



Baxter State Park 2017 A.T. Hiker Permit FAQs

3/29/2017

On February 1, 2017, Baxter State Park announced changes to its Appalachian Trail (A.T.) Hiker Permit system, which limits the number of permit cards available to thru-hikers seeking to climb Katahdin to the northern terminus of the Trail. We have compiled some of the most common questions below about the logistics of this system.

For the most up-to-date information, check www.appalachiantrail.org/updates.

How do I acquire an A.T. Hiker Permit for Baxter State Park?

Permits will be available at Katahdin Stream Campground and at Baxter State Park headquarters in Millinocket, Maine.

Do northbound hikers have to go all the way to Maine and register for their permit card before starting their thru-hike?

No. You will acquire your permit card upon arrival at the Katahdin Stream Campground ranger station or at Baxter State Park Headquarters in Millinocket, Maine. You will not need this card to begin your hike at Springer Mountain or any other location.

How long will the permit be valid?

Permits will be date stamped when acquired. The permit will be valid for 7 days after the date of acquisition.

Is Baxter State Park Headquarters or Katahdin Stream Campground right on the trail?

Baxter State Park Headquarters is in Millinocket, while Katahdin Stream Campground is directly on the Trail within the Park. You will be able to acquire an A.T. Hiker Permit at either location.

What information must I provide to Baxter State Park in order to receive my permit card?

You will need to provide your trail name, real name and emergency contact information.

Is there a fee for this permit?

No, the permits are free. The fee to stay at The Birches campsite, which is set aside for northbound A.T. long-distance hikers in the park, will continue to be \$10 per person. This campsite has a 12-person limit. For hikers entering the park by vehicle, the entrance fee for an out-of-state vehicle is \$15. An optional Day Use Parking Reservation for one of the Katahdin trailheads costs \$5.

Will I need to speed up the pace of my thru-hike in order to make sure I get a permit?

No. *Katahdin will not be closed to A.T. hikers if the A.T. Hiker Permit limit is reached.* However, if the limit is reached, A.T. hikers will need to comply with the day-use or campground permitting limits. In other words, if hikers don't have a camping reservation after the A.T. Hiker Permit limit has been reached, they will need to leave the Park and then re-enter through Togue Pond Gate as day-use visitors to the Park. This may require a delay during peak seasons (end of June through Labor Day) and peak days after Labor Day, as daily entry quotas at Togue Pond are based on the number of vehicles allowed in the Park.

What are the best days of the week to climb Katahdin?

Midweek is best, particularly after school starts in early September. Always try to avoid Saturdays, the busiest day for all other park visitors.

How does Baxter define “A.T. long-distance hiker” (in other words, who exactly needs a permit)?

All backpackers who enter or exit the Park via the A.T. need a permit. In order to stay at the Birches Long Distance Hiker Campsite, hikers should have completed at least 100 miles of the A.T. contiguous to the Park prior to entering the Park. In other words, they should have started hiking in Monson or points south.

What will happen to me if I arrive at Baxter State Park after all of the thru-hiker permits have already been claimed?

Katahdin will not be closed to A.T. hikers if the A.T. hiker permit limit is reached. If that happens, A.T. hikers will need to obtain a campsite reservation or compete for day use access to Katahdin trailheads along with other Park visitors. They will need to leave the Park and then re-enter through Togue Pond Gate as a day-use visitor to the Park. We still encourage all thru-hikers to plan to complete their hikes by October 15 because weather on Katahdin is unpredictable in late fall, and late-season hiking can cause undue impacts to the alpine zone.

Will I be able to find out at Abol Bridge whether the quota has been reached?

Yes. There will be messaging at the Baxter State Park kiosk at the entrance to the Park. If the quota has been reached and you do not have a campground reservation, plan to spend the night in Millinocket or at one of the campgrounds near Abol Bridge. You will need to make a campground reservation or enter the Park via Togue Pond gate.

How long is the A.T. section through Baxter State Park?

There are 14.4 miles of the A.T. in Baxter State Park. 5.2 miles follow the Hunt Trail on Katahdin. The remaining 9.2 connect the Katahdin Stream Campground area to Abol Bridge.

Should I still register my hike using the ATC’s voluntary A.T. Thru-Hiker Registration?

Yes.

What can I do to help Baxter State Park preserve its fragile natural resources and help ensure future A.T. hikers and other visitors will be able to enjoy it?

Follow Park regulations and practice Leave No Trace ethics in the Park. In particular, hike alone or in small groups, celebrate quietly at the summit, make sure to respectfully share the summit with other hikers, and save alcohol for later.