

Appalachian Trail Backpacking Trip

Harriman State Park, NY

April 13-15, 2012

Day 1 (4/13/12)

I guess to start I should mention that this trek almost to not happen. As of Wednesday, there was section of the park which was on fire due to the extreme drought situation. We were unsure how this would affect our intended route. On Thursday, we were given the green light when the fire was finally put out. Later would find just how close our route would come to the affected area. Our goal for the 3 days was to cover approximately 16 miles using the shelter system along the Appalachian Trail as our camp for the 2 nights. It was early in the season and the parks had not yet opened the park campsites.

Our first day Friday started at 9:00 A.M. at the OLPH parking lot where we prepared for our longest day (for what we thought would be 7.6 miles). Upon arrival we gathered everyone together and weighed them with and without their packs to make sure everyone was in the right weight range (the pack should weigh anywhere from 20% - 25% of their weight without the pack). Since we had an unusually small group taking part in this trip and only a small amount of adults we decided to stay in one hiking trek. Just like a patrol, treks are a smaller group of hikers to separate scouts in accordance to skill, cooking, and leadership roles. Mr. Dugas had brought 2-way radios which were distributed to Adam Frank, who would be in the front and one for one of the grown-ups who would be the last hiker to make sure no scout would fall too behind. Finally, we divided up other miscellaneous items and gear, such as paper towels and water filters to people who had an underweight pack. Since we did not have access to potable water, we brought water filters and tablets to use at any streams or lakes within the park. However, since it had not rained recently we were worried that some of the streams would be dried up. Aside from the lack of rain the weather forecast for the weekend was great. To our advantage the weather was supposed to be a very low percentage of rain and sunny.



Once we decided that everyone was set up and had appropriately adjusted backpacks, we gathered all of the hikers together and condensed everyone and their packs into only two cars and drove to the starting point which was the peak of Bear Mountain at Perkins Tower. Once on the top of Bear Mountain, we took in the views of the Hudson Valley from the top of Perkins tower and took a group photo. From there we will go south on the Appalachian Trail (AT). Our goal of the first day was to hike roughly 7.5 miles to the William Brien Shelter. Unfortunately we got off on the wrong foot when Mr. Dugas accidentally picked the wrong entrance to the AT trail which had us heading North. Once he noticed this we all had a good laugh and looked at our maps. Luckily there was another trail that led directly to the right trail and soon, we were back on the right trail. Surprisingly, it looked like we actually took a short cut. For a while we descended Bear Mountain until we reached the bottom. Our new challenge that lied in front of us was West Mountain, which we would have to ascend. But it was all worth it when we were rewarded with an amazing view overlooking the Hudson River and Perkins Tower. We picked this spot for our lunch break.



After completing lunch we geared up and resumed hiking. While descending the other side of West Mountain, we came upon the site of the fire we had heard about. The entire face of the mountain was scorched and still smoldering and warm. Ironically, the AT trail had acted as a fire break by stopping the fire from continuing onto the other side of the trail. It was really cool to see but was a reminder of how we must always be careful when having campfires. Once we reached the bottom of West Mountain, we had another adventure as the AT trail crossed the Palisades Parkway and we had to do it during rush hour. We hiked for several more hours before we reached route 6 and had to cross it, which was an adventure on its own.



After crossing the Palisades we needed to ascend the second major mountain of the day, Black Mountain. Again, the views were amazing but the hilly terrain was beginning to take a toll on many of us and all we could think of was getting to our campsite. Even though the days were longer, we had spent a lot of timing during the day in search of water that needed to be filtered to keep our water bottles full and our daylight was beginning to diminish. After traveling a few more miles of constant up and down, we began to close in on the shelter according to our map. As we began to lose sunlight and the trail was taking a toll on our legs, we sent Mr Dugas and Adam Frank to scout ahead for the shelter. After they reported seeing no sign of the shelter and minimal light left, Mr Dugas made the decision to back track down the mountain we were on and setup camp on an old mining dirt road that had easy access to much

needed water. Our total mileage for the day ended up being 8.8 miles. The rest of the evening included setting up tents and equipment, hanging a bear bag, eating a much deserved dinner, and filling our water bottles at nearby Silver Mine Lake. After sharing stories about our day, massaging our feet and a game of cards, we all crashed in our tents for night.



Day 2 (4/14/12)

The troop woke up after getting a good night sleep. We had breakfast and broke camp pretty quickly, and a number of scouts went down the road again to the lake to re-fill water bottles. When we returned, everyone got their packs on and off we went. It was a really nice day. We headed back up the hill and passed the spot where we turned around. After that, the trail went down and up again, through a thick grove of small trees. After another up and down, we finally arrived at the yellow trail and the William Brien Shelter. We stopped there to check out this historic shelter on the Appalachian Trail.



We continued along the Appalachian Trail, and saw a bunch of day hikers. After a while, a few of our hikers split off and took a shortcut trail to Tiorati Circle because one scout wasn't feeling well, and the other was having trouble with his backpack. The rest of us

continued on the AT, and crossed Seven Lakes Drive. After crossing the road, we went a short way and stopped for water. There were fish and turtles in the stream. We used the water pump to purify the water. We headed up another hill, and then headed south along the ridge. We crossed a pipeline cut, and went further until we got to a scenic overlook. Since there was one mile left to Tiorati Circle, we decided not to eat lunch at the overlook. (It wasn't as scenic as some of the other overlooks.) When we got to the road, we crossed, and then walked down a hill to hide our backpacks. When we got everything tucked away, we headed to Tiorati Circle.



At Tiorati, we re-connected with the others. There were picnic tables and the restrooms were open, so we could wash up and use the bathroom. There were a lot of visitors to the park, and many motorcycles riding up and down Seven Lakes Drive. We crossed over to the beach area where there were vending machines, and got some snacks and drinks. After a nice long rest, we headed up the hill, and retrieved our backpacks. We headed off to Fingerboard Shelter, which was not too much further. We passed a water tank, and headed up the hill again. After a little way, we came to the shelter area. We were the first ones to the shelter, so we claimed it. The adults set up tents in the grassy area behind the shelter, and the scouts laid out their sleeping bags in the lean-to. Total miles for the day was 9.1 miles.

We soon met a father (Chris) and his young son (Max) who was 4 years old. They were camping out for an overnight, and we collected firewood with them. We showed them the technique for hanging the bear bag, and let them use our bear bag for their smellables. A larger church youth group also arrived and set up camp just a bit south of the lean-to.

For dinner, we cooked on the rocks behind the lean-to. Most of us had freeze dried food. One older scout had a Carrs Grease Trucker sandwich. The sides of the Fingerboard lean-to were made of stone, and each side has a fireplace. We set up the fire in one of the fireplaces, and moved some logs around for seating. We invited Chris and Max to join us for a campfire, and we all had a great time telling stories playing games. We were all tired, and called it a night.



Day 3 (4/15/12)

In the early morning, Adam and Zack went down to the Lake to refill water bottles for our third day on the trail. We packed up pretty quickly, and said our goodbyes to Max and Chris. We were on the trail again. After a while, we came to the abandoned Greenwood Mine. The entrance to the mine is completely flooded, so it just looked like a little pond. Opposite the road were the remnants of the slag piles where the unused material was discarded.



We didn't stay there long, and continued on just a bit further, until we came to the intersection of the Long Path and the Appalachian Trail. The signposts were amazing, because they showed how many miles to New York City, Altamont, NY, Springer Mountain in Georgia, and Mount Katahdin in Maine.



APPALACHIAN TRAIL
← FINGERBOARD SHELTER 1.5 →
← ARDEN VALLEY ROAD 2.8 →
← BRIEN SHELTER 6.8 →
← PALISADES PARKWAY 8.9 →
← WEST MT. SHELTER TRAIL 10.1 →
← BEAR MT. 13.2 →
← BEAR MT BRIDGE 15.9 →
← MOUNT KATAHDIN 79.3 →

NEW YORK LONG PATH
← ARDEN VALLEY ROAD 2.1
← STOCKBRIDGE SHELTER 4.4
← ROUTE 6 6.4
← ROUTE 293 10.1
← SHAWANGUNK RIDGE TRAIL 60.5
← ALTAMONT NY 291.6
← TO HIGH POINT THEN SHAWANGUNK
RIDGE TRAIL NORTH 82.5

APPALACHIAN TRAIL
← LEMON SQUEEZER 4.6
← ISLAND POND ROAD 7.3
← ELK PEN 2.4
← ROUTE 17 - AGONY GRIND 2.9
← LITTLE DAM LAKE 5.4
← WILDCAT SHELTER 12.9
← WAWAYANDA SHELTER 24.8
← SPRINGER MT. GA 136.5

NEW YORK LONG PATH
ASB - WHITE BAR TRAILS 7 →
EICHEN TRAIL 1 →
TIMES SQUARE 1.6 →
DUNNING TRAIL 2.3 →
SEVEN LAKES DRIVE 3.6 →
BEECH TRAIL 4.8 →
BIG HILL SHELTER 7.3 →
G.W. BRIDGE - NYC 51.8 →

FOOT TRAIL
Maintained by Volunteers
NY-NJ Trail Conference

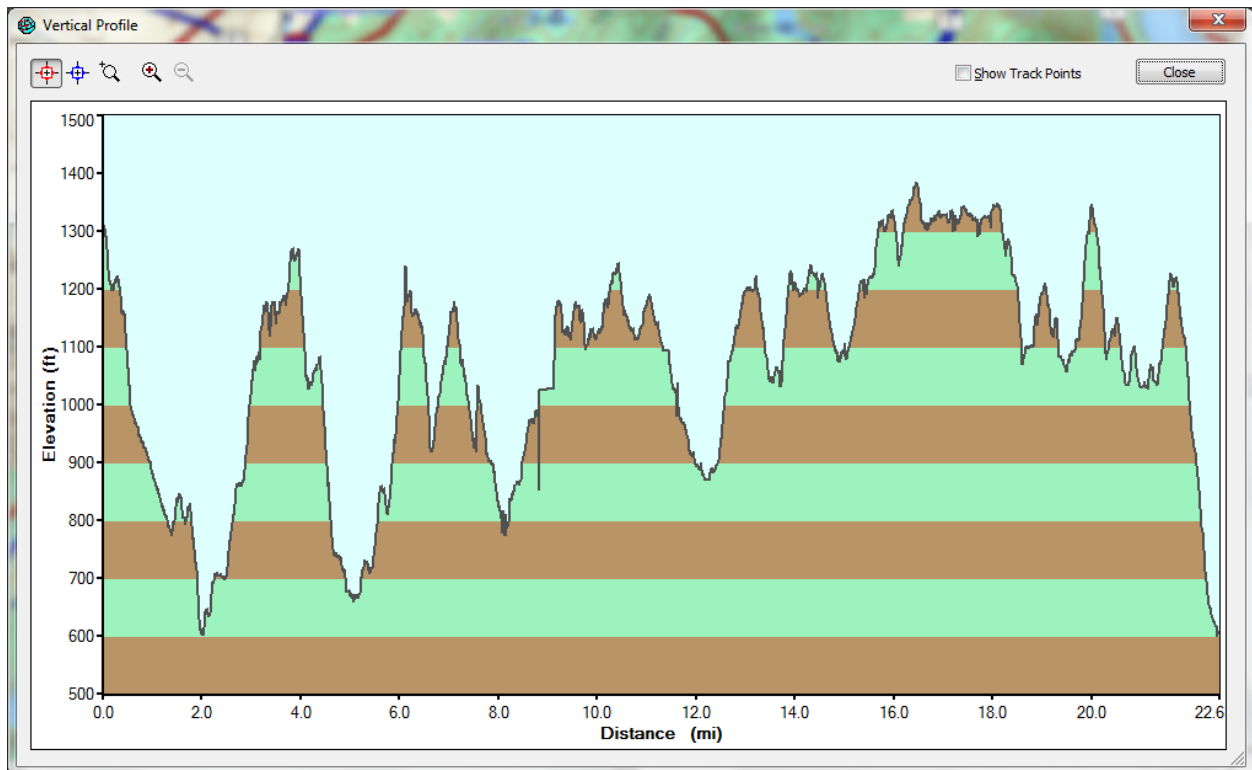
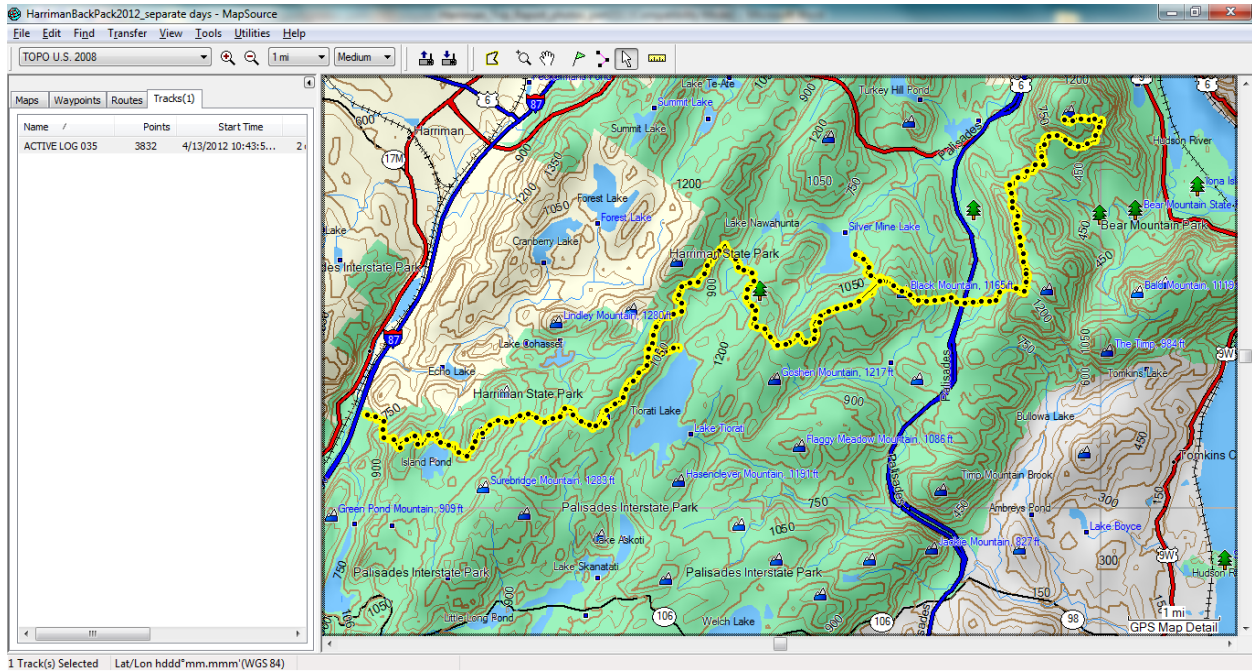
Moving along, our next place to stop was the Lemon Squeezer. This is pretty much a big crack in the massive rocks, which the AT officially goes through! We took the pass around trail, and then dropped our packs for some time to explore.



By this time, we were really looking forward to getting home, so it didn't take too long before everyone was anxious to get going. Not a half mile down the trail, we came across Mrs. Frank, who arrived early to get some hiking in while we were hiking out. Adam joined her for a hike back to the Lemon Squeezer, and the rest of us went on toward Arden Valley Road. The hike was up and down, and we passed some old mining equipment, and a parking lot for boaters by one of the small lakes. Up and over another hill, and we were going to be home. As we got closer, we found Mr. & Mrs. Rosfjord, who had also arrived to pick us up. We hiked to the cars, and our backpacking was officially over. Total mileage for the day was 4.6 miles. Total mileage for the 3 days was 22.5 miles.

On the way home, a bunch of cars stopped for some ice cream, which was a great luxury after being on the trail for 3 days.

This trip was a lot of fun and a great experience to have hiked one of the most famous trails in the world, the Appalachian Trail!



Lessons Learned:

- Backpacking on the AT trail is a lot of fun and rich in history. Using the shelter system is a great way to save money and meet interesting people from all over the world.
- Backpacking in remote areas with adequate water filtration capabilities is a must. We encountered a severe drought situation and water was very scarce. It is necessary to carefully plan out “reliable” sources during the planning stages of such trips.
- No less than 4 adult leaders should be present on these type of trips as it is sometimes unexpectedly necessary (as in our situation) to break-up treks. Two deep leadership must be maintained.
- Sometimes we can't see what is right in front of us. Having a GPS on these types of trips is a great thing. Using the coordinates for the shelter locations that you previously downloaded can save you a lot of time and anxiety. Our first night was not spent at the intended shelter. Had Mr. Dugas remembered that he had downloaded the coordinates to all the shelters from a previous trip to Harriman, this wouldn't have happened.

Respectfully submitted,

Brandon Dugas and Patrick Dente