

HORSE-SHOE TRAIL CONSERVANCY

NEWSLETTER SPUR



Hiking the Horse-Shoe Trail End-to-End

We are often asked: How can a hiker complete the whole trail, end-to-end?

There are as many ways to accomplish the journey as there are people to do it but here are a few suggestions. Most people complete the trail in a series of day hikes (sections). We will discuss equestrians and back packers in another article.

Purchase the guidebook and map set before you start so you can plan your trip. It has parking, directions and mileages as well as lots of information about the trail. The guidebook will come with trail errata which tells you the latest changes. The trail is marked with yellow blazes. The blazes always supersede the maps which are re-printed every few years.

Learn how to read and follow the blazes. On the H-ST, a Blaze is a 2"X 6" yellow rectangle. If a single Blaze is on a tree, keep going straight. If you see two blazes, the top blaze tells you which direction to turn to stay on the trail. Blazes are usually painted on trees but may also be found on telephone poles, guardrails or sign posts when the trail is on roads.

Choose a starting point for your first section. Some folk like to "start at the beginning and end at the end" as Lewis Carroll wrote in Alice in Wonderland. But most hikers start near their homes and then branch out from there especially if they live in or near Berks, Lancaster, Lebanon or Dauphin counties. The directions corresponding to the maps are from East to West. You have to follow them backwards to go from West to East. You can hike in any direction that suits your schedule – some days one way, some another.

Determine how far you want to hike. If you are an experienced hiker, you may do a complete map (roughly 14 miles) for each hike but most hikers prefer a shorter distance especially if you are just starting to hike. Hikers have taken any number of years and sections to complete the whole trail.

Decide how you will get to and from the trail- You can use the two-car method: You and a friend take 2 cars to the end of the hike. Park one of them and drive the other to the beginning. Hike back to the first car. You will then have to drive back to pick up the first car. This is known as a shuttle hike. Another shuttle option is to drop your car off at the end of the hike and have your friend drop you off at the beginning. You then hike back to your car while your friend goes home. A third option is to hike "out and back". Park your car at the beginning, hike in so far and turn around and hike back to your car. Keep in mind if you hike "in" 5 miles, you will need to hike "out" 5 miles. Please park legally.

Assemble your essential gear:

- Map (Don't rely solely on your cell phone. Cell service is not always available.)
- Water- you need water in all seasons. Unexpected things can happen while you're hiking. Should you fall and be stuck somewhere for a while, you need water!
- Food- snacks; lunch if appropriate.
- Rain gear- forecasts can change.
- Hiking Shoes (low cut or boots). Trail may be muddy or wet.
- Bug spray, sunscreen, small first aid kit
- Back pack or bag that you can carry on your back
- Hiking poles (optional) but lots of hikers use them

The American Hiking Society has a more extensive list of items hikers should carry to be fully prepared on their website: <https://americanhiking.org/resources/10essentials>.

Respect the land and the landowners who graciously host the trail. Carry out all trash. Leash all pets and clean up after them. Stay on the trail and off private property.

Have fun and keep track of the sections you've completed. When you've hiked the trail "end-to-end" let us know at info@hstrail.org so we can send you a certificate of completion and recognize your accomplishment in the BLAZE newsletter.

