

John Raleigh

Start: March 23 1974; Springer Mountain, GA

Finish: August 19, 1974; Katahdin, ME

Backpack: Kelty BB5 external frame pack with rain cover

Boots: Started with Fabiano Mountain boots and later replaced with Raichles

Stove: Unleaded gasoline powered cook stove with cook kit



John signs in atop Springer Mountain, March 23, 1974.
Photo courtesy John Raleigh

"... Forty years is a long time but some memories from that time are still vivid."

In 1974 I was 22 years old, having finished college at the end of the summer of 1973 with a B.A in Sociology from what is now the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. I had been an avid hiker as a boy and backpacker after graduating high school. I had climbed Mount Katahdin with my family and had hiked all of the 4000 foot peaks in New Hampshire and backpacked much of the AT in that state as well.

My friend Scott Leite and I planned the AT logistics over the course of 6 months prior to departure. A third person, Bob Chew, met us at the bus station in Boston and he and I hiked together for half the trail. One of the hardest logistical challenges was figuring out how to get to the start of the trail. Fortunately the locals were very helpful. Unfortunately, my friend Scott dropped out due to a knee injury after 9 days.

Planning the trail was quite a chore in the day. No internet research, only very few books or journals available. I think more people complete the AT every year now than had done it since its inception through 1974. The cryptic 1974 AT Mileage fact sheet was only 22 pages but was mostly accurate. The AT guidebooks, obtained from the ATC, were indispensable since there was no other information available other than some notes left in shelter registers along the way. Ed Garvey's book was a godsend for the information it provided. Even though it was 3 years old it was undoubtedly the best and most current information available. So needless to say there were always surprises and we never really knew what to expect almost anywhere we went.



Without cell phones, we depended on pay telephones for comms home. Every couple of weeks was often enough. We depended heavily on the US Postal Service for some hard to find supplies sent from home like fuel canisters for the stove and for new guidebooks at appropriate. Overall, the post office was very efficient and accommodating to hikers.

John's typical campsite setup.
Photo courtesy John Raleigh