

Hiking the Appalachian Trail



Complete two activities in the Skill Builders section, one activity in each of the other three sections, and two other activities in any section you choose.

Skill Builders

- 1.** List what you need to carry with you on a day hike or an overnight hike along the Appalachian Trail and be able to tell why each item is important. Help plan and participate in three day hikes or one overnight hike. Be sure to practice minimal-impact ethics during your hikes. Keep a journal of your experiences.
- 2.** Learn about trail nutrition. How much water do you need for your hike? Check *Safety Wise* and know how to purify water for drinking. Plan and prepare a nutritious, well-balanced meal that requires no cooking and no refrigeration. Eat this meal on one of your day hikes. Remember to include emergency rations.
- 3.** Know how to give first aid for the following: cuts, scrapes, sprains, bee stings, hypothermia, frostbite, burns, heat exhaustion, and heatstroke. Assemble a small hiking first aid kit to carry with you.
- 4.** Carry out an overnight hike. Follow *Safety-Wise* guidelines. Obtain permission for the trip and submit a written plan that describes the route and includes emergency procedures and contact information. Establish group safety rules. Learn the rules of fire building along the Appalachian Trail and practice other minimal-impact camping skills, including proper disposal of trash. Carry the necessary equipment, plan menus, and ensure that you have an ample water supply. Upon your return, evaluate your trip and make appropriate changes before your next outing.
- 5.** Identify and record in your journal the names of animals you see along the Appalachian Trail. Sketch and/or photograph them. You may want to carry a field guide to help you. Learn to recognize animal tracks and be able to identify at least three.
- 6.** Identify 10 species of trees along the Appalachian Trail. Be able to identify them by leaf, twig, and/or fruit samples. Name the ways each tree is used by humans and/or wildlife. Record these in your journal using photographs, sketches, or descriptions.

Technology

- 1.** Design a hike to observe birds. Record the name of each bird, the date and location where it was seen, weather conditions, bird companions, and whether or not this may have been a rare sighting. Find out about binoculars. Which ones are best for watching birds? Practice using binoculars to locate perched birds and birds in flight.

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- 2.** Use a computer to help you learn how to read a weather map. Be prepared for changing weather with proper clothing and equipment. Two days before your hike, record the weather and try to predict the weather conditions for your hike. Then record the conditions during the trip in your journal and compare them with your predictions.
- 3.** Learn how to use a compass with a topographical map. Be able to use these skills on your hike to navigate the terrain. Know how to read the map you will be using on your hike. Learn how a compass is constructed and what to consider when purchasing a compass.
- 4.** The Appalachian Trail has a history that includes Native Americans and the Civil War. Using the Internet, find out some of the history of the Appalachian Trail.
- 5.** The Appalachian Trail is approximately 2,000 miles long and runs from Maine to Georgia. Connect with another Girl Scout troop either by mail, through the Internet, or in person and share your experiences on the Appalachian Trail. Exchange journal entries, drawings, photographs, videos, etc., of your hikes on the trail.
- 6.** Visit an outdoor equipment store or look at the website for one of these stores. Find out about the materials used in packs, tents, sleeping bags, boots, and other outdoor gear, including safety equipment. How has technology helped us to improve the equipment used when hiking?

Service Projects

- 1.** Plan and carry out an outdoor skills survival game for a Junior troop or Cadette/Senior troop.
- 2.** Contact a search and rescue group. Volunteer to provide service hours or train to become a member.
- 3.** Organize a trail maintenance or campsite cleanup effort.
- 4.** Take photographs of your hike and organize them in a scrapbook. Donate your scrapbook to a nursing home, rehabilitation center, or childcare center or it share with another troop.

Career Exploration

- 1.** Brainstorm careers that involve protecting the environment. Choose three of these careers and find out what skills, education, and experience are necessary for them.
- 2.** Design your own outdoor business. Give your business a name, sketch out advertising, develop your products, etc.
- 3.** Design a brochure complete with your own photographs, a slideshow, or a video advertising hiking on the Appalachian Trail. Show your presentation to at least two other groups (they may be Girl Scout or community groups). Be prepared to answer questions.
- 4.** Discuss with your troop how your interest in outdoor education and survival could direct girls toward a different path (such as writing, photography, teaching, research, business, medicine, law enforcement, or sales) and invite someone in one of these fields to speak to your troop.

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5. Research the latest techniques used by firefighters in fighting wildfires. Invite a firefighter to speak to your troop or visit the local fire station. Find out what training is necessary to become a firefighter.

Resources:

www.appalachiantrail.org/about/history/index.html
www.aldha.org/advice.htm
www.patc.net/index.html
www.fred.net/kathy/at.html
www.ratc.org/index.shtml



Developed by: Jane Garnett and Laura Garnett
Botetourt Service Unit

