

The Insider: Student hikes the Appalachian Trail

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When Nathaniel Newhall's college studies became overwhelming he decided to clear his mind by hiking the full [Appalachian Trail](#) ? a journey that would span five months, one academic semester and 2,200 miles.



Nathaniel Newhall takes in the scenery during his five-month trek on the Appalachian Trail. (Photo from Nathaniel Newhall)

From Feb. 24 until Aug. 10 Newhall hiked the trail, which was “covered with rocks and roots and rarely smooth.” He traveled through 14 states, made new friends and spent lots of time alone.

“School just started to feel like a grind and I needed an escape,” recalls Newhall, 21, of Blue Bell, Penn. “I got the idea from a friend who hiked last year and as soon as I heard about it I knew I had to do it.”

To prepare, he completed several practice hikes and called on his experience working at an outdoor camp during the past two summers.

He packed light. Eighteen pounds to be exact.

In his bag was an iPhone, Kindle, sleeping bag, two T-shirts, two pairs of shorts, three pairs of socks, one fleece, headphones, a visor, a pocket knife, a tent, a water

filter and water bottle, rain jacket, glasses, contacts, sunglasses and toilet paper.

A typical day on the trail, he says, went like this; “Wake up with the sun, pack, eat, poop, hike all day, take a break for lunch and maybe a few snack breaks, get to camp, set up camp, eat, read if you have enough energy, then back to sleep.”

This semester, an emotionally and physically stronger Newhall is back on the Tulane University campus and far more relaxed than he's been in the past.

“Leaving my friends at Tulane was the hardest part,” says Newhall. “It was difficult seeing them post photos during Mardi Gras and the Super Bowl when I wasn't around.”

Still, he highly recommends the journey, but warns, “This is not a trip to be taken lightly.”

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