shower	7
Photo contest	6
Ride board	7
Showers at the Y	7
Tenting	7
Thru-hike 2026 freebie	7
Volunteers needed	2
Where do I go first?	8
Workshops	3
Work trip	3

ALDHA's 44th GATHERING of HIKERS and TRAIL FRIENDS

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

Oct. 9-12, 2026



JOHN TYNUM / ISTOCK

The Gen. Warren statue on Little Round Top in Gettysburg, Pa.

Veteran global explorer traces long forgotten stories of past

Our featured speaker on Saturday night at the Gathering will be J.R. Harris of New York, a renowned explorer who has ventured to mountains, lakes, rivers, deserts and the polar ice cap to experience the world all around us. Here's how he spent his summer ...

When J. Robert "J.R." Harris first set foot on Greenland's inland ice cap in 1995, he was guided by little more than a paper topo map, a compass and a healthy dose of audacity. Traveling alone across the Arctic wilderness, the long-time New York City denizen spent 12 days trekking 100-plus miles between the remote Indigenous communities of Kangerlussuaq and Sisimiut, following herds of muskoxen across tundra with no GPS and no safety net.



COURTESY OF J.R. HARRIS

For several years now, world explorer J.R. Harris of New York City, our Saturday evening keynote speaker, has been a mentor to our Friday night speaker, Derick Lugo (inset), also of New York City. **See Page 5.**

Thirty-one years later, the veteran explorer and member of The Explorers Club returned for an encore. But at 82 years old, Harris didn't go back to

break trail or prove his endurance. He returned to chase a century-old story.

Continued on Page 4

BULLET POINTS

WHEN AND WHERE

- Oct. 9-12 — Columbus Day holiday weekend
- Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pa.
- Directions on Page 8

REGISTRATION FEE

- For all 3 days: **\$40**
- Tenting nearby is **FREE**

MEAL TICKETS

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

SIGN UP ONLINE AT

aldha.org/the-gathering



The Long Distance Hiker

September 2026

Vol. 37, No. 3

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

ALDHA Coordinator

Joe Gleason '27

Assistant Coordinator

Penny Vann '27

Treasurer

Jill Byrd '26

Membership Secretary

Brian O'Malley '26

Recording Secretary

Kristi McLeod '27

At-Large Board Members

Andy Boyes '26

Tom Jenkins '27

John Jordan '26

Mary Julian '26

Christopher Marshburn '27

Vacancy '26

Vacancy '27

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: Tom Jenkins

Post-Gathering work trip coordinators:

Jim Foster and Vera Hurst

Earl Shaffer Memorial Photo Contest:

Sanne Larsen and Mary Lou Lester

Sunrise Service: Kip Redick

Official photographer: H. Dean Clark

Gathering games: John Jordan

Signature banner: Ann Gerckens

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.

Elections are now under way, so exercise your right to vote

It's the fall, so that means it's election season once again.

On the ALDHA board of directors, there are two officer positions and four at-large member positions that need to be filled.

Voting opened Sept. 1 and will close Sept. 30. Electronic ballots will be available through the ALDHA website, with one ballot per membership. You should have gotten the link in the September issue of *The Blaze*. If not, you can find complete bios and a ballot



at aldha.org/elections.

There is only one candidate for each of the two officer positions, treasurer and membership secretary, although write-ins are allowed.

There are five candidates for the four at-large seats, so you have to make a choice. Write-ins are also allowed.

Election results will be announced at the Sunday business meeting at the Gathering and published on the ALDHA website and in *The Blaze*.

Ballots received after Sept. 30 will not be counted.

We need several people to step up

As anyone who has been at a previous Gathering has seen, it's not a one-person job. Already since February, a committee has been meeting to organize this year's event.

We also have several people taking ownership of certain areas, including the tent site,

which will be organized by

Mark Hudson. Ann

Gerckens has been

designing the banner

that attendees

will sign, and Mar-

lene Simpson will

take care of display-

ing the banner and

making sure there are

plenty of Sharpies available

for people to leave their mark. Brian O'Malley and Tom Jenkins are handling the hiker fair, Kip Redick will lead the sunrise service and Chuck Wood will help out with the campfire.

Mike and Martha Wingart are coordinating the meal tickets, Joe Gleason has charge of the Friday orientation for Gathering newbies, and Vera Hurst and Jim Foster are handling the food and work details, respectively, for Monday's work trip at Ironmasters Mansion Hostel.

Meanwhile, Sanne Larsen and Mary Lou Lester are in charge of the photo contest (see story on Page 6), and John Jordan is ringmaster once again for a series of group games. Weathercarrot will assist with this year's rendition of Trail Jeopardy.

But we still need several people over the weekend for the key tasks below. Don't wait: Volunteer now at gathering@aldha.org.

■ **Parking attendants (see Mark).**

■ **Registration packet stuffers (see Penny Vann).**

■ **A building greeter in the 3 classroom buildings for 3 shifts: Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, Sunday afternoon (see Bill O'Brien).**

■ **Someone to post itinerary sheets on each classroom, using a small piece of blue painter's tape on Friday (see Bill O).**

■ **A tech troubleshooter in each building (see Bill).**

■ **Campfire monitors (see Woodchuck).**

Penny Vann is handling announcements, which will **not** be read from the podium this year but rather posted on the big screen in the Ballroom when appropriate during evening programs, and listed on a board at ALDHA Central at other times. So if there's a brief announcement that needs to be made, see Penny in plenty of time before any evening programs so she can create a slide for the big screens. (This will include changes in the program that crop up over the course of the weekend.)

And let's not forget the workshop presenters, our day-hike leader and the hiker fair exhibitors who are volunteering their time to fill all facets of this event. It wouldn't be a Gathering without all these people pitching in.



Workshops and forums await

From hiking trails to hiker tales, backwoods ethics to book authors, there's a wide variety of workshops lined up to keep you busy during the weekend. Here are highlights of what's on tap:

WHERE TO HIKE NEXT

The Pacific Crest Trail, presented by Sandy "Frodo" Mann, who with her husband Barney is a PCT thru-hiker, hiker host and yearslong advocate and lobbyist for this trail.

The Continental Divide Trail, presented by Ed Kostak, who just completed a CDT section hike to become a triple-crowner.

The John Muir Trail, presented by Reg Spittle, author of a book on the JMT. From California, he's excited to be attending his first Gathering.

The Mountains to the Sea Trail by trail maintainer and 1992 AT thru-hiker Andrew Sam, aka "Medicine Man," of North Carolina.

The Benton MacKaye Trail: America's next National Scenic Trail, presented by BMT hiker, former ATC president and ALDHA co-founder Ron Tipton.

The Centennial Trail in South Dakota, presented by Rush Williamson, a longtime leader in the Potomac AT Club.

Backpacking in Michigan by Todd Carlson, a new ALDHA member coming to his first Gathering to tout trails in his home state.

The Cohos Trail: A trail less traveled, presented by Dr. G. Nelson about a 240-mile trail from New Hampshire into Quebec.

The New England National Scenic Trail, presented by 2026 NET hiker Laurie Adkins, aka "The Umbrella Lady."

Sights and hikes in Peru and Chile, presented by former ALDHA board member Chris Vores, he'll take you to the sights and hikes in the Andes, including Machu Picchu.

My experience of 2,160 miles and 24 locations on the International Appalachian Trail, by Will French, an IAT booster.

Hiking on the International Appalachian Trail in Ireland and Northern Ireland, by Julie Queen, manager of the AT Museum.

Below the Rim of the Grand Canyon, presented by Kristin Leach, aka "Peaches," who recounts a six-day trek during winter.

A trek in the enchanted land of Nepal, offered by Judy "Gray Jay" Young based on her experiences before the recent flooding.

Adventures in dog sledding in Alaska, presented by Dan Nellis, an early member of ALDHA who spent time in the 49th state.

ON THE TRAIL

Women's safety and security on the trail — Inspired by recent incidents, this session will be led by a woman 2,000-miler who is a current ATC ridgerunner in Pennsylvania.

Wildflowers of the Appalachian Trail: A 2,000-mile floral parade — Leonard Adkins will offer a pictorial lesson on the leaves, flowers and berries of what's in the woods.

How to stay found — Led by Andy Boyes, it's a precursor to the compass workshop.

Landnav/Compass skills — Presented by an orienteering expert, former ALDHA coordinator Dennis Newton.

Section-hiking benefits — "Hikerboy" Andy Boyes will draw on his 50 years of section-hiking experience for this "how to" session.

Section-hiking the AT: past, present and future — A different perspective and approach to section-hiking by hiker Bill Cooke.

How has AT thru- and section-hiking changed over the last 53 years? — Warren Doyle tracks the evolution he has seen his first thru-hike in 1973.

Day-hiking the entire Appalachian Trail — Other than a couple of overnights needed in the Smokies, Warren Doyle says there's a way to do the rest of the trail as a day-hiker.

The AT Barstool Debates — Tim Bennett will lead an imaginary pub crawl along the AT while discussing the pros and cons of various styles of hiking the trail.

First aid and mental health on the trail — Brian O'Malley, registered nurse, will prepare you for first aid and coping with mental health issues on a thru-hike.

Help, I'm back in the real world! — Penny Vann leads an interactive discussion of post-hike depression and how to lessen it.

Electronics on the trail — Gary Windham weighs in on the power and usefulness of various devices you can pack along.

Build a cat food can alcohol stove — Jan Shuster will show how to make a camp stove out of a cat food can. (BYO Can.)

PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

Forum: Minorities on the trail — Two of our keynote speakers, Derick Lugo and J.R. Harris, will talk about their experiences.

The centennial of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy — Jim Foster and Ron Tipton will trace the 100-year history of the ATC.

Forum: The Next 100 years of the ATC — Jim LaTorre, chairman of the ATC board, and Hawk Metheny, vice president of trail management, will lead this discussion.

History of the AT Museum — Recently retired president Larry Luxenberg reflects on his 28 years as head of the museum he founded.

Tails from the trail — Maria Wishart builds on past workshops to share lessons learned from hiking long distances with a pet dog.

The first person to walk from Katahdin to Oglethorpe — Historian Mills Kelly will tell the amusing story of the man who finished a complete section-hike 90 years ago this year.

My 58-year love affair with the AT — Warren Doyle reflects on his passion for the trail he first experienced on Mount Madison in 1968.

The Class of 1976: What was it like hiking 50 years ago? — S.G. Arey will paint a picture of a different era in the world of AT thru-hiking.

Women pioneers of the AT — Museum vice president and author Gwen Loose will introduce you to the female founders of the trail.

Trail epiphanies/stories — Master storyteller Warren Doyle shares five epiphanies he has experienced at specific sites in five states between the Smokies and Speck Pond.

The future of ALDHA: Where do we go from here? — Coordinator Joe Gleason will lead.

Open house, work trip at AT Museum and hostel

On Oct. 8, the Thursday before the Gathering, you're welcome to check out the AT Museum in Pine Grove Furnace State Park during an open house and tour from 1-4 p.m. Stay the night at Ironmasters Mansion Hostel on the other side of the camp store. Or at the park campground, then

head to Gettysburg on Friday morning.

The museum, at 1120 Pine Grove Road in Gardners, Pa., will be open all weekend and on Monday, Columbus Day, in case you can't make it on Thursday.

On that Monday, the post-Gathering work trip

will take place at the hostel where painting and cleaning will be the order of the day. A signup sheet and waiver need to be signed at ALDHA Central in the CUB during the weekend. Your overnight hostel stay and dinner will be provided by ALDHA and the museum free of charge.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

History and humor: Taking a second look

Leonard Adkins is a frequent presenter at ALDHA Gatherings, and it was a session he offered at last year's Gathering that spurred us to have him present it to a larger audience at this year's Gathering.

He has compiled about 100 vintage and never-before-seen photos from his six-book pictorial history series on the Appalachian Trail in celebration of last year's 100th anniversary of the ATC. In addition to the photos, Leonard has dug up the background details on these images, some of which are surprisingly hilarious.

He will present an encore of his presentation as the capstone of the Gathering on Sunday night at 7 in Masters Room 110.

Leonard is an author, avid backcountry adventurer and outdoor writer with more than 20,000 miles of total hiking experience. He and his wife Laurie have hiked several trails together, and several others separately. He has thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail five times. He has explored

long-distance routes globally, including thru-hikes of the Continental Divide Trail and Long Trail.

His deep relationship with the AT extends into volunteer stewardship, having served as a ridgerunner, a Natural Heritage monitor and a board member for maintaining clubs associated with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

He was the first editor of ALDHA's *Long Distance Hiker* newsletter (in the 1980s), and, with Laurie, is an honorary life member of ALDHA.

He has written more than 20 books focusing on hiking, regional natural history and outdoor



Leonard Adkins

travel. His AT-related works include titles such as "Wildflowers of the Appalachian Trail," "Nature of the Appalachian Trail," "Best of the Appalachian Trail" (both day hikes and overnight hikes), and the "Along the Appalachian Trail" books published through the "Images of America" series.

His book about wildflowers on the AT will be the subject of a separate workshop during this Gathering.

His writing work has earned multiple accolades, including the National Outdoor Book Award and the Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Award.

We hope to have a special treat as part of his presentation this year, something that wasn't included in the workshop last year, so stay tuned.

HARRIS: On the trail of forgotten history

Continued from Page 1

Harris' Arctic expedition stemmed from a deep curiosity about the 1909 Arctic expedition of Robert Peary and Matthew Henson, the groundbreaking Black American explorer who reached the North Pole alongside Peary. While history celebrated Peary and Henson, the four Indigenous Greenlandic men who accompanied them were largely left out of Western history books.

"Their names were not lost to history," Harris explained in an interview, noting that Peary documented them meticulously in his logs during their two decades in the region. "They were very well-known among the people living in Greenland back then... but not many people outside of Greenland even know about them, although they did some really extraordinary things up there."

Combining his passion for wilderness travel with his background as a social scientist, Harris tracked down the living descendants of those four Inuit polar explorers, as well as the local descendants of Henson himself.

Rather than isolated wilderness survival, this journey focused on living history, cultural immer-

sion and traditional Arctic skills. During the trip, Harris planned to learn traditional dog-mushing and seal hunting from the local descendants.

"This time it's going to be a different trip," Harris said beforehand. "It's going to be more about learning about the Inuit culture and their tradition, their history, religion and their voyages of exploration."



H. DEAN CLARK

Unconventional Trailblazer

For those who have followed Harris' career, his solo approach to adventure comes as no surprise. Unlike backpackers who flock to well-trod thru-hikes, Harris has built a life seeking solitude on remote international treks.

His long-distance resume includes the 233-mile Canol Heritage Trail through northern Canada's rugged Mackenzie Mountains — a

three-week unsupported trek where he didn't encounter a single soul.

His taste for the open road began long before modern outdoor gear existed. As a 22-year-old in New York City, Harris impulsively drove a Volkswagen Beetle cross-country to the northernmost road in Alaska, 1,500 miles each way — an audacious journey that sparked a lifelong obsession with wilderness exploration.

That trip set off more than five decades of unsupported solo expeditions around the globe, which he detailed in his memoir, "Way Out There: Adventures of a Wilderness Trekker." (Harris will autograph copies during the Gathering.)

The Science of Survival: 'Plan to Plan'

Stepping into extreme environments alone requires meticulous preparation. Harris divides all of his expedition planning into four strict pillars: clothing, food, gear and logistics.

In the decades before instant satellite communication, planning a single journey meant writing snail-mail letters and sending faxes across oceans just to source regional map sheets. While GPS devices like Garmin inReach have made safety communications easier today, Harris' core philosophy remains anchored in old-school self-reliance.

"Because I'm going alone, because I'm probably not going to see anybody, I need to make sure that every possibility... I've thought about it and I have a response for it," Harris said. "The stakes are higher for my trips... If I get in trouble, I have to be able to deal with it on my own."

To sum up his approach to adventure, Harris points to a timeless quote from Benjamin Franklin: "By failing to plan, you are planning to fail."

So how did his expedition to Greenland go? You'll have to come to the Gathering to find out.

THE MENTOR MEETS HIS MENTEE

J.R. Harris, Derick Lugo: Two New Yorkers share common bond with the trail

By BILL O'BRIEN

Gathering Program Chairman

When Derick Lugo was born, J.R. Harris had already bicycled from New York City to Montreal, canoed all over up-state New York, Maine and Minnesota/Ontario, and backpacked in the Adirondacks, Alaska, Montana, Canada, the Arctic Circle and New Zealand.

And that's not to mention his first cross-country trip — exactly 60 years ago this year — when, as a 22-year-old former Boy Scout in New York City, he drove a VW Bug from his home all the way to Circle, Alaska, and back again. Why? He wanted his car to be the northernmost vehicle in North America.

That sort of Quixotic quest has driven the 82-year-old for the past six decades. He will regale those who attend this year's Gathering with tales from his many other adventures around the globe, including an expedition this summer where he traveled around Greenland with an interpreter to meet up with descendants of the four Inuit men who guided Robert Peary and Matthew Henson on their historic trek to the North Pole in 1909.

It's not everyday a kid from New York City grows up to become an explorer in his own right. It's even more unique that the kid, now an elderly gentleman, is a minority who rarely ever read about explorers who looked like him, with the great Matthew Henson a rare exception.

And then along came Derick Lugo, a native of the New York borough of Brooklyn, who read lots of stories about famous travels and adventures, including one influential book that he and I share as major touchstones in our respective lives: John Steinbeck's "Travels With Charley." (I am forever indebted, Monsignor Tucker.)

When Derick decided against driving around the country in favor of walking a famous long-distance hiking trail, he was about as tender-footed as they come. In fact, it was not until his very first night on the Appalachian Trail in 2012 that he had ever camped out in the woods. That fact alone is so hard to imagine, that after his highly successful and enjoyable end-to-end walk from Georgia to Maine, he titled his book about his adventure, "The Unlikely Thru-Hiker."

He was a popular and recognizable character on the trail that year, with his long braided hair tucked up in a dread tube and wearing his signature purple clothing and accessories. It was only natural that he would accept the trail moniker of "Mr. Fabulous."

It wasn't until the publication of his book seven years later that Derick started to become more universally known in thru-hiking circles. He also caught the attention of fellow New



CONTRIBUTED

J.R. Harris, left, and Derick Lugo met at a restaurant in Manhattan in March where, among other things, they talked about their coming appearances at ALDHA's 44th Gathering in Gettysburg, Pa., over the Columbus Day weekend holiday.

Yorker J.R. Harris, who reached out to Derick in 2019 and arranged to meet in person — at the prestigious Explorers Club no less, where J.R. was made a member years ago. It was the start of a great bond that continues to this day.

The two well-traveled adventurers (Derick is now a triple-crowner) will deliver keynote addresses at this year's ALDHA Gathering, which is Oct. 9-12 at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania.

Derick will be the Friday night opening speaker, and J.R. will deliver his presentation Saturday night. Then, on Sunday, the two will sit for an informal discussion about minorities on the trail, sharing their individual experiences in hopes that others will follow in their footsteps.

Details on how to sign up to attend the Gathering are at aldha.org/the-gathering.

Andy Boyes, aka 'Hiker Boy,' captured this photo of the wild ponies and other residents of the Appalachian Trail at Wilburn Ridge in Virginia in May 2025. His photo won first place in the wildlife category at last year's Earl Shaffer Memorial Photo Contest. He's pretty sure that's Mount Rogers in the background, and yes, that's a steer sitting among the ponies, with another steer or calf at left.



Annual photo contest: Give it your best shot

The Earl Shaffer Memorial Photo Contest will return to this year's Gathering after a successful run at last year's event.

All Gathering attendees are encouraged to bring their best photos to the Gathering to enter them in the contest. Judges will review the submissions and award prizes to the winners.

Contestants must be registered for the Gathering in order to enter.

Here are the rules:

- Participants must submit a print photo (snapshot sized, unmatted) for display and judging, up to 5 photos per contestant, and only one photo per category. (Drugstores and office supply stores offer print services from emails and thumb drives at very low cost.)

THE 5 CATEGORIES

- 1) Beauty and Grandeur of the AT
- 2) Beauty and Grandeur of any trail (other than the AT)
- 3) Flora/Fauna (on any trail)
- 4) Humor (on any trail)
- 5) Community (on any trail)

- Submissions will be accepted Friday starting at 3 p.m. in the CUB.

- Name, category and some info about the

photo's subject must be provided on the form provided at time of submission. (For example, Sam Stone, flora/fauna, Foothills Trail / birds at waterfall.)

- Voting will take place Saturday, from noon to 5 p.m.

- Gathering attendees may vote for one photo per category.

- Winners will be announced at the Sunday business meeting.

- If not in attendance at/after Sunday's business meeting, participants should have made arrangements for a representative to pick up their prize(s). Prizes not picked up by 3 p.m. Sunday will be forfeited — although the "winner" designation(s) will remain for that contestant.

Walking tour of the battlefield offered on Saturday

Former coordinator Henry Edwards will be back to his first Gathering in several years to lead a day-hike on the Gettysburg Battlefield.

A teacher, author and history buff, Henry will offer an entertaining trip through a portion of the pivotal 1863 battle that forever made Gettysburg

synonymous with the American Civil War.

It'll be a 3-mile hike after lunch on Saturday (raindate Sunday), starting at the visitor center. You'll see Union Gen. Meade's headquarters, the field of Pickett's Charge, and the National Cemetery where Abraham Lincoln delivered

"the address." A signup sheet and waiver form that participants must sign will be posted at ALDHA Central in Room 126 of the CUB. Printed directions will be made available there.

Dress for the weather, wear good walking shoes, bring water and, if needed, a snack.

GATHERING ALMANAC

Buy meal tickets now before it's too late

If you want to enjoy the convenience and camaraderie of having your meals on campus, you must buy meal tickets in advance. The dining center *will not* take cash or cards. You can buy tickets while paying your registration fee online at aldha.org/the-gathering. The deadline for buying your tickets is Sept. 28.

Here are the costs and dining times for each meal at the Dining Center:

- Breakfast **\$11**, 7:30-10 a.m.
- Lunch: **\$16**, 11:30-1:30
- Dinner: **\$17**, 5-7:30 p.m.
- Deadline: **Sept. 28**.

There are plenty of restaurants if you prefer to drive into town and have time to be away from the Gathering. Be advised: parking in this tourist town is tight. There's a fast-food outlet in the CUB called The Bullet Hole, but its hours will be limited on Columbus Day Weekend.

Dining Center achieves national distinction

Gettysburg College Dining Services consistently ranks as one of the premier campus culinary programs in the U.S., currently boasting the No. 5 ranking nationally for Best Campus Food, according to *The Princeton Review*. The Dining Center has several main stations serving different dishes, in addition to self-serve stations for things like build-your-own salads, Asian food, hot dogs (with all the fixings), and a pizza parlor in the back. Everything — and we mean everything, from main courses to beverages — is All You Can Eat and Drink.

Need a ride or a rider? Visit our Facebook page

On ALDHA's Facebook group page, there's an interactive Ride Board where you can post a note seeking a ride to Gettysburg, or if you have room in your vehicle, offer a ride to someone who might not be able to attend the Gathering otherwise. It's a great way to share gas costs.

Camping near campus part of registration fee

Remember, camping is included with your Gathering registration. The field will have porta-potties in a central location, but no water or trash collection is available. "Drive it in, drive it out." Mark Hudson, is overseeing the tentsite, so please follow his car and tenting directions.

One area will be set aside for evening campfires. The farther away you pitch your tent, the

quieter it will be. But bring earplugs just the same. (No other campfires will be permitted.)

As we cautioned in April, hotel rooms in Gettysburg come at a dear price in the fall, but check travel sites anyway for possible deals.

Oh, and if you prefer to sleep in a hammock, be advised to bring your own frame. There are virtually no trees on the field where we'll be tenting.

Limited number of mugs available from family

The 2026 Gathering is dedicated in memory of longtime ALDHA member Pieter A. Van Why, aka "The Cheshire Cat," who died five days shy of his 83rd birthday in April. Pieter thru-hiked



the AT in 1985 and started attending Gatherings that very year. He went on to do the AT three more times and tackle several other long trails.

At Pieter's celebration of life in Colebrook, Conn., on Aug. 22, his family had commemorative mugs made for those who attended, among them Tim Messerich, Kirk Sinclair, Bill O'Brien and Chuck Wood. (Chuck thru-hiked the AT with Pieter in 1985.) The family has graciously donated leftover mugs to anyone at the Gathering who knew Pieter. The mugs, several photos and a Final Blaze crafted by his trail partner "Woodchuck" will be displayed on a Spirit Table at the hiker fair.

Hiker fair still has room for trail clubs, vendors

Authors, too! If you need a table to tout your stuff, visit aldha.org/the-gathering to fill out a vendor form. It's free for Gathering registrants. The hiker fair will be located in the College Union Building, or CUB, in both the lobby behind the info desk and in the back of the Ballroom. Tables will be provided, and each one will be labeled with the presenter's name on it.

For those planning to set up a display, you will not have access to the CUB until late Friday morning, Oct. 9. We'll need time to set up the tables and have them labeled for those who have reserved one ahead of time. ALDHA board member Tom Jenkins will be on hand to assist you. Remember: To reserve a table, register for the Gathering and fill out the vendor form at aldha.org/the-gathering. Do it soon!

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

Anyone who has finished the whole Appalachian Trail 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, if you're an ALDHA member, we'll mail you a nice certificate that you can have framed.

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.



Free showers available for members of YMCA

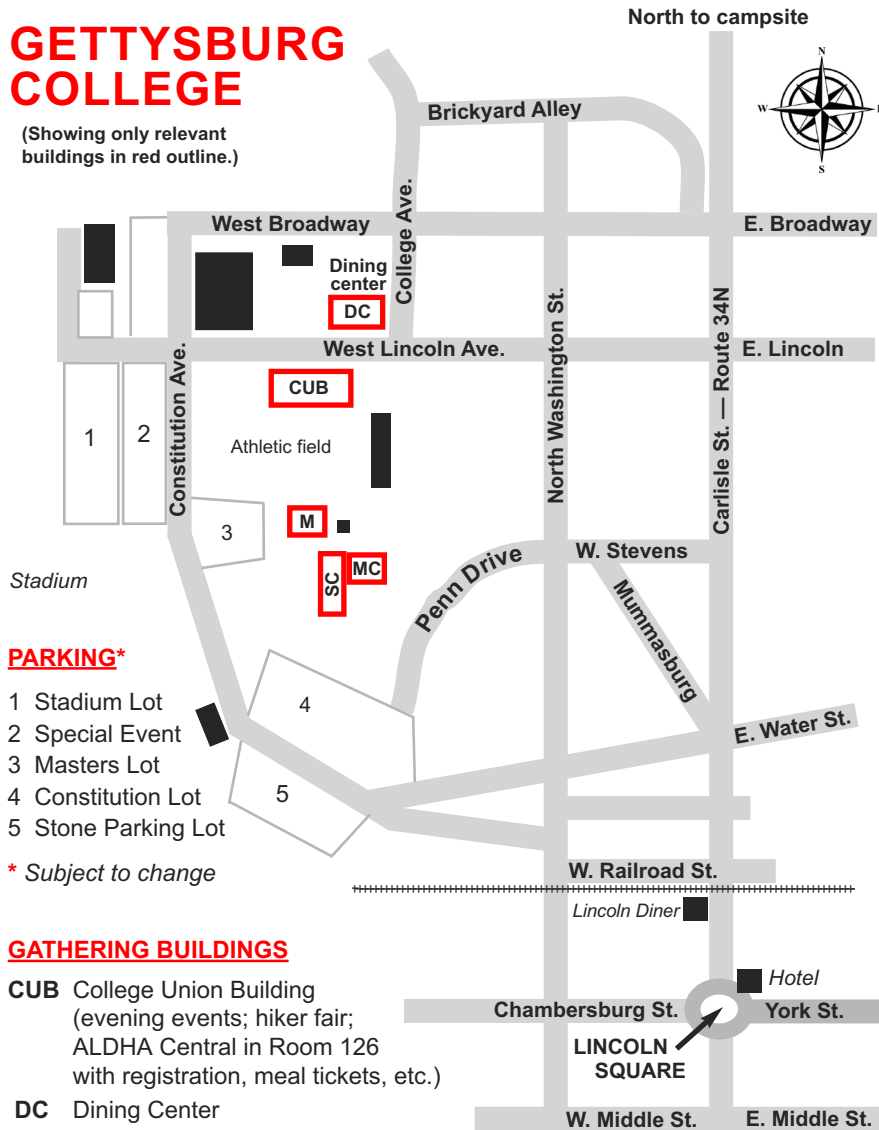
While the sports complex is not available for showers, there is a nearby option if you really need to take a shower. The YMCA at 909 Fairfield Road has free showers for members (bring your card!). For nonmembers, they charge \$10.

Meteor shower hits peak during the night Friday

The Draconid meteor shower peaks on the Friday night of the Gathering. While it's a modest shower with about six shooting stars an hour, viewing conditions will be excellent because it will coincide with a nearly new moon, leaving dark skies free of moonlight interference. The tentsite is far from city lights, so if it's a clear night, gaze upward. Why mention this? Last time we were there, a green meteor streaked by.

GETTYSBURG COLLEGE

(Showing only relevant buildings in red outline.)



PARKING*

- 1 Stadium Lot
- 2 Special Event
- 3 Masters Lot
- 4 Constitution Lot
- 5 Stone Parking Lot

* Subject to change

GATHERING BUILDINGS

- CUB** College Union Building (evening events; hiker fair; ALDHA Central in Room 126 with registration, meal tickets, etc.)
- DC** Dining Center
- M** Masters (classrooms)
- Mc** McCreary (classrooms)
- SC** Science (classrooms)

Many restaurants and shops can be found in and around Lincoln Square but parking is at a premium.

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:** Closest airports are Harrisburg (MDT), a 1-hour drive; Dulles (IAD), 1.5-hour drive; 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.

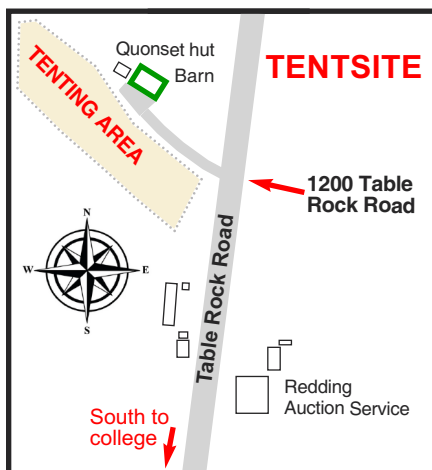
■ **Where do I go first?** If tenting, go to the campsite, 1200 Table Rock Road, Gettysburg, on Thursday or Friday. If in a hotel, go there first. Registration does not open until Friday at 1 p.m. in CUB 126.

■ **Registration:** In CUB 126. Open Friday 1-6 + 9:30-10 p.m.; Saturday 8:30-4; Closing on Sunday.

■ **CUB Ballroom:** Site of Friday and Saturday night programs.

■ **Hiker Fair:** Behind info desk in the CUB, and in the Ballroom.

■ **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.



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.