



The Appalachian Trail Reader

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The Appalachian Trail is the longest continuous footpath in the world. Its 2,140 miles run through 14 states--from Georgia to Maine--and vastly different natural and social environments, from the solitary splendor of mountain crags to the genial slopes frequented by dayhikers and scout packs. Each year, more than three million visitors enjoy the diverse scenery and cultures of the trail, united by a common appreciation for the outdoors. A lively and evocative introduction to this national treasure, *The Appalachian Trail Reader* collects stories, poems, and essays that reflect this wilderness trail across both time and geography. Here are the works of both well-known writers and anonymous raconteurs, including Henry David Thoreau, James Dickey, Aldo Leopold, Washington Irving, James MacGregor Burns, Richard Wilbur, and many others, as well as excerpts from the diaries and letters of modern day visitors. Hikers' private journals stand next to scientists' close observations of the natural world, and these readings mingle with poets' evocations of meaningful music heard in the wind, in birdsong, or in the babbling brooks. Here, too, are historians, who remind us of how Appalachian culture developed, and early explorers, reporting the thrill of seeing uncharted territory and wildlife for the first time. Taken as a whole, this patchwork quilt of voices both eloquent and raw offers a surprisingly varied pattern of appreciation for the wilds of the Appalachians. With the addition of maps of the trail and photographs of its majesty, *The Appalachian Trail Reader* presents a rich introduction to the trail for those planning a trip, and a vivid scrapbook for those who've already visited. Originally conceived as an antidote to the competitive, fast-paced, and increasingly urban civilization that America was becoming, the Appalachian Trail is more than an experience of geology and natural history; indeed, it is a vast open-air cathedral where the emotions and the senses unite. *The Appalachian Trail Reader* bears out this spirit, offering a heart-felt appreciation of one of our greatest natural resources while it presents an opportunity to escape the stresses of everyday life and revel in the inestimable value of a wilderness experience.

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