



Discover America

Newsletter of the American Discovery Trail Society

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ADT Featured Area

Dolly Sods Wilderness



The Bear Rocks overlook the beauty of Dolly Sods.

Photo courtesy of Monongahela National Forest

Traveling along the American Discovery Trail in the Dolly Sods area of West Virginia, you may forget that you are in the eastern United States. Dolly Sods is located on the highest plateau of its type east of the Mississippi River—its elevation reaches 4,000 feet. Snow can be found there any month of the year and the tundra-like vegetation is reminiscent of Canada or Alaska.

The Eastern Continental Divide runs along the crest of the ridge so the rain that falls to the west becomes part of the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico while rain to the east of the ridge eventually drains into the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay.

At over 17,000 acres, the Dolly Sods Wilderness protects over half of the entire area known as Dolly Sods. It is abutted by the Dolly Sods Scenic Area, which provides road access to some of the most visited parts of the Sods. The

Dolly Sods North area, like the rest of the area, is under the management of the U.S. Forest Service. Together, these are vulnerable areas that need this protection because they have been the scene of considerable environmental damage.

The high plateau was once covered by a dense, ancient red spruce and hemlock forest. Its trees grew to 90 feet tall and 12 feet in diameter. Their fallen needles created a blanket of humus seven to nine feet deep. But during the late 1800s, the invention of the railroad provided access for logging at a previously unheard of rate. Also, homesteaders in the logged areas burned the undergrowth to provide grass cover for grazing sheep, further decimating the understory. Whether by intention or the stray sparks of locomotives and sawmills, with the protective tree covering gone, the thick, dry humus easily caught fire. By the 1910s, with everything burnt down to the rocks, all insects

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Wilderness Facts

The Wilderness Act passed in 1964.

There are 756 federal wilderness areas in the U.S. (as of March 2009).

The United States was the first country in the world to designate wilderness areas through law.

Five percent of U.S. soil is protected by wilderness designation, but only half of it is in the lower 48 states.

The act defines wilderness as “...an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man...” and “untrammelled” as “not being subject to human controls and manipulations that hamper the free play of natural forces.”

The ADT goes through or next to many wilderness areas:

West Virginia

Otter Creek

Illinois

Clear Springs
Lusk Creek
Panther Den
Garden of the Gods
Bald Knob
Crab Orchard

Colorado

Holy Cross
Collegiate Peaks
Raggeds

Nevada

Alta Toquima
Arc Dome
Currant Moutain
Mt. Rose
Table Mountain

California

Granite Chief
Phillip Burton

New State Coordinator Takes Reins in Nevada

Ted Oxborrow is the new ADT state coordinator for Nevada. He shares some of his background and interests for Discover America readers here.

By Ted Oxborrow

From a very young age through high school, I spent my summers “haying” in Lund, Nevada—a pioneer town in eastern Nevada founded by my great grandparents and now, coincidentally, on the ADT route—and the rest of the year tending the dairy in Carson City.

Early on, I fell in love with Nevada’s expansiveness and freedom of movement. Long hikes to geological sites, camping by horseback, and orienteering were common family activities.

Jill (a Nevada native) and I married and first sought adventure in Micronesia. We owned and operated a charter sail boat and dive marina for 14 years. During that time, we thoroughly sailed and hiked the islands and atolls of Palau, the Western Carolines, the Northern Marianas, and Guam.

Next, from Japan, we launched a 30-year international ranch estate management business, overseeing the design and development of high end, luxury beef, lamb, and poultry production.

When we returned to Carson City in 2009 we wanted to dedicate our time and interests toward the preservation and improved management of Nevada’s expansive wilderness and natural beauty.

The opportunity to volunteer quality time as members of the American Discovery Trail Society team fits very well with our goals and our interests.

You can count on us.

The ADT Society would like to express its gratitude to Dale Ryan for his many years of service as the first coordinator for the state of Nevada. Happy trails wherever they lead you. —Editor

Obama Sets out America’s Great Outdoors Initiative

President Obama recently signed a presidential memorandum to establish the America’s Great Outdoors Initiative. It seeks to promote and support community-level efforts to conserve outdoor spaces and reconnect Americans to the outdoors.

The initiative aims to bring together farmers, ranchers, land trusts, recreation and conservation groups, sportsmen, community park groups, governments and industry, and people from all over the country to start a national dialogue about conservation. They will then develop a 21st century strategy that supports the efforts of private citizens and local communities to protect resources, manage land, and provide outdoor recreation.

“Today, with 80 percent of Americans living in cities and suburbs, it is more important than ever for people to have access to outdoor space. Just as we cherish our childhood memories of hiking and sledding, fishing and camping, and just as we enjoy spending time outdoors with our families, we must guard these places and traditions for new generations,” said Council on Environmental Quality Chair Nancy Sutley.

A website that explains the initiative and allows input can be found at <http://ideas.usda.gov/ago/ideas.nsf>.

Cairo, West Virginia, Holds National Trails Day Event

The town of Cairo, W.Va., celebrated National Trails Day on June 5 with a “Saturdays on the Square” festival along the North Bend Rail Trail. Participants enjoyed outdoor music, food, fruit smoothies, and iced coffee drinks. Ridge Runner races were held along the trail.

The historic town is proud of its association with the American Discovery Trail and the fact that the North Bend Rail Trail runs right down its main street.

Decade for National Trails

Working together brings strength in numbers. The Partnership for the National Trails System (PNTS) works to further the protection, completion, and stewardship of the National Trails System by doing just that. As an affiliated member of the PNTS, the American Discovery Trail Society indirectly helps to complete and sustain the National Trails System.

In recognition of the upcoming 50th anniversary (2018) of the National Trails System, the PNTS has launched the “Decade for National Trails” to support trails. Although significant progress has been made to “transform trails from lines on maps to places in the landscape for people to learn from and enjoy,” much remains to be done. Specifically, the Decade for National Trails would like to see:

Every citizen and community in the United States aware of the National Trails System;

All designated national trails completed and enhanced;

Federal agencies better able to manage and sustain National Scenic, Historic, and Recreation Trails, as well as rail trails;

An enhanced capacity for non-profit organizations to develop more volunteer trail stewards to form a network of community-based natural and cultural resource stewardship.

In addition, the ADT Society would like to see National Discovery Trails added to the list of national trails following the passage of our proposed amendment to the National Trails System Act to create this new category (see page 4).

Making Connections...
Coast to Coast

800-663-2387
info@discoverytrail.org
www.discoverytrail.org

The Down-Home Dream of NOT Going Coast to Coast

By *Chuck Oestreich*
ADT Northern Illinois Coordinator

“You walked from California to Delaware?”

“Yes, I did, and it was the dream of my life.”

“I’ll bet it was. Say, how long did it take you?”

“Oh, I was on the trail—the American Discovery Trail—for just about nine months.”

With that my heart sank. I don’t have nine months available to go off on a walk across America. And, I suspect, not many others have the time—or, for that matter, the physical and psychological resources—to do such a sustained adventure.

In fact, in the entire history of the ADT, fewer than 30 people have done it. It remains a dream to most of us.

A car racer has the Indy 500.
A bike racer, the Tour de France.
A swimmer, the English Channel.
Alas, very few of us will ever realize any of these dreams.

But, come on, you wake up in the morning, shaking away the ephemeral shadows that remain for only a few seconds before you eye the hands of the alarm clock. No more sleep; no more dream.

Welcome to reality.

And what’s the matter with that? Good old reality—real living life—is much different than a fleeting vision, floating out there wispy and unsubstantial.

So where does the ADT fit in?

Well, for the vast majority of us it is the best of all worlds. It’s a combination of dream and reality.

Of both long-distance hiking or biking, and local walks or bike rides;

Of both knowledge that there is a grand

plan for non-motorized travel across America and the down-to-earth reality that there is a trail, path, or roadway nearby where we can enjoy nature, fitness, and comforting thoughts without a major investment in time, energy, security, or planning.

All of us can hop on the ADT close to where we live and enjoy a day trip or even just an hour’s romp. We can heighten our reality by getting away from our ordinary work-a-day world. We can daydream, as it were, while staying near to where we live.

The ADT is a coast-to-coast dream, but for most of us it’s more of a down-home chance to become closer to ourselves and our local environment. And that’s a realistic dream worth having—and cherishing.

Bedding Down with the Help Of Social Networking Sites

By *Brian Stark*
ADT National Coordinator

Contemplating a long-distance trek on the American Discovery Trail requires extensive planning. When is the best season to cross the mountains and deserts? What safety precautions should you take? What type of shelter do you want to plan for?

It’s this last question that offers some new alternatives to the growing crowd of trail users who are also connected to the internet. One website in particular could add an occasional rich cultural experience to trail users. Couchsurfing.org is a social networking website where people all over the world can register for free, offer a couch or bed to others traveling through their area, and search for similar offers from people living in areas they plan to travel.

It’s a great concept: nearly everyone has either a guest room or a couch that regularly goes unused. And there are hundreds of visitors in each state looking for lodging. For those interested in making connections with locals instead of sheltering themselves away in a hotel room, couchsurfing could add to the trail experience and lower your travel costs.

Here’s how it works: “surfers” create an online account. They establish whether

they will definitely take someone in, perhaps offer space, or just meet for coffee. You set your comfort level. Once your profile is established, you can search online for similar couchsurfing hosts in the areas you plan to travel, in this case, along the American Discovery Trail.

As with most social networking sites, the bulk of users are in the large metropolitan areas, so while it’s likely that you could easily find a couch to sleep on in Denver, you will also likely struggle to find a registered user in Ione, Nevada. With that in mind, having a host in the bigger cities could actually be an advantage as they may be able to suggest area restaurants, post offices, and other services which are easier to spot in the smaller communities. Couchsurfing hosts don’t generally offer anything beyond good conversation and a place to sleep, however, some may do so on occasion.

My wife and I recently had our first couchsurfing experience on a trip to the mountains of northern Arizona for a 50-mile trail race. I had just registered my account on the website and found a family offering a couch in the town where the race started.

After contacting them through the couchsurfing website (everyone’s personal email addresses are protected and all correspondence is recorded for safety issues), we quickly established a connection with our hosts and we stayed two nights with them. Users of the site can even customize the type of person they are willing to host: foreign travelers, single, gender, no pets, etc.

Our hosts had a guest room for us, prepared a nice dinner and even breakfast the next morning, but this is certainly not typical. While hotels greatly add to the local economy and travelers do sometimes appreciate a quiet night alone, having spent the weekend with our new friends greatly added to my race weekend. Not only did my wife and I have a great time at the event, we also made some wonderful new friends and got excellent tips on traveling internationally with young children. (Our

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National Discovery Trails Legislative Effort Continues

Q: What does it take to pass an act of Congress? A: Lots of support from individuals. That's where every ADT Society member and trail enthusiast can help.

Currently, the National Discovery Trails Act (H.R. 4671) has 22 co-sponsors. We need more, especially from states the trail goes through. This will show the broad appeal of this legislation.

Write, call, or e-mail your representative and ask him or her to co-sponsor H.R. 4671. Emphasize that this is a *bipartisan* bill that doesn't require any funding for buying land or maintenance. The trail is already on public lands and in the budgets of the existing landowners, such as state parks.

We need this legislation so the various national parks, national forests, and federal lands along the route can put up our ADT logo trail signs. Official designation will also bring national attention to the

trail's features all along its 6,800 coast-to-coast miles.

If you have never written or called your representative, you'll be happy to know it is easier than you think. Go online to www.house.gov and click on your member's name to get contact information, including the locations and phone numbers of their home-state district office.

For more information on the bill and sample letters of support, see our website at www.discoverytrail.org/news/issues.html.

The legislation is bipartisan. Its main sponsors are John Sarbanes, a Democrat from Maryland, and Jeff Fortenberry, a Republican from Nebraska.

The primary purposes of the act are to add a new category of trail to the National Trails System Act—called National Discovery Trails—and to designate the American Discovery Trail as the first of this important and unique new category of trail.



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Many thanks
to
The Coleman
Company
for its
continued
support of
the
American
Discovery
Trail!



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DO AWAY WITH RENEWAL NOTICES BY BECOMING A GREEN MEMBER TODAY

The American Discovery Trail Society is establishing a new membership program to cut down on the paper, printing, and resources used each month in generating membership renewals. As a green member, you will no longer receive membership renewal letters or new membership cards. Your membership dues will be automatically charged to your credit card and help the ADT Society save time and money. You can enroll for any period of time you wish, and simply contact the Society office to discontinue your membership. Please consider making your membership sustainable throughout the year by giving each month. Or have your dues automatically charged on a day of your choice once a year.

Monthly Dues

Charged on the 1st business day of the month

- \$5 per month
- \$10 per month
- \$15 per month
- \$20 per month
- \$25 per month
- \$ ____ other amount per month

Yearly Dues

Charged on the day of your choice

- \$30 per year
- \$50 per year
- \$100 per year
- \$ ____ other amount per year

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Mail to: American Discovery Trail Society
PO Box 20155, Washington, DC 20041



Red Creek cuts a path through the Dolly Sods Wilderness.

Photo courtesy of Monongahela National Forest

Dolly Sods

(Continued from page 1)

and burrowing forms of life perished and the area became a desert.

Finally, during World War II, the U.S. Army used the area as a practice artillery range and maneuver area for troop training. Unexploded and dangerous shells have been found in recent years as crews searched the most traveled areas to eliminate them. Still, a few may have remained undetected and if one is found, the Forest Service reminds people to not touch it but report it to the ranger district in Petersburg.

Today, the red spruce forest is starting to recover as it shares the land with a mixture of hardwoods and a variety of heath-type bushes.

Boggy areas, or “sods,” remain due to the many storms that form as moisture-laden air climbs the high ridges. Wind-stunted red spruce and twisted yellow birch remind visitors of the weather extremes this wilderness produces.

Each season displays its own beauty on the plateau. In late spring and early summer, azalea, mountain laurel, and rhododendron blossoms cover the

heath barrens. Blueberries abound in mid-summer, and autumn brings bright crimson vistas from rocky outcroppings. Each August and September, volunteers gather on the overlooks just north of Red Creek Campground to count and band thousands of birds as they migrate over the Allegheny Front.

The Dolly Sods Wilderness has 47 miles of trails, many of which follow old railroad grades or logging roads. As in all wilderness areas, group size is limited to no more than ten and mountain bikes and mechanical devices such as carts are not allowed on wilderness trails.

The American Discovery Trail uses the Blackbird Knob Trail in the north section as its hiking route. Because wilderness areas are closed to bicycles—and in any case the route is single track and inappropriate for a fully laden bicycle—an alternative bicycle route follows nearby Forest Service roads.

The primitive trails have limited marking or blazes, but signs are placed at trail junctions. Hikers need to ford creeks or alter their travel plans in times of high water as there are no bridges.

The Dolly Sods Wilderness is many things – a challenge, a history lesson, a unique ecology, and a place of wild beauty. The American Discovery Trail takes its visitors to this special enclave so they can discover all that it has to offer.



Wind-swept flag trees are testament to weather extremes on Dolly Sods.

Photo courtesy of Jim Shaner

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BACKPACKER
THE OUTDOORS AT YOUR DOORSTEP

Social Networking

(Continued from page 3)

hosts have taken their kids to 22 countries in three years!)

As with all trail life, travelers should exercise caution and diligence when communicating with strangers, and especially when considering being taken in for the night. However, well-managed sites like Couchsurfing.org could open the doors to making connections between trail traveler and community. Because, after all, making connections is what the American Discovery Trail is all about.

Change Service Requested

Nebraska Trails Grow One Mile at a Time



Nebraska coordinator Gary Gebhard represented the ADT at the dedication of the 1.2-mile long Paul Madsen Trail along Johnson Lake near Lexington, Neb. The trail is an important contribution to the Nebraska effort because it is on the ADT route along the south side of Johnson Lake. This lake serves as an oasis for the ADT because it offers services, camping, and, not the least, shade. About 100 people attended the dedication, where Gebhard explained to those gathered how their trail fits into a bigger picture.

Photo courtesy of Gary Gebhard

Osprey Packs and Baltimore Bikers Donate to Society

This spring the American Discovery Trail Society received two very generous donations, \$1,000 from Osprey Packs and \$1500 from the Baltimore Bicycling Club.

The Osprey donation was part of its Osprey Pro Deal Donation Program, which requires a \$2 per transaction donation and included five trails organizations. Customers check off which organization they want their do-

nation to benefit. It is a great way for customers to give back and learn about various organizations like the ADT Society. You can learn more about Colorado-based Osprey Packs and their products at www.ospreypacks.com

The Baltimore Bicycling Club sponsors bicycle activities and advocates for the rights of bicyclists. The club raises money through many events and donates virtually all income after expenses to bicycle-friendly organizations—an amazing \$160,000 from 2000 through

2008. This is their first donation to the ADT Society. You can find information on the bike club at www.baltobikeclub.org.

The Society extends a big thank-you to both of these donors for their important support.

All Members Invited to ADTS Annual Meeting

The American Discovery Trail Society annual membership meeting and board of directors meeting will be held October 16 on the campus of Hanover College, in Hanover, Ind., just west of historic Madison and 45 minutes north of Louisville, Ky.

The ADT Society annual meeting is open to all society members and all are invited to attend. The meeting will be held in the Ogle Center, an environmental retreat facility on the campus, and will begin at 8:00 a.m. Directors will be elected and general business conducted. The membership meeting will be followed immediately by the board meeting.

In addition to the expected spectacular fall colors, the area offers the chance to hike in Clifty Falls State Park or tour the city of Madison, which is renowned for its historic buildings and antique shops. Additionally, there are new, recently dedicated, ADT trail sections nearby that you may want to check out.