



The Appalachian Trail “2020 Lockdown” Pat’s Diary

Monday 4th May

Pat. Surely, we can do something. There must be some walk we can do?

Jerry. Yes, you can walk 2km from your front door but no further, they are going to extend to 5km shortly!

Pat. We need to think outside the box here or we will go stir crazy.

Jerry. Lets have a Zoom call tonight with the gang, have a few beers and something might come to us, at least it will be a bit of Craic.

Tuesday 5th May

Pat. That zoom call was a bit of craic all right, what did we come up with?

Jerry. Not sure.

Pat. What about that idea of walking the Appalachian Trail?

Jerry. It’s 3,500km long.

Pat. Isn’t there 13 of us, we could do it in relay stages.

Jerry. It’s in America.

Pat. Even better, the land of the free and all of that.

Jerry. How are we going to get there?

Pat. We will do it virtually.

Jerry. Brilliant, but how are we going to get there?

Pat. Let it with me, I'll make a few calls.

Thomas. Yes, a friend of mine knows a guy who knows a guy who knows Trump.

Pat. Any chance of a call with him?

Thomas. Who the guy I know?

Pat. No, we need a call with Trump

Thomas. I'll ask.

Pat. He can only say no.

Thomas. OK, were on he will take a zoom call tonight but my guy says it would be best if he is talking to a senior guy with a few women hanging off him.

Pat. I have just the man, and I am sure the girls wouldn't mind an excuse to put on some lippy & dressing up for the evening.

Robert. I have a call with who?

Pat. The "Don" in Washington, just wear your red tie and tell him a few stories about the old days, get a letter from him to allow us into the country to walk "The Appalachian Trail". The girls will be on the call as well, chances are he

mightn't be taking much notice of what you're saying to him.

Robert. But is this critical travel?

Pat. Yeah!

Wednesday 6th May

Pat. He did it, were going to America, we have a letter.

Jerry. Really?

Pat. Robert played a stormer, Anne Marie, Gillian and Gina were dressed up to the nines and giggled at everything he said, Trump thought he was looking at an episode of Charlie's Angles at the start until one of his aide's told him he was talking to someone from Ireland on a zoom call.

Jerry. How are we getting there?

Pat. The "Don" is sending his private jet to Cork airport, we fly out on Friday.

Jerry. Where are we flying to?

Pat. We're flying into Lumpkin County-Wimpys Airport just outside Dahlonega, Georgia only 20km from Springer Mountain the official starting point of the Appalachian Trail since 1958.

Jerry. I'll send out a What's App to the group

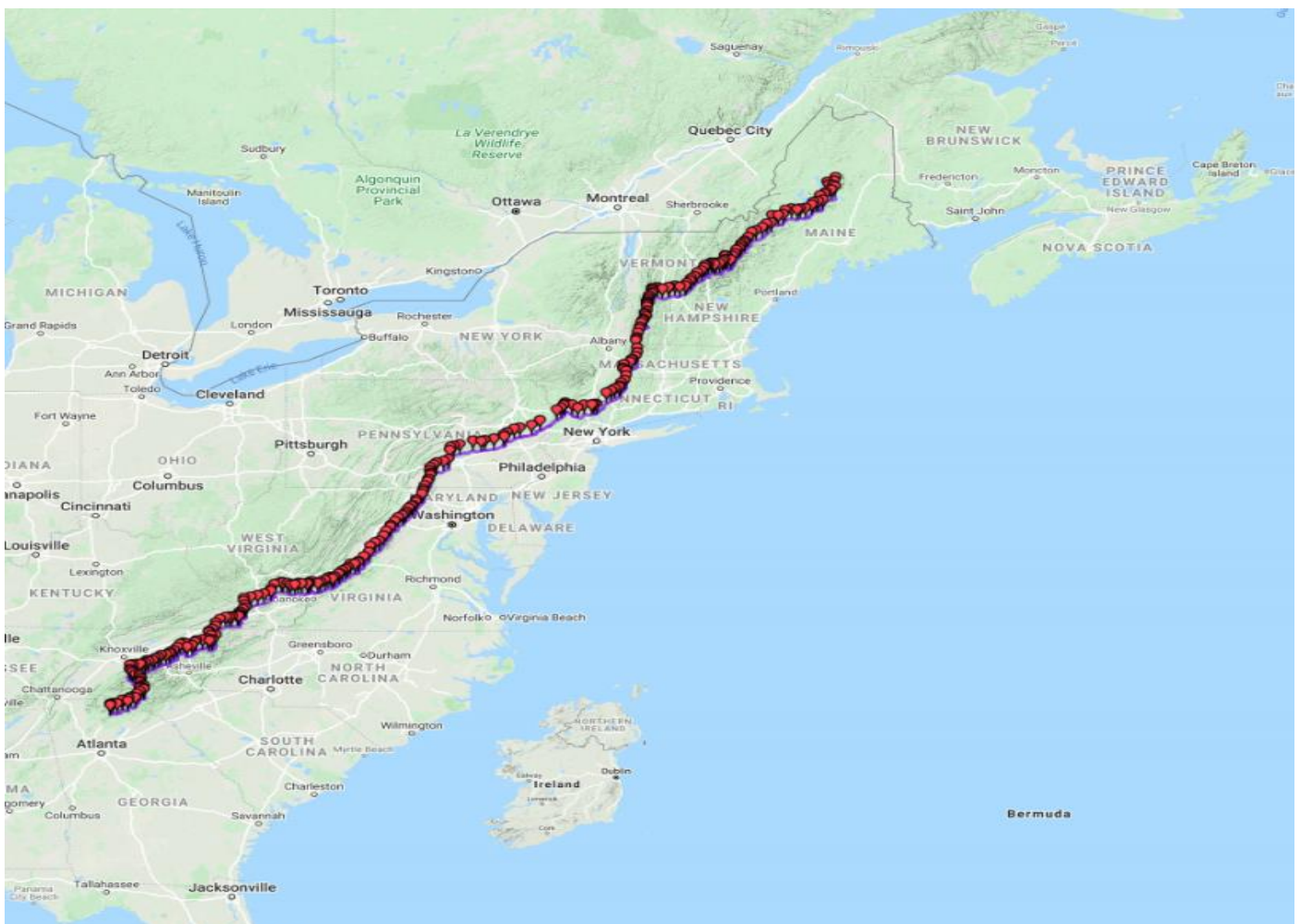
Pat. Don't forget the kit list it's on the website, tent, sleeping bag, thermarest, water bladder, dried food, gas stove and the usual gear.

Jerry. It's amazing what you can do when you put your mind to it!

Thursday 7th May

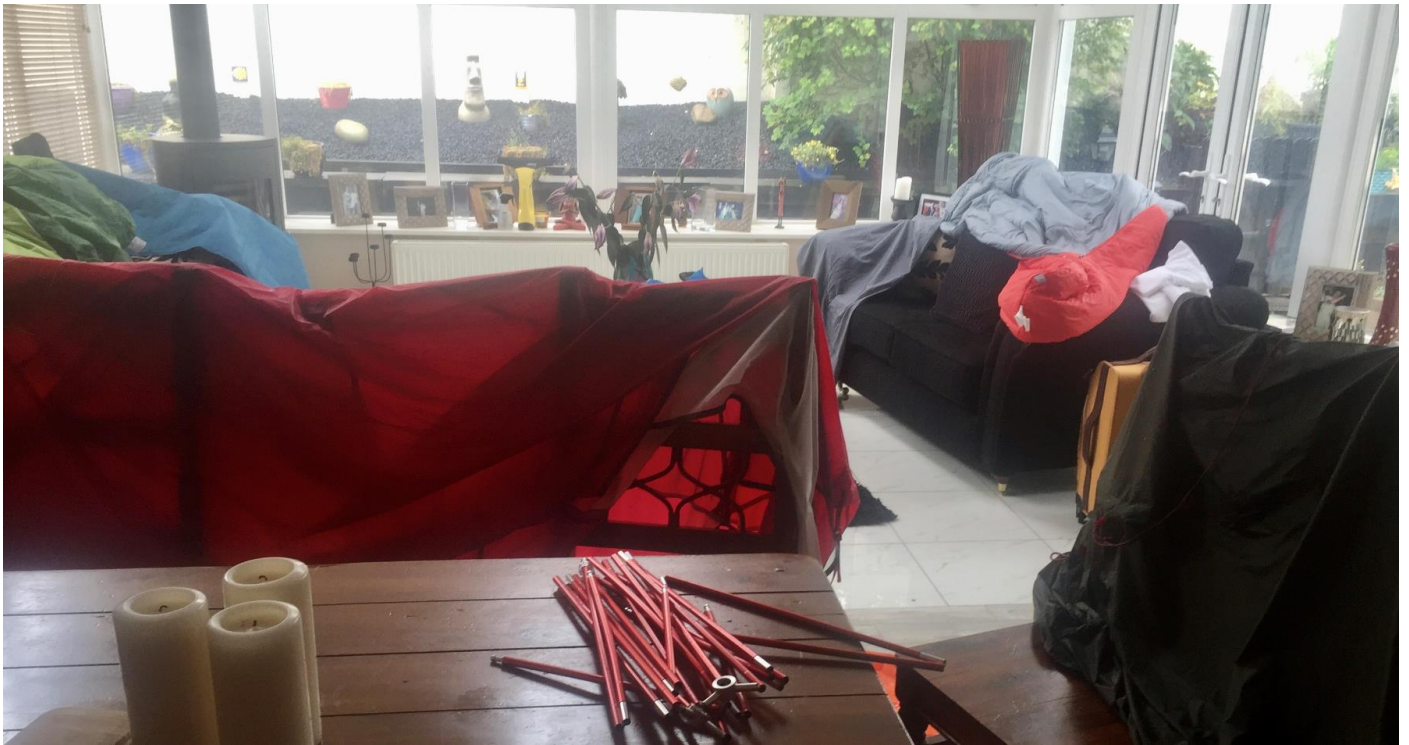
It normally takes someone 12 months to plan, train, gather gear, organise gear drops into different locations along the trail and get mentally ready to take on the Appalachian Trail. In 2018 just over 1000 people completed the entire route, compare that to 800 people summiting Everest in the same year shows the task ahead.

The number of states the AT crosses. From south to north:
1. Georgia 2. North Carolina 3. Tennessee 4. Virginia 5. West Virginia 6. Maryland 7. Pennsylvania 8. New Jersey 9. New York 10. Connecticut 11. Massachusetts 12. Vermont 13. New Hampshire 14. Maine.



We have 48hrs so we better get cracking, I gave a few tents an airing out and packed all my gear.

“Downtown Mogadishu”



My rucksack weighted 16kg, most people were about the same, Jerry’s weighed 12kg, he had a big smug head on him until Thomas’s rucksack came in at approx. 6.752kg. Every mini mars bar I could find in the back of the cupboard from Easter and some bounty’s left over from Christmas Celebrations were gathered as little treats.

I packed my well-worn copy of Bill Bryson’s book “A Walk in the Woods” one of the funniest travel books I’ve ever read, Bryson’s tells his tail of his time spent on the AT. You can only call it the AT once you have walked it so fingers crossed we can complete it before lockdown ceases and become an AT “thru-hiker”.

Friday 8th May

We were all just getting settled into our plush surroundings in our private jet when Pauline says, I read a black bear won't attack you for your food. More likely, they will wait until you're sleeping and try to get to your food bag you hung in a tree away from the tents. Coyotes don't want to get close to you either. Snakes are probably the least scared of you. You might see a Rattle Snake or Copper Head on the trail and it will take it's time moving along or it might just curl up and stay where it is.

Mick says the most dangerous things will be the flora, poison ivy, ivy bush, nettle wood, poison sumac. Rosemary says it will be the insects, spiders and bugs. Gary said he heard a story about running from Black Bears or maybe it was standing still for Black Bears or visa versa for Brown Bears, something like that anyway he can't remember. A few of us wondered if we should have put a little bit more thought into this trip.

Payno who was decked out from head to toe in North Face Summit Series gear handed out some stretching and exercise sheets for us to do every chance we get, we need to be ready to hit the ground running once we land he says, he seems to be taking the Training Officer position a little too serious. I'm not sure if the burnt orange pants go with the lime green tee shirt and lime green walking shoes but he tells me it does, the jury seems to be out with the rest of the gang. Peasant's he calls us.

We badly needed to sleep so Robert told us the story of Benton MacKaye, a forester who shortly after the death of his wife in 1921 wrote his original plan called “An Appalachian Trail”. MacKaye's idea detailed a grand trail that would connect a series of farms and wilderness work/study camps for city-dwellers along the Appalachian Mountains from the highest point in the North (Mt. Washington in New Hampshire) to the highest in the South (Mt. Mitchell in North Carolina)

On October 7, 1923, the first section of the trail was officially opened, from Bear Mountain west through Harriman State Park to Arden, New York, in 1958 the starting point was then changed to Springer Mountain due to the growth of commercial activity on the original route.

Zzzzzzzzz!

