

# RIVER AND STREAM CROSSINGS CAN BE DEADLY

There are unbridged river and stream crossings on this section of the Appalachian Trail (A.T.). Learn how to tell when a river may not be safe to cross.

**WHEN IN DOUBT, TURN AROUND**

Your safety is your responsibility. Learn techniques on how to safely cross rivers and streams before you leave for the A.T. Scan the QR code or visit [appalachiantrail.org/river-crossings](http://appalachiantrail.org/river-crossings) for more information.

When in doubt about the safety of a crossing, turn around - the Trail will be here on a drier day.



Working toward completing the entire A.T.? Skipping flooded sections or taking designated alternative routes around dangerous crossings does not disqualify you from becoming a 2,000-miler.



A river crossing after heavy rain. Photo by Richard Merchant.

When the water is moving faster than you can walk, it is unsafe to cross.

Throw a stick in the water and see how fast it is carried away. If you cannot walk as fast as the stick is moving, it is not safe to cross.

When the water depth is higher than thigh height, it is unsafe to cross.

Even a moderate current can knock someone off of their feet if the water is high enough. High water can also be an indicator of a recent storm, snowmelt, etc., meaning that the crossing is especially dangerous.



A good, shallow spot to cross. Photo by Laurie Potteiger.



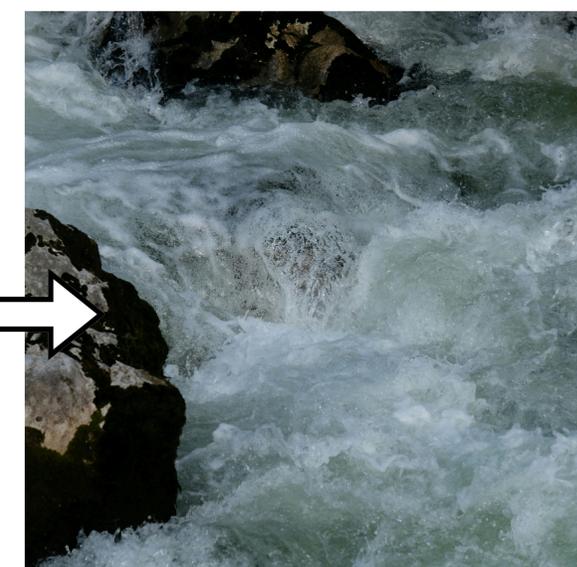
River in flood stage. Photo by Jean Violett.

When a river is in flood stage, it is unsafe to cross.

Look for muddy, murky water that you cannot see through; surging, churning water; flooded banks; and hazards in the water such as branches and other debris being carried downstream.

When you can hear rocks being moved by the water, it is unsafe to cross.

This indicates an abnormally powerful current and can also be an indicator that a river is in flood stage.



Strong rapids. Photo by Fabian Berne.



Check for rapids near a crossing. Photo by James Timothy Peters.

When there are hazards downstream such as rapids, trees or branches stuck in the river, or a waterfall, bridge, or dam, it is unsafe to cross.

Always look downstream before crossing and assess what you might encounter if you are swept off your feet.

