



Appalachian Trail Ambassador: Saddleback

MATC's Mission

The Maine Appalachian Trail Club (MATC) is a volunteer, nonprofit corporation that was organized on June 18, 1935, to assume responsibility for the management, maintenance and protection of the 267-mile section of the Appalachian Trail in Maine, spanning from Route 26 in Grafton Notch to Katahdin in Baxter State Park.

About the Program

Program Overview: Stewardship and education play a crucial role in preserving our environment and recreational spaces. As part of our mission to protect the Maine section of the Appalachian Trail, MATC has an established Ridgerunner program that educates recreationists about backcountry knowledge, skills, and ethics. MATC currently has three Ridgerunners at high-use recreational destinations along the Appalachian Trail including Gulf Hagas, Saddleback, and Bigelow Mountains. In 2025, we will be launching the Appalachian Trail Ambassador (“Ambassadors”) program to support the work of our Ridgerunners.

Saddleback: The Saddleback Ridgerunner is responsible for ridge running across some of the most physically strenuous and visually stunning miles on the Appalachian Trail. Named Maine’s Favorite Mountain, the summit of Saddleback Mountain sits at 4,130’ with the adjacent Horn at 4,041’, offering beautiful panoramic views of the surrounding landscape and a unique and fragile alpine zone. Due to a recent increase in visitation at this sensitive location, MATC has identified a critical need for additional outreach at this summit.

Volunteer Role: Volunteers are essential to the success of our organization, and we invite you to be part of this important stewardship effort on Saddleback Mountain. As a volunteer in this role, you will help educate visitors about Leave No Trace principles, the impacts of plant trampling on summits and trails, and monitor potential threats to alpine plants, wildlife habitats, and water resources. Volunteering is a great way to build your network, gain valuable experience for your resume, or simply enjoy a rewarding and engaging stewardship opportunity. Being an Appalachian Trail Ambassador promises to be a truly unique experience! See the *Roles and Responsibilities* section for more detailed information about your role as an Ambassador.

Volunteer Commitment

We ask that Ambassadors commit to a minimum of four two-day volunteer trips or eight single day trips during the season - while we would be thrilled if you could commit to additional days. MATC has Ridgerunners on site from the end of May through mid-October, with training from May 18th through May 21st. Additional field training will occur on June 12th and/or 13th, along with other dates as opportunities arise. We ask that all Ambassadors attend these training sessions whenever possible. There will also be opportunities for Ambassadors to lead training opportunities, if desired.



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Flexible Commitment: We understand that schedules vary, so commitment is flexible. You can sign up for any four or eight trips that best fit your availability. MATC's full-time Ridgerunners typically have Wednesdays and Thursdays off, making these ideal days for having volunteers.

Expectations for Attendance and Reliability

Dependability is crucial to the success of our organization, especially since we rely on our volunteers to carry out essential functions. Your commitment and reliability ensure that our efforts are effective and that we can continue to make a meaningful impact. We value volunteers who show up when needed, as their dedication directly supports the success of our mission.

Roles and Responsibilities

Detailed Description of Tasks: It will be the primary duty of the Ambassador to educate recreationists about the fragility of the Saddleback alpine zone and the importance of practicing Leave No Trace principles. Other responsibilities can include assisting with the maintenance of scree walls, inspecting and rebuilding cairns above treeline and discouraging hikers from removing or modifying existing cairns, packing out trash left on the summit, discouraging overnight camping and fires on the 2.5-mile ridgeline and encouraging dog owners to always keep their dogs on a leash.

Multiple day volunteering and camping: There are two convenient camping options available for individuals wishing to volunteer over multiple days:

Redington Stream Campsite: A subalpine campsite, approximately 1 mile north of The Horn summit. This site is 2.5 miles from the summit of Saddleback. There is a privy, several tent platforms, and multiple on-ground tenting areas. The water source is at the end of the blue blaze trail.

Piazza Rock: A 2-mile hike from Route 4, and an additional 4-miles to the Saddleback Summit. MATC's full-time Ridgerunner is located at this site. There is also a lean-to and privy. Piazza Rock is a favorite day hike for locals and families. The area features an impressive glacial erratic situated approximately .1 miles from the Piazza Rock Lean-to.

Volunteers are responsible for their own camping arrangements, gear, and equipment. If access to gear is a barrier to participation, please let us know.

Single day volunteering logistics: If volunteering for a single-day, the most direct route to the Summit would be via Grey Ghost and Tri-Color paths, which begins at Saddleback Ski Area. The trail is approximately 1.7 miles one way, with an elevation gain of 1,750 ft. Parking is available at the resort.



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Skills and Qualifications

It is preferred that Appalachian Trail Ambassadors have some experience and understanding of the flora and fauna of Maine. Experience/knowledge of Leave No Trace practices and alpine ecosystems is preferred, however, MATC will provide materials and training opportunities to learn about alpine zones. A friendly, outgoing attitude and desire to interact with the public is a must. Ambassadors must be confident in independently camping in the backcountry (if camping), possess excellent backcountry skills, and be able to traverse difficult terrain. Participants must be at least 18 years old to participate.

Your Support Team

Appalachian Trail Ambassadors will have access to the Saddleback Ridgerunner, if they are scheduled during the Ridgerunners normally scheduled work hours. MATC's Outreach Steward or the Saddleback Ridgerunner Site Supervisor will also be available for supervision and support.

Opportunities for Advancement

There may be opportunities for Appalachian Trail Ambassadors to become full-time, seasonal Ridgerunners in the 2026 season. Additionally, there are many volunteer opportunities within MATC such as volunteer trail crew, bog bridge projects, trail and campsite maintenance, corridor monitoring, and other educational programs.

What the Organization Provides

- **Training and Orientation:** Volunteers will have the opportunity to participate in our Ridgerunner training program, this involves Leave No Trace and alpine ecology topics. In 2025, we will have guest speaker Nick Lund from Maine Audubon. Additional training opportunities will be communicated throughout the season. It will be required that Appalachian Trail Ambassadors complete the free online Leave No Trace 101 course and one day of in-the-field training, scheduled June 12th and/or 13th 2025.
- **Volunteer Materials:** Volunteers will be provided with a handbook and a copy of MATC's *Saddleback and Bigelow Mountain Alpine Guide*. Other materials, such as first aid kits and maps, will be provided upon request.
- **T-shirt/Uniform:** Volunteers will receive one MATC T-shirt if volunteering for single day trips and two shirts if signing up for trips that are two days or more.
- **Certificates or Recognition:** At the end of the season volunteers will receive a Certificate of Recognition from MATC. Volunteers are welcome to attend the end of season potluck and share their experiences!



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How to Become an Appalachian Trail Ambassador

Individuals interested in becoming an Appalachian Trail Ambassador should send an email of interest to MATC's Outreach Steward, Amanda Reimer: americorpoutreach@matc.org.

In your email, kindly introduce yourself and share your experience with alpine zones and environmental education. Please also explain why you're interested in the program and include your availability.

Code of Conduct and Policies

Behavior Expectations: As a Volunteer Ridge Runner with MATC you are a representative of the organization. It is expected that public education is based on your handbook and the training and materials provided to you. If you are uncomfortable with any of the duties expected of you, please discuss this with your support team. Misconduct will not be tolerated.

Volunteer Services Agreement (VSA): All participants must sign a VSA prior to volunteering. This can be done electronically.

Don't miss the opportunity to be part of our great stewardship community!

We need passionate, dedicated individuals like you to help make a difference. If you're passionate about environmental conservation and education - there's a place for you on our volunteer team. By joining our Appalachian Trail Ambassador program, you'll play a vital role in preserving ecosystems, building valuable skills, and ensuring the protection of our beautiful Appalachian Trail for generations to come.

Contact Information

Program Coordinator: Amanda Reimer, Outreach Steward: americorpoutreach@matc.org

Website: <https://www.matc.org/ridge-runner-education-program/>