

Appalachian Trail Four State Challenge

By Andy Niekamp

On Monday, August 2, MVOC members Andy Niekamp and Yvonne Entingh successfully completed the Appalachian Trail Four State Challenge. The challenge involves hiking on the A.T. in Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania all in one day. It was a 45 mile hike and took 17 hours. We chose to do the hike unsupported meaning we had to carry everything we needed on our backs. Our packs weighed 10-15 pounds each at the start. Some people prefer to do the Four State Challenge with support by having someone meet them at road crossings with food, water and supplies.

We woke up at 3:15am and by 4:00am our shuttle driver was taking us from Harper's Ferry, West Virginia to the A.T. crossing at Pen-Mar Road in Pennsylvania. We began our hike in the dark at 5:00am using headlamps for light. After a short distance we crossed the Mason-Dixon Line and entered Maryland. By 6:00am it was light enough that we did not need our headlamps. We tackled the hardest part of the journey first. The first miles are extremely rocky and have numerous ups and downs. It took over 6 hours to hike the first 15 miles.

We did not spend time admiring the many natural and historical sites along the way such as the

Civil War Battle fields, Dahlgren Chapel, Annapolis Rocks, White Rocks Cliff or Historic Harper's Ferry. We had seen these places before. I have hiked this part of the A.T. three times and Yvonne has hiked it once. There was no time to see these sights again if we wanted to complete the Four State Challenge in one day.

The second 15 miles went quicker as there were less climbs but still many rocks. By 5:00pm and after 12 hours of hiking we had traveled 32 miles.

Our destination felt within reach. At 8:30pm we crossed the Potomac River and entered West Virginia at the 41 mile mark. The Virginia state line was now just a few miles away. The sun had set and it was dark again. We resumed hiking using headlamps. On the Shenandoah River Bridge and with only one mile to go I developed an intense pain in the heel of my left foot. It was very difficult and painful to hike. The last mile up the mountain to Loudoun Heights took one hour as I limped each step to reach the Virginia

state line.

We reached Virginia just before 10:00pm. We let out a few celebratory cheers and took a short rest break. We still had 1.5 miles to hike back down the mountain to get to our hotel in Harper's Ferry. It was an awesome hike and we felt a great sense of accomplishment! Each of us set a personal record for having hiked the most miles in one day.



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