



Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Course Syllabus

Weekend Backpacking Course

Course Information

Course Length: Three Days/Two Nights
Course Location: Great Smoky Mountains
National Park
Date: 12/1-12/3
Website: www.appalachiantrail.org

Instructor Information

Name: Chloe de Camara
Phone: (828) 357-6542
Email: cdecamara@appalachiantrail.org
Office Location: Asheville, NC

ATC's Mission

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's mission is to preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail – ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come.

Course Description:

A led 3-day/2-night introductory backpacking intensive course on the Appalachian Trail (A.T.). The courses will help novice hikers feel prepared to successfully hike the A.T., while gaining an appreciation for the outdoors, knowledge of the A.T., and long-distance hiking culture. Course graduates should leave as competent, responsible hikers prepared to accomplish their version of a successful long-distance hike.

Two experienced ATC staff will guide six participants through an agenda comprised of all the information they need to know for planning a long-distance hike on the A.T. The principles of Leave No Trace are incorporated into the course curriculum to educate hikers on how to understand the collective impact they have on the resource and how they can individually take steps to mitigate their impacts while recreating on the A.T. and other public lands. Course participants will have a thorough gear shakedown from our expert staff the first day of their arrival, with the purpose of better understanding what gear they need for their hikes.

Note that the courses will be spending the two nights backpacking, rain or shine. Courses are limited to six participants, and spots will be tentatively reserved on a first come, first serve basis. Pending review, ATC staff will choose applicants. Cost of courses are \$375 per person, which includes food and course materials.

Course Competencies/ Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete the course will be competent in the following areas:

- One step closer to achieving their dream of hiking on the A.T.
- A newfound confidence of backpacking on the A.T.
- Tangible experience backpacking on the A.T.
- A new sense of appreciation for the A.T. as a public resource and the work that goes into



- preserving and protecting it.
- A fluency in the principles of Leave No Trace

Course Expectations

1. Payment received upon acceptance into course.
2. Arrive on time according to the course agenda
3. Be considerate to yourself, teachers, and classmates at ALL times.
4. Be responsible for your learning by being prepared for course and bringing all necessary materials to the course (appropriate gear, notepad/ pens, etc.)
5. Successful participants will have:
 - a. an enthusiasm for the experience, (*attitude is everything!*)
 - b. an ability to get along with and work cooperatively with others,
 - c. keep safety top of mind.
6. Backpacking and hiking short distances on challenging terrain rain or shine.
7. Backcountry camping overnight rain or shine.

Accommodations

While the majority of the course is taught in the field for the purpose of experiential learning, the group will meet and spend the first half of day one at an ATC basecamp. If you are travelling a long distance for the course, reach out to Chloe de Camara (cdecamara@appalachiantrail.org) prior to the course regarding accommodations for the night before the group meets for orientation.

Electronics Policy:

iPods, smart phones, and e-readers are a reality of our world today, but we encourage course participants to leave those at base camp rather than bring them into the field. Reception is unlikely in the field and diminishing battery power often means its “dead” weight in your pack.

If you decide to bring technology into the field, please keep in mind some folks on crew are there to get away from their sometimes “hectic” world and are not interested in hearing beeps, rings, etc that may cloud the sounds of nature. Out of respect for others, please keep technology on “silence” and only use devices out of eye and earshot (or with ear buds) of other. As much as anything else, recognize that it has the potential impact group dynamics and opportunities to connect with the best people you’ll get to hang out with all year.

Communicating with your Crew

While you participate on this course, the Course Instructors should be a source of information, education, assistance and advice. The Course Instructors have the final word on any matter concerning group life and safety. In the field it is important that the group acts as a team. You will sometimes be faced with less than perfect living conditions with a group of people who may not always share your views, lifestyle, experience or background. While such a situation can sometimes lead to abrasions, it can also lead to personal growth.

Course participants must all pitch in to help one another. If you encounter insurmountable problems, talk them over with your Course Instructor. **Do not let a bad situation sit and fester!**



Emergency Situation Communication

While you are out in the field, the Course Instructors will be keeping in contact with the appropriate agency's communications center via radio or pre-established Emergency Response Plans. In the event of an emergency on course, ATC staff communicates directly with the Agency Partner and ATC's southern regional office.

Emergency at home

If your family **urgently** needs to get a message to you in the field due to an emergency at home, please direct them to the following number:

ATC Regional Office at (828) 254-3708

They should indicate that they need to get a message to your name, a course participant on the ATC backpacking course. If they don't hear back from anyone and it is a TRUE emergency, they may contact the National Park Service's Communication Center at 865-436-1230, or North Carolina National Forest. Again, they should indicate that they need to get a message to your name, an ATC backpacking course participant. Please keep in mind that this contact should be reserved for **TRUE** emergencies, like serious incidents, illnesses, family emergencies, etc. Do not expect your personal cell phone to get reception in the field.

Course Rules

There are some basic rules while on course. Our goal is to make course life as carefree as possible without imposing on other members or placing the program in jeopardy.

- 1.No pets.** We can't transport pets to the field with you or watch them while you're away. Additionally, pets are not allowed on backcountry trails in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.
- 2.No alcohol.**
- 3.No illegal drugs.**
- 4.Only ATC staff may drive ATC vehicles** (other than in an emergency).
- 5.Please, no smoking in any of the A.T. structures or in the ATC van.**

Safety

Should you be concerned about safety? Yes, safety is a **very** serious topic. This sort of activity can be stressful to your body's musculature. You will be hiking in a very remote area and we must avoid injuries!

Here are some **tips** to stay safe:

- The best way is to use your head -- **Listen** to your Course Instructor. **Be aware** of your fellow classmates.
- Don't try to compete with yourself or anyone else. Hike your own pace.
- Be particularly careful at the end of the day. That's when most injuries occur.
- Come to the course prepared to backpack with weight on your back.



Safety is covered extensively at the mandatory first night orientation; please pay attention then and in the field! Ask questions!

Insurance

Course participants are expected to have their own insurance coverage.

We need for you to come prepared for any situation, namely get a tetanus shot if you're overdue, a shot for poison ivy if you're allergic, and bring your own bee kit if stings cause reactions, etc.

There's lots of attention given these days to ticks, Rocky Mountain spotted fever and Lyme Disease (more about those [here](#)). It's important to be informed about these maladies and vigilant about checking for the buggers. We've never had an instance of either of these diseases on ATC courses, but you need to be informed and aware of the risk involved. Always check for these at the end of the day. Also, let a fellow course participants know if a tick is crawling on them!

If the situation around insurance is a problem to you, let us know **before** you arrive in camp. We don't want to get hung up on this issue, but we do have to face reality.