

Alabama Hiking Trail Society

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TAKING IT ONE STEP AT A TIME

First Thru-Hiker of Great Eastern Trail to Step Off in April

It's over 1,700-miles from the Alabama-Florida state line to the Finger Lakes in New York State and while you can drive or fly there, there's an air of adventure about hiking it.

Sue Turner plans on being the first person to do just that – hike the entire Great Eastern Trail from Alabama to New York. The 50 year old Turner, better known by her hiking moniker “Hammock Hangar”, is set to embark on the hike April 1st.

The Great Eastern Trail is a 1,700-mile long path that consists of several existing long trails, such as the Alabama Pinhoti and Conecuh Trails, all linked together by either new connecting trails or road walks.

The trail, also known as the GET, is an alternative adventure to the Appalachian Trail which is seeing an enormous increase in foot traffic. According to Tom Johnson with the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club and one of the original planners of the trail, the GET has an advantage over the A.T.

“In contrast to the A.T., the Great Eastern Trail is in a wilder, less populated area with fewer hikers and very few population centers. It will afford the long distance hiker more of a primitive experience, closer to what Benton MacKaye envisioned in 1921 when he wrote about building the Appalachian Trail.”

Turner's trek will begin at the Florida-Alabama state line in Escambia County near the Conecuh National Forest. From there she will hike through some of the most beautiful country a hiker can experience. In Alabama she'll hike through cypress swamps in south Alabama, get a taste of history in Montgomery, and walk the mountains and past the waterfalls of Talladega National Forest. From there it's one breathtaking view and experience after another as she travels through Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and finally ending the trip in upstate New York at the Great Lakes.

The big question is why would someone want to hike from Alabama to New York?

“I was planning on re-hiking the AT,” Turner said. “Then I heard about the new GET. I love new challenges and this seemed like just the ticket: new places, new mountains, new experiences.”

Sue is a veteran thru-hiker, having hiked the Appalachian Trail, Benton MacKaye Trail, and Florida Trail, but this is a brand new footpath with many unknowns.

“As this trail is new I really do not have a clue about what to expect,” she says. “The trail consist of a number of existing trails being connected together. Since all of the dots between the trails have not been connected I really don't know all the variables. That is what is going to make this a real adventure.”

Turner hopes to complete the journey by mid-September. Readers can keep up with her adventure on her online journal at <http://trailjournals.com/entry.cfm?trailname=4974>.

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Official Great Eastern Trail website: www.greateasterntail.org