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Forest Service shelters available along the southern Appalachian Trail

Asheville, NC, April 21, 2021 — Shelters along the Appalachian National Scenic Trail in Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia are now available for use. Hikers are encouraged to bring their own personal tent and face coverings. Earlier in the pandemic these shelters were shut down, along with trailheads.

The shelters are located on national forest land, managed by the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Officials say there are hundreds of shelters averaging about 8 miles apart along the trail, although the intervals vary. Shelters might not be frequently maintained at all locations.

Another overnight option is dispersed camping in designated areas of the national forest. Hikers should be prepared to tent camp if social distancing in shelters is not possible.

Hikers can plan ahead by checking forest websites for site-specific details before their trip. The southern portion of the Appalachian Trail runs through four national forests:

Tennessee: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recmain/cherokee/recreation>, Cherokee National Forest

Georgia: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recmain/conf/recreation>, Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

North Carolina: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recmain/nfsnc/recreation>, National Forests in North Carolina

Virginia: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recmain/gwj/recreation>, George Washington and Jefferson National Forests

The Appalachian Trail is a popular hiking path stretching more than 2,100 miles from Georgia to Maine. About 100 miles of the trail are in North Carolina and about 226 miles of the trail are along the North Carolina and Tennessee border.

Hikers are encouraged to recreate responsibly, maintain a safe social distance and follow health guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local health authorities.

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