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First U.S. Hiking Museum to Open in Pennsylvania

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The Appalachian Trail Museum opens June 5 at in a historic grist mill in Pennsylvania's Pine Grove Furnace State Park.

The Appalachian Trail Museum will open June 5 in a 200-year-old grist mill at Pine Grove Furnace State Park, about 15 miles west of Gettysburg in Gardners, Pa. Located two miles from the halfway point of the 2,175-mile Appalachian Trail (A.T.), it will be the only museum in the country dedicated to hiking. The museum will feature changing trail exhibits, photo displays, a children's discovery area, hiker's lounge and an indoor/outdoor storytelling center.

"Years of planning, volunteer hard work and dreaming have gotten us to where we are today," said Larry Luxenberg, president of the Appalachian Trail Museum Society, the non-profit organization that was formed in 2002 to lead efforts to establish the museum. "The museum will be more than a building and the midway point on the 2,178-mile trail that stretches from Maine to Georgia. It will be a tribute to the thousands of men, women and families who have hiked and maintained the Appalachian Trail, making it arguably the most famous hiking trail in the world."



(Cumberland Valley Visitors Bureau Photo by Robert T. Kinsey)

Exhibits at the museum will tell the stories of the founding, construction, preservation, maintenance, protection and enjoyment of the trail since its inception in the 1920s. The museum will portray not only the history of the trail but also the essence of the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual human experience of the Appalachian environment and the culture of hiking.

The initial featured exhibit will tell the story of one of the region's favorite sons - York County, Pa., outdoorsman Earl Shaffer, who in 1948 became the first person to hike the Appalachian Trail in a single season. The trail shelter that the humble hiker, poet and WWII soldier built on Peters Mountain in Pennsylvania was recovered in 2008 and will be part of the exhibit. (www.atmuseum.org)