



A HIKER'S GUIDE

Safety precautions and stories of the trail

Student survives 20-hour ordeal in Pisgah Forest

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A UNC Asheville alumnus anticipated a short backpacking trip through Pisgah National Forest, but ended up stuck for more than 20 hours.

"I got going, and I kept going and going," Lindsey Pfundstein said. "I started hiking last Sunday afternoon and got done Monday morning."

Pfundstein began at the Turkey Pen Gap trailhead forking into three different directions.

"Supposedly, it's a very easy area to get lost in," she said. "Either trails aren't marked that well, or the blaze marks go in and out, which are the markings on the trees that let you know what trail you're on."

A friend of Pfundstein's informed her about a short looping trail that provided a fairly easy hike.

"I was thinking it was only going to take two hours, maybe three at the very most," the 22-year-old said. "I had packed somewhat of a light backpack because I knew it was going to be a short hike. I put some extra jackets, food and water in there."

She started her hike around 2 p.m. and grew concerned as the sun began to set. Pfundstein took a trail that she thought led back to her car.

"I switched trails, and the sun was setting on me. Finally, it was dark. I was hiking down this mountain, and it was really steep — there were a lot of rocks," she said. "Eventually, I get to this point where I think my car is sup-

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Hiking safety: Bring a map, compass and partner

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More than one-third of the U.S. population hiked last year, according to the American Hiking Society, but despite its popularity, UNC Asheville hikers encourage people to take precautions while enjoying the outdoors.

"Go hiking with someone experienced, who knows the area, the trail, where water sources are located and any other potential hazards that may arise during the trip," said Chris Hampson, a history major and UNC Asheville Outdoors trip supervisor said. "Always look at a weather report before leaving so that you can prepare for potential storms. Always pack plenty of water, approximately 2 liters, and have a map. Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return, especially for overnight trips. Most importantly, have fun."

Running out of water may be the least of hiking hazards. Approximately 11,000 black bears inhabit 10 million acres of land spread mainly across western and eastern North Carolina, according to North Carolina Wildlife.

"While hiking in Linville Gorge, in Pisgah, I thought I saw a bear. I slowly turned around and just walked in the other direction," Ben Gilbert, an economics major, said. "That is the most scared I've been while hiking."

According to Appalachian Bears Rescue, bears rarely attack humans.

Only 57 people died from bear attacks during the last

SAFETY TIPS

- Plan ahead
- Bring plenty of water
- Know the environment
- Start small
- Know basic first aid
- Pack first aid kit
- Never hike alone
- Watch where you step
- Take regular breaks
- Stick to the trail
- Share plans with reliable person
- Check weather
- Carry trail map

100 years.

Hampson suggested storing food up high or separating the cook site from the camp site as precautions while hiking in bear country.

"One time I was with a group of people on UNCA's wilderness trip, and I saw a snake on the trail," said Anna Mills, a multimedia arts and science major. "It was just a black snake, so it probably wasn't dangerous, but I saw it out of the corner of my eye. My gut reaction was to run and push the two people in front of me out of my way."

Many students said that hiking served as a break from regular day-to-day stress.

"I go hiking by myself. It is peaceful for me and a good de-stressor," Gilbert said. "I just got a dog and I can't wait to take him with me."

For many hikers, including Gilbert, completing the vast Appalachian Trail is the ultimate goal.

"I really want to hike the entire Appalachian Trail one day. Next summer I'm going with my uncle to hike part of the Continental Divide," he said. "I also want to go to Mount Rogers in Roanoke because I hear you can walk up and pet the wild ponies."

Mills plans to hike part of the Appalachian Trail with her boyfriend this summer through the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia.

"It seems so mentally and physically challenging to do the Appalachian Trail," Mills said. "I've been reading books and articles about people who have hiked the trail before, and it seems so tough. I heard 15 percent of the people who attempt it quit after the first week."

The Appalachian Trail extends 2,175 miles long.

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