

Buzzing the Appalachian Trail

So you want to booze it while you're travelling the Appalachian Trail? I'm not surprised. Hiking 2,200 miles while staring at your shoes or, better yet, at the wide array of never changing, never flowering fascinating coniferous trees, could get a little hum drum. Alcohol, however, makes everything much more interesting (or so I've heard). The birds sing sweeter, the waitress at the Cracker Barrel in Damascus appears to be dime piece, and your Mountain House Chili tastes... well some things can't be improved no matter how much alcohol you've ingested.




Alcohol, assuming you are of legal age and aren't pregnant, is a great way to improve your Trail experience, but it needs to be thought out. When you pack your bag, every ounce is accounted for. You try and make everything as light as possible in order to save your strength. Packing alcohol is not really an option. Maybe if the FDA allowed for the production of powdered alcohol this would be a viable alternative, but the potential for high schoolers shoving stuff up their noses that shouldn't be there is too high. Your best option would be to take Everclear with you, highest proof alcohol (180+), but even that would add a whopping five pounds to your pack. Not really worth it. When consuming alcohol on the Trail, you have to be smart. This paper will give you the facts you need to know regarding buying alcohol, storing/disposing of alcohol, and taking the necessary precautions. Think before you drink.



Alcohol on a Hiker's Budget

First off, I would like to get something very clear. While travelling through the Marijuana Belt, the states of Tennessee, Kentucky, and West Virginia, you will be presented many an opportunity to drink homemade Moonshine. This isn't the pansy stuff you can buy while visiting Gatlinburg, Tennessee. No, this stuff is deadly. Take a sip or two so you can say you did to all your yuppie friends back home, but after that, stay away. According to Ed Grabianowski, Moonshine researcher, "Some distillers realized that part of the appeal of moonshine was that "kick (high proof)." They experimented with different ingredients to add more kick to the drink, including manure, embalming fluid, bleach, rubbing alcohol and even paint thinner." (Grabianowski). I'm no doctor, but if it can be used to make a bomb, than I think it's pretty safe to say it doesn't need to go into your body.

That being said, a high proof of alcohol will give you the biggest bang for your buck in terms of getting a buzz. It isn't heavy to bring back to the campsite (especially if it's in a plastic handle), and it can be quickly consumed.

On the opposite side, beer and box wines are still cheap, but they weigh more to carry back to the campsite. The benefit to these types of alcohol is that they can be consumed slowly if that's what you're into, and they are high in calories, which is almost a necessity for any food or beverage items consumed while on the Trail. The chart below (courtesy of Getdrunknotfat.com) is a good reference on which drinks are the cheapest for the buzz and calorie count they produce. (Name, Proof, Calorie Count, Cost per 1 oz. of pure alcohol)

Bowman's Vodka	40%	97 cals per 1.5 oz	\$0.41
Vodka - Royal Gate (generic) 80 proof	40%	97 cals per 1.5 oz	\$0.42
Franzia Shiraz Wine	13%	110 cals per 5 oz	\$0.45
Popov Vodka 80 proof	40%	97 cals per 1.5 oz	\$0.46
Franzia Merlot Wine	12.5%	105 cals per 5 oz	\$0.47
Franzia Cabernet Sauvignon 	12%	105 cals per 5 oz	\$0.49
Everclear	95%	226 cals per 1.5 oz	\$0.54
Carlo Rossi - Burgundy 	12.5%	135 cals per 5 oz	\$0.59
Popov Vodka 100 proof	50%	121 cals per 1.5 oz	\$0.61
Carlo Rossi - Cabernet Sauvignon 	11.8%	125 cals per 5 oz	\$0.63
Charles Shaw - Cabernet Sauvignon	12.5%	119 cals per 5 oz	\$0.63

Franzia Chillable Red	9%	105 cals per 5 oz	\$0.66
Natural Ice 	5.9%	130 cals per 12 oz	\$0.75
Bacardi Gold Rum 	40%	98 cals per 1.5 oz	\$0.76

How to Drink Alcohol on the Trail

You are probably thinking, “I’m a grown man, I know how to handle myself and I know how I like my alcohol.” This may be true, or you may be the worst drunk ever. Whatever the case may be, the Trail is a completely different place than the club, your home, bar, airport lounge, or the alleyway where you usually consume your alcohol. There are different ways to consume your alcohol and different customs you should be ready to observe.

If you choose to partake in liquor, and you need a chaser, or something to get rid of the strong flavor of 150+ proof alcohol, that’s perfectly understandable. If you need a chaser for beer or wine, stop reading this immediately— you are clearly under 21 because your taste buds aren’t mature enough to handle low level alcohols. Anyways, you can’t bring chasers with you; just like alcohol, it’s too much weight. Also, you shouldn’t buy it in town, as all your spare money is going to non-freeze dried foods and alcohol. Instead, try this little hack I discovered while hiking in Alaska.

Of course, I’m under 21, I wasn’t consuming alcohol while in Alaska, but that didn’t mean I didn’t need chaser. Aquamira is extremely cheap, safe, and effective way to purify water. When getting your water from places with names like Giardia Creek, Aquamira is a necessity. We couldn’t take the chance that a UV light would run out of batteries, or that a filter had a hole in it.

The only problem with Aquamira is that it leaves a strong taste of sulfur in the water. We found that this could circumnavigated by adding Mio, a type of instant beverage drops, would

replace this foul taste with cherries, apples, watermelon, or whatever flavor we wanted. It chased the sulfur.

So, all of you needing chasers, buy some Mio or Dasani Drops. They are extremely light weight, cost barely anything, and taste great. Even if you don't need chasers for alcohol, use the drops to get rid of bad tastes in water, give you energy (some have caffeine), or for extra calories. Those are always needed.

The way you drink alcohol is different on the Trail, as well as the culture surrounding alcohol. Many different types of people hike the trail. Some may enjoy their alcohol in a tasteful manner, sipping cognac in front of fireplace with their cronies while discussing the works of Shakespeare. On the opposite end of the spectrum, younger hikers may have a more epicurean approach, i.e. binge drinking PBRs. Whatever your social background, try to stay in between these two extremes as you will be mingling with people from all walks of life. Whiteblaze.net is a popular Appalachian Trail discussion board, and the varied views of alcohol is quite clear. One user, Manwhich (2009), claims he drinks, "Brandy for a nightcap". Another user, Yahtzee (2009), would drink "12-15 beers in one sitting". No matter their drink of choice, most users agreed that you should be prepared to share a little with the people in your shelter, and under no circumstance should you drink to a point where you become belligerent, blackout, or sick. You aren't in college, at least, not at the moment. Stay smart, no your limits, you do not want to be hung over in the morning. With limited access to greasy food, showers, or Starbucks, a hangover can completely ruin a day and set you behind schedule.

Alcohol can augment your Trail experience if you are smart. Don't waste all your money on it, make sure you can stomach the kind you bought, share, and drink lots of water.

Towns Along the Way

A quick guide for places to drink in towns along the Trail

Tennessee:

- Gatlinburg- Smoky Mountain Brewery, Gatlinburg Moonshine
- Johnson City- Numan's Sports Bar, New Beginnings, Smokey Bones, Holy Taco, Bailey's Sports Grille, Tipton Street Pub

Virginia:

- Damascus- Damascus Old Mill Inn, Rain Restaurant & Bar, Blue Blaze Café, Dot's Inn

- Roanoke- Flanary's Pub, WR Brews, Horseshoe Bar, Annie Moore's Pub
- Waynesboro- Heritage on Main Street, Ed's
- Berryville- Gray Ghost Tavern, Veramar Vineyard
- Linden- Wine and Duck Restaurant

Pennsylvania:

- Harrisburg- Underdog, Midtown Tavern, Stallions Club, McGrath's Pub, Appalachian Brewing Company
- Fayetteville-Greenwood Tavern, South Mountain, Jolly Cork, 401 Pub & Fare
- Duncannon- Horseshoe, Riviera Tavern, Pub, Burgundy's
- Wind Gap- Beer Stein, Stenger's Bar, Detzi's Tavern
- Port Clinton- Boran's, Westy Bar & Grill

New Jersey:

- Vernon- The George Inn, Lamp Post Inn, Smokey's Brick Oven Tavern, Bixby's & Co
- Unionville- Liberty Tavern, Suspenders, Joe's Place

New York:

- Pawling- Pawling Tavern, Clock Tower, McGrath's, O'Connor's Public House, Kelly's Corner
- Middletown- Empty Bottle Saloon, DeStefano's Old Eerie, Hard Times Tavern, Bullpen

Conneticut:

- Salisbury- Black Rabbit Bar, Irving Farm, The Woodland
- Falls Village- Falls Village Inn
- Kent- The White Horse, Kingsley Tavern, Fife 'n Drum

Massachusetts

- North Adams- Freight Yard, The Hub
- Cheshire- CJ's
- Dalton- Mill Town, Zip's. Mission Bar
- Lee- Moe's, Cork N' Hearth

- Tyringham- Bucky's, 102 Tavern
- Great Barrington- Aroma Bar, Brick House Pub, Castle Street

Vermont

- Woodstock- Skunk Hollow, Lookout Tavern, Salt Hill
- Wallingford- Wobbly Barn, Killamey
- Manchester- Ye Olde Tavern, Marsh Tavern, Gringo Jack's, Red Fox

New Hampshire

- Berlin- Fagins, Millyard, J Corner's
- North Woodstock- Gypsy Café, Truant's Tavenne
- Lyme- Lymme Inn, Salt Hill Pub, Molly's

Maine

- Millinocket-Sawmill Bar
- Monson- Spring Creek Bar B Q, Bears Den, Woody's, Stress Free Moose
- Stratton- Stratton Plaza Bar, White Wolf Inn
- Rangley- Sarge's, Tall Tales, Loon Lodge
- Andover- Tommy Guns Pitstop, Rooster's, Sunday River, The Phoenix, Mill Hill Inn, Park Street

Works Cited

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