

# Exploring the **APPALACHIAN TRAIL**

**HIKES** in the **MID-ATLANTIC STATES**  
Maryland Pennsylvania New Jersey New York



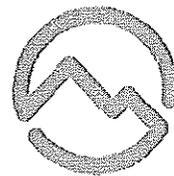
**GLENN SCHERER & DON HOPEY**

## **Bear Mt. - Harriman State Parks - West**

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## HIKE #35

### Bear Mt.–Harriman State Parks — West

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**Maps:** ATC N.Y. & N.J. Map 3; NY-NJTC Harriman Map North

**Route:** In Bear Mt.–Harriman SP, from Arden Valley Rd. (Elk Pen) to Island Pond, Surebridge Mt., and Arden Valley Rd. at Tiorati Circle

**Recommended direction:** S to N

**Distance:** 5.7 mi. total; 5.5 mi. on AT

**Access trail name & length:** Arden Valley Rd./Ramapo-Dunderberg Trail, 0.2 mi.

**Elevation +/-:** 550 to 1328 to 1050 ft.

**Effort:** Moderate

**Day hike:** Yes

**Overnight backpacking hike:** Optional

**Duration:** 3½ hr.

**Early exit option:** At 4.1 mi., Hurst Trail

**Natural history features:** Green Pond Mt.; Island Pond; Lemon Squeezer; Surebridge Mt.; Fingerboard Mt.

**Social history features:** Clove Furnace; Civilian Conservation Corps spillway; Long Path; Ramapo-Dunderberg Trail; Surebridge Mine Rd.; Greenwood Mine; first miles of AT ever built

**Trailhead access:** *Start:* Take NY 17 1.9 mi. N of Southfields or 0.7 mi. S of Arden to Arden Valley Rd. and go 0.3 mi. E to Elk Pen parking area (overnight). *End:* Continue past Elk Pen parking area on Arden Valley Rd. 3.5 mi to Tiorati Circle parking area (overnight).

**Camping:** Fingerboard Shelter

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**T**he less-traveled western section of Bear Mt.–Harriman SP offers an ideal introduction to the history, flora, and fauna of the Hudson Highlands. The land here comes alive with signs of the dynamic 12,000-year relationship between human beings and nature. You will travel through secluded forest once occupied by Native Americans, walk along the shores of pretty Island Pond, slip through the Lemon Squeezer (an unusual rock formation), and explore the ruins of a 19th-century iron mine. Most notably, this hike follows the approx-

imate route of the very first 5.5 mi. of Appalachian Trail ever blazed.

The hike begins at the bottom of the deep, narrow Ramapo Valley, once a north-south wagon route for hardy 18th- and 19th-century pioneers (the same route followed by the NYS Thruway, NY 17, and tired commuters today). Here a 700-ft.-deep gorge and the Ramapo River neatly divide the Hudson Highlands in two, marking the western edge of Bear Mt.–Harriman SP. These two adjoining parks (part of the Palisades Interstate Park) were founded in 1910 and are among the

oldest in New York. In the 1920s they served as a model for the design of state parks across the nation.

From the Elk Pen parking area (the name "Elk Pen" is all that remains of a failed 1915 attempt by park personnel to introduce elk to the Hudson Highlands), turn right onto Arden Valley Rd. and immediately look for the AT's white blazes along the road. In 0.1 mi. the trail turns right onto a chained-off woods road (old Arden Rd.). The flowering meadow at right and forest-cloaked hills to the left may seem like a pastoral setting untouched by human hands. In reality, you are seeing how thoroughly nature has healed itself over the past 125 years. The town of Arden, on NY 17 just a mile north of this spot, was a mini-Pittsburgh in the 1800s, inhabited by 2000 industrious citizens all dedicated to iron-making. Arden's Clove Furnace (now headquarters for the Orange County Historical Society and open to visitors) produced thousands of tons of iron between 1854 and 1871. The three-story-tall blast furnace, fed with iron ore dug from these hills, roared like a deafening rocket at lift-off and ran twenty-four hours a day. It belched soot, covering the green hills with a layer of gray ash. The Parrott brothers, who owned the furnace and the surrounding mines and mountains, made a fortune manufacturing cannon and shot for the Union Army in the Civil War.

At 0.3 mi. the trail turns left off the road and ascends Green Pond Mt.



Dale Gelland

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### Mountain laurel

Notice how young the mixed hardwood forest of oak, ash, and maple is here. These hills were stripped clean of trees to provide charcoal for the Clove Furnace. The charcoal makers, a reclusive breed of men, scoured these hills, selected smaller trees, cut them, and built tight tepees of wood, which they set afire. In a slow, controlled burn lasting several days, the mounds smoldered and the wood inside turned to charcoal. The charcoal mounds required constant attention, giving the soot-covered workers little time for a social life. They were generally viewed as outsiders and little welcome in more polite 19th-century society.

The trail ascends steeply on switchbacks and reaches the rocky summit of Green Pond Mt. (0.8 mi.). Some archeologists believe that the

## From Dream to Reality: The AT Is Born

In October 1921 regional planner and visionary Benton MacKaye first proposed the building of the AT in an article for the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*. MacKaye called for the creation of a million-person volunteer army to "walk the skyline and develop its varied opportunities . . . for recreation, recuperation and employment in the region of the Appalachian[s]." MacKaye's dream did not fall on deaf ears. A fledgling hiking club confederation whose charter it was to build trails in Bear Mt.–Harriman State Parks met in 1922. They established the New York–New Jersey Trail Conference and went to work creating the very first miles of the 2100-mi. Maine-to-Georgia trail.

Led by New York journalist and conservationist Raymond Torrey and by J. Ashton Allis (a New York banker who helped engineer Vermont's Long Trail in 1916), the first section of the AT quickly took shape. Years later, Torrey described in the *New York Evening Post* how his crews made it happen. "The working parties were divided according to experience and ability into scouting, clearing, and marking squads. The scouts were those who knew how to lay out a trail to include the highest scenic qualities: directness of route, supplies of water . . . and occasional ledges and cliff climbs to make the routes interesting. They went out

ahead of the rest and made temporary small blazes or rock cairns. When everyone had agreed to the best route, it was primarily marked with a line of cotton string looped over the bushes and trees."

Next came the "elephant squads," who followed the white string, clearing the way with hatchets and pruning shears. Lastly, specially made metal AT markers were affixed to the trees. Torrey's elephant squads couldn't work fast enough for a public eager to enjoy the new trail. He tells of a group of conference volunteers "laying string along the top of the cliffs on West Mountain in Harriman Park. The string had not been up two hours when eleven persons came along it."

In October 1923 MacKaye, Torrey, Allis, and trail club members from Maine to Georgia met at the Bear Mountain Inn (see Hike #37) to celebrate the completion of the first 6 mi. of AT, running from the Ramapo River to Fingerboard Mt. By January 1924, 20 mi. of continuous trail were complete, all the way across Bear Mt.–Harriman State Parks. Trail Conference volunteers then struck off to the north and the south, completing New York's and New Jersey's AT sections by 1931. Other hiking clubs stretched the trail farther north and south, and the entire AT was finished by 1937.

extreme stoniness of Harriman SP's peaks was caused by 19th-century clear-cutting of forests for charcoal, lumber, firewood, railroad ties, and ship masts. The resulting erosion left a rocky, acidic soil where stone-clinging lichen, carpets of moss, sedges, and grasses work resolutely to rebuild lost layers of topsoil. Open rocks here provide views west over the Ramapo Valley.

At 1.0 mi. the trail descends, then turns left onto Island Pond Rd. This carriage road was built by 19th-century railroad magnate and self-made millionaire Edward Harriman. By the 1880s the discovery of vast iron ore deposits in Minnesota had caused the collapse of Eastern iron making. So when the Parrott brothers decided to sell their 7863-acre Hudson Highlands holdings, Harriman bought the land for \$52,500, absorbing it into his estate. This property was later sold to New York State and formed the core of Bear Mt.–Harriman SP.

When not on the balding ridgetops, the AT in Harriman SP passes through a maturing oak forest, rich with life. A deluge of autumn acorns supports a vast army of squirrels and chipmunks who regularly scold passing hikers. Jays (who also feed on the acorns), flickers, crows, and nuthatches flit from branch to branch of understory maples. Deer can often be spotted among the trees or browsing at the edges of clearings. The forest floor is littered with rotting logs and leaves, home

to millions of insects, fungi, and bacteria that digest these materials, breaking them down into natural fertilizer.

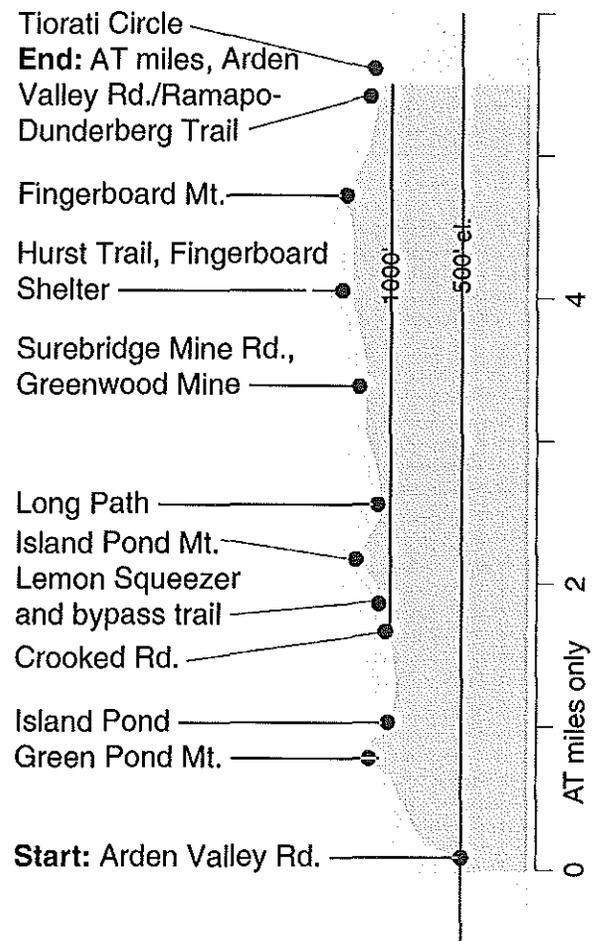
The trail leaves Island Pond Rd. (1.3 mi.), climbs log steps, and crosses a gravel road that provides vehicle access to Island Pond for fishing (by permit only). The trail then crosses a bridge over the pond's outlet. The outlet is channeled into a cut stone spillway, the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps, who in the early 1930s transformed the face of Bear Mt.–Harriman SP by building dams, lakes, roads, and camps (see "With the Boys of the CCC" in Hike #29).

Shortly the trail crests a rise with a lovely view of Island Pond. At 1.7 mi. the AT reaches, briefly follows, then turns left off of Crooked Rd., an old woods road, then starts to ascend. The trail reaches the Lemon Squeezer at 1.9 mi. This narrow passage slices upward through the center of a split rock ledge composed of coarse gneiss, the result of eons of glacial or frost action. The 300-ft.-long climb to the top can be a tight squeeze and tricky work with a wide backpack. It can also be difficult for small children or the less agile. A bypass trail to the left snakes easily around the Lemon Squeezer. Early in 1922, members of the NY-NJTC scouted out the first 6 mi. of the AT ever blazed, looking for interesting historical and geological features for the trail within Bear Mt.–Harriman parks (see "From Dream to

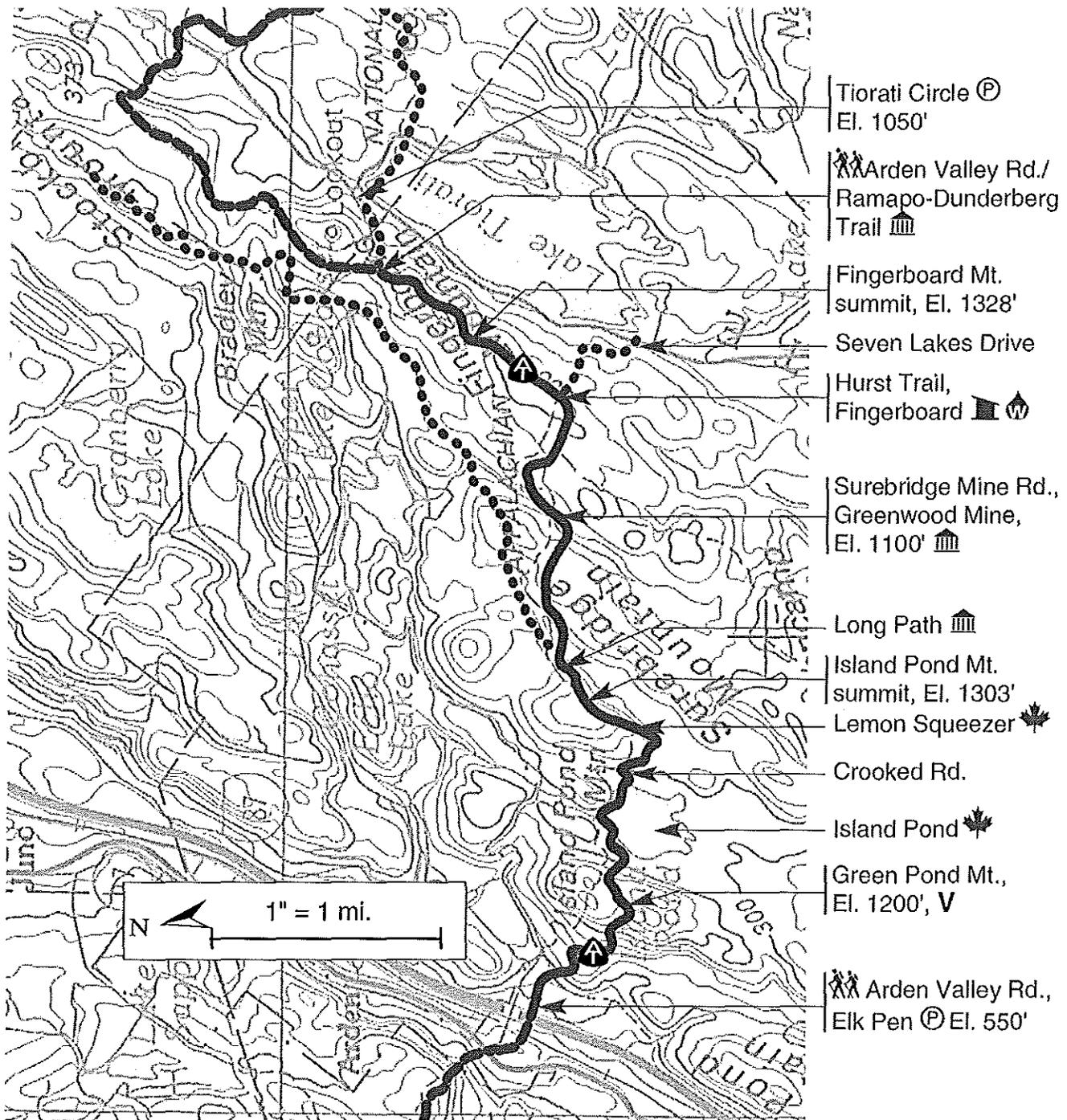
Reality: The AT Is Born"). The much-photographed Lemon Squeezer may have been one of their best finds. The Arden-Surebridge Trail (red-triangle-on-white blazes) also passes through this geological feature; be sure to stay on the white-blazed AT.

Over the next 0.3 mi. the trail gradually ascends Island Pond Mt. (1303 ft.) through a mixed oak forest. At 2.6 mi. the AT crosses the turquoise-blazed Long Path. This long-distance trail was first proposed by Vince Schaefer, a self-taught General Electric meteorologist and trail builder, in the 1920s. The Long Path presently extends 300 mi. from the George Washington Bridge nearly to the Adirondack Mts. But you needn't walk that far to enjoy nature. The forest floor in Bear Mt.–Harriman SP is dotted with wildflowers. Beginning with coltsfoot in early April, a long parade of flowers follows: bloodroot, Dutchman's-breeches, dwarf ginseng, rue anemone, wood anemone, wild geranium, and Solomon's-seal, to name just a few. By September, the many varieties of aster dominate.

The AT descends, crosses an intermittent stream, then ascends steeply, reaching a shoulder of Surebridge Mt. The trail crosses Surebridge Brook at 3.4 mi. and turns left onto Surebridge Mine Rd., passing the water-filled pit of Greenwood Iron Mine on your right. Take a look at the immense tailings piles to your left and you'll begin to get an idea



of just how deep this mine goes. Tailings are the worthless rock left behind by the miners (though these stony heaps still contain enough magnetite ore to deflect a compass needle). While the Greenwood Mine's actual depth is not recorded, Hudson Highland iron mines typically dove several hundred feet underground. They were dug out largely by hand, using black powder, picks, and shovels. The mine road beneath your feet once carried wagons loaded with tons of ore headed for the Clove Furnace.



In another 0.1 mi. the trail turns right, leaving the mine road. It ascends through hemlocks, climbing to the ridge of Fingerboard Mt. (4.0 mi.). Here, the red-on-white-blazed Ramapo-Dunderberg Trail (R-D) co-aligns with the AT. The R-D was the first trail constructed by volunteers of the NY-NJTC and one of the first built in the New York metro-

politan area. Bear Mt.-Harriman SP Superintendent Major William Welch recruited the volunteers to blaze this 24-mi. path in 1920, the start of a trail-building-and-maintenance relationship between the public and private sector lasting to the present day. In another 0.1 mi. the blue-blazed Hurst Trail goes 350 ft. right to Fingerboard Shelter. The

Hurst Trail continues past the shelter, reaching Seven Lakes Dr. on Lake Tiorati in 0.4 mi. (a water source, but purify). Closeness to the road makes this a less-than-private camp spot with big weekend crowds. The shelter has no privy.

At 4.7 mi. the AT reaches the summit of Fingerboard Mt. (1328 ft.) and begins a gradual descent over sloping rock that in some places seems nearly as smooth as pavement. Veins of pegmatite crystals, a combination of quartz and feldspar, glitter like white ice permanently frozen in the exposed Hudson Highlands bed-

rock. These crystals were formed millions of years ago, deep underground, under intense heat and tremendous pressure.

There are views of Lake Tiorati (best when leaves are off the trees) from Fingerboard Mt. The large lake, once two small ponds, was dammed in 1915 by Major Welch as part of his plan to provide outdoor recreation for New York City residents. At 5.5 mi. the trail arrives at paved Arden Valley Rd. Turn right, leaving the AT but still following the R-D, and walk 0.2 mi. to the Tiorati Circle parking area (overnight).



## HIKE #35 Itinerary

Miles <b>N</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	Elev. (ft./m)	Miles <b>S</b>
<b>Total: 5.7 mi. with access on Arden Valley Rd./Ramapo-Dunderberg Trail</b>			
0.2	Access: Tiorati Circle in Bear Mt.–Harriman SP, overnight parking; go W from circle following Arden Valley Rd./Ramapo-Dunderberg Trail.	1050/320	0.2
5.5	<b>End AT miles:</b> Arden Valley Rd. Leave AT, turning right (E) on road, still following Ramapo-Dunderberg Trail.	1196/365	0.0
4.7	Fingerboard Mt. summit.	1328/405	0.8
4.1	Hurst Trail to Fingerboard Shelter (350 ft.) and to Seven Lakes Drive (0.4 mi.); water from lake; early exit option.		1.4
4.0	Ridge of Fingerboard Mt.; Ramapo-Dunderberg Trail joins AT.		1.5
3.4	Surebridge Brook; Surebridge Mine Rd.; Greenwood Mine.	1100/335	2.1
2.6	Cross Long Path, 300-mi. trail between George Washington Bridge and Mohawk River.		2.9
2.2	Island Pond Mt. summit.	1303/397	3.3
1.9	Lemon Squeezer rock formation with bypass trail.		3.6
1.7	Crooked Rd. woods road.		3.8
1.3	Leave Island Pond Rd.		4.2
1.0	Descend to Island Pond.	1100/335	4.5
0.8	Green Pond Mt. summit.	1200/366	4.7
0.3	Turn L (E) into woods and begin climbing.	600/183	5.2
0.1	Turn R (S) onto chained-off Old Arden Rd.		5.4
0.0	<b>Start:</b> Arden Valley Rd., Elk Pen overnight parking, 1.0 mi. SE of Arden.	550/168	5.5

## **SOUTH**

## Geographic Organization

The hikes included in this volume follow the Appalachian Trail from south to north. Most of the hikes are described as south-to-north walks, but many are suitable to walking the opposite way, too. A few hikes are best done from north to south. We have avoided some wicked climbs by bringing you down, rather than up, certain nasty hills.

## Maps: Legends, Skills, Sources

### Abbreviations

Abbreviations commonly used:

AHS, American Hiking Society

AMC, Appalachian Mountain Club

ATC, Appalachian Trail Conference

CCC, Civilian Conservation Corps

USFS, U.S. Forest Service

USGS, U.S. Geological Survey

	Start or End of hike
	Trailhead parking
	Viewpoint
	Camping
	Lean-to (a.k.a. Shelter) (anything three-sided)
	Cabin, Lodge, Hut (anything enclosed)
	Water (spring or other source)
	Toilet (outhouse, privy, or better)
	Elevation
	Natural History Site
	Historic / Cultural Site
<hr/>	
	Appalachian Trail
	Appalachian Trail—before Start and after End of hike
	Appalachian Trail—planned relocation
	Access Trail (to/from AT) or side (spur) trail

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



GLENN SCHERER is a NY-NJTC volunteer who moves rocks and mountains of paperwork to support the AT. Scherer has hiked the AT in Maryland, New Jersey, and New York, plus Vermont's Long Trail and Maine's 100-Mile Wilderness. His writing has appeared in *Backpacker*, *Outside*, *AMC Outdoors*, *Appalachian Trailway News*, *American Hiker*, and *New Jersey Country Roads*. In 1995 he wrote *Vistas and Vision: A History of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference*. His *Nature Walks in New Jersey* is forthcoming from AMC. Glenn Scherer lives in Highland Lakes, New Jersey.

DON HOPEY is the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette* environmental reporter. He has hiked 700 miles of the AT in Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, Georgia, and Maine. Hopey contributed to *Appalachian Adventure*, about a 1995 AT relay hike by reporters from five newspapers. He has also hiked in the Grand Canyon (Yellowstone River), Black Canyon (Gunnison River), Never Summer Mountains (Colorado), Great Smoky Mts. (Tennessee), and on Mt. Rainier (Washington), all with a fly rod poking from his backpack.

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