

## Terms to Know

**Separation:** This is when men and women separate into two groups, with one group moving ahead on the trail. Once separated, the two groups are free to take a bathroom break. If you need an unofficial separation during the hike, make sure you tell the sweep so you don't get left behind.

**Sweep:** A person assigned to stay at the end of the line of hikers, particularly on hikes with a lot of people. The sweep is the last person in line. The leader knows that when the sweep appears everyone on the hike is accounted for.

**Junction:** A trail intersection where a decision must be made as to which way to go. All hikers wait at a junction until the sweep appears, so that the group stays together.

**Blaze:** A marking of paint fully visible on a tree or rock to mark a trail at somewhat regular intervals. Plastic or metal trail markers or piles of rocks (cairns) may be used instead of painted blazes.

**Car Spot:** When a hike is linear instead of circular, it doesn't end where it began. Therefore, cars need to be at the end of the hike to provide transportation back to the cars at the beginning. Arranging the correct number of cars at each end can take extra time.

**Dropout Point:** A point on the hike where you can leave the group and easily get back to your car. Many hikes do not have dropout points. Contact the leader if you are unsure.

**AT:** The Appalachian Trail, which runs from Maine to Georgia. Nearly 90 miles of the Trail run through the Berkshires. The National Park Service has delegated responsibility for the AT in Massachusetts to the Berkshire AMC.

**M-M Trail:** The Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, which runs 114 miles from the Mass.-Conn. state line to Mt. Monadnock, New Hampshire. Berkshire AMC members, along with group and individual members of the M-M Trail Conference, perform trail maintenance.

**Bushwhacking:** Hiking without the benefit of a blazed trail, or possibly any trail.

**LNT:** Leave No Trace is a program designed to minimize our impact on the environment through responsible use of the outdoors. See [www.Int.org](http://www.Int.org).

## Who Hikes with the AMC?

Participants include adults of all ages. Children are welcome on trips that are appropriate to their ability and when accompanied by an adult. Dogs may not accompany their owners without specific permission of the leader. The AMC always welcomes both members and non-members.



## Hike Ratings

Hike ratings consist of a letter-number-letter system indicating MILEAGE-PACE-TERRAIN.

The first character indicates distance:

- AA = over 13 miles
- A = 9–13 miles
- B = 5–8 miles
- C = under 5 miles

The second character indicates the leader's pace (on average terrain):

- 1 = very fast (2.5 m.p.h. or faster)
- 2 = fast (2–2.5 m.p.h.)
- 3 = moderate (1.5–2 m.p.h.)
- 4 = leisurely (less than 1.5 m.p.h.)

The final character indicates the kind of terrain:

- A = very strenuous
- B = strenuous
- C = average
- D = easy

Two letters at the end indicate the terrain is somewhere between the two values.

Don't hesitate to call the trip leader if you are in doubt about your ability to complete a hike, or if you need more information on trip difficulty, equipment needed, or meeting place.



# Experience the Wilds of Western Massachusetts



Appalachian  
Mountain Club

A Guide to Hiking with the  
Berkshire Chapter of the  
Appalachian Mountain Club



[amcberkshire.org](http://amcberkshire.org)

## How do I find out about hikes to go on?

Activities are listed on our Chapter website, [amcberkshire.org](http://amcberkshire.org), and sometimes in our newsletter, the *Berkshire Exchange*, which is mailed to Chapter members four times a year. Members also receive the AMC's magazine, *AMC Outdoors*, which includes the activities of all the AMC's chapters. Activities are also listed on the overall AMC website, [outdoors.org](http://outdoors.org).

## How do I know which hikes will be within my ability?

Use the hike rating system (included in this pamphlet) to determine which hikes appeal to you. If you are unsure, don't hesitate to contact the leader to discuss what the hike will be like and if there are dropout points. It's a good idea to start below where you think your ability is and work your way up.

## How do I sign up for a particular hike?

Many of our hikes are "show and go." This means that the starting time and location are provided in the hike description, and you can just show up for the hike. Other hikes do not provide this information, or specifically say that you must register; simply contact the leader of the activity to find out about participation.

## Who will lead the hike?

All leaders are AMC members who volunteer their time and skills to the Club. Leadership training is available and leaders are experienced hikers. Always feel free to contact a leader before a hike.

## What should I bring with me on the hike?

You should bring plenty of water and a snack on every hike you go on, more or less depending on the weather conditions and the length of the hike. Longer hikes may include a lunch break. You should also bring any medication that you may need (e.g., for bee sting allergies). Other items you might consider bringing are insect repellent, sunscreen, a personal first aid kit, a whistle, a flashlight, and a daypack to carry it all! Some terrain may call for a walking stick or trekking poles, although use may vary by individual preference. Winter hikers often bring a pad (to sit on during breaks), a tent or emergency shelter, a sleeping bag, and extra warm clothes. When in doubt, contact the leader.

## What should I wear on the hike?

Layered clothing is best in all seasons so that you can adjust to changes in temperature. For hiking at higher elevations, bring a sweater or jacket (wool or synthetic). In colder weather, wear/bring long underwear (polypropylene or other synthetic), a sweater and/or vest (wool or synthetic), a

waterproof/windproof shell (for rain and wind protection) large enough to allow wearing warm layers beneath, a hat, gloves/mittens, and a scarf. Avoid cotton clothing whenever possible.

Proper footwear is a must. Sturdy, comfortable hiking boots provide safety and support. Waterproof boots may be recommended on some hikes. For cushioning and protection, wear a light inner sock (polypropylene or other synthetic recommended) and a heavier outer sock (wool or synthetic). Snowshoes or crampons may be required in winter. Don't hesitate to ask the leader any questions if you're unsure what kind of clothing and footwear you may need to bring.

## What happens when I arrive at the trailhead?

You can usually spot the AMC by the friendly group of people at the meeting spot, passing around a clipboard. You will sign in on the liability form, then everyone will form a circle ("Let's circle up!"). The leader will go over a few things, and everyone introduces themselves. Then the hike begins!

## Do I have to sign the liability release?

The liability release serves to protect our many volunteers, and to inform you of your responsibilities as a participant. You are required to sign it to participate in any activity with the AMC. You should familiarize yourself with the text by reading it in full.

## What else can I do with the AMC?

A lot! Bike, backpack, canoe, kayak, raft, climb, snowshoe, volunteer your time, perform trail work, support conservation efforts, participate in a workshop, attend social events, go on a trip, stay in a hut, lead a hike or other activity, camp, make new friends, meet great people, and so much more! Sounds great, doesn't it?

## I still have questions!

You can find more information online at our Chapter website, [amcberkshire.org](http://amcberkshire.org), and at the overall AMC website, [outdoors.org](http://outdoors.org). Feel free to contact the Chapter Chair at [chapterchair@amcberkshire.org](mailto:chapterchair@amcberkshire.org), or any Committee Chair. We'd love to hear from you!

## The AMC looks like a great club! How do I join?

You can join through the Membership In A Bottle program, which comes in a Nalgene® water bottle with a \$10 gift certificate good towards AMC merchandise and workshops. Membership is for the overall AMC, affiliated with the Berkshire Chapter, and includes a subscription to *AMC Outdoors*, as well as our quarterly Chapter newsletter, the *Berkshire Exchange*.

# Membership in a Bottle

For the cost of your new annual membership, you will receive:

- A Nalgene® water bottle embossed with the AMC logo;
- A \$10.00 gift certificate good for AMC books, lodging, and workshops;
- An AMC window decal;
- A subscription to *AMC Outdoors*; and
- A temporary ID card.

You'll receive a new member packet with your permanent club ID, a copy of current Chapter activities, and our Chapter's quarterly newsletter, the *Berkshire Exchange*. (The same is true for gift memberships.)

**To purchase a Membership in a Bottle, please complete the form below and mail with check to:**

**Chris Ryan  
PO Box 9369  
North Amherst, MA 01059**

**Questions? Contact Chris Ryan at 413-549-4124 or [bottles@amcberkshire.org](mailto:bottles@amcberkshire.org)!**

## — AMC Berkshire Membership Form —

I wish to purchase:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Individual "Membership in a Bottle" kits (\$50 each).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Family "Membership in a Bottle" kits (\$75 each).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Senior "Membership in a Bottle" kits (\$25 each, age 69 and over). Age: \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Young Member "Membership in a Bottle" kits (\$25 each, up to age 30). Age: \_\_\_\_\_.

I have enclosed a check for the total amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ made payable to **Berkshire Chapter AMC**.

Please mail the kits to:

Name: .....

Street: .....

City, State, Zip: .....

Phone: .....

E-mail: .....

Is this a gift membership?  Yes  No  
(Bottles will be sent to the address above, and the membership recorded in that name, unless you indicate otherwise.)

**Note: This offer is for new members only. Not for renewals, please. Thanks.**