

ARIZONA TRAIL FINISHER REPORT



FEBRUARY 2019

Arizona Trail Finisher Report

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Arizona Trail Association

The Arizona National Scenic Trail is a complete non-motorized path, stretching 800 diverse miles across Arizona from Mexico to Utah. It links deserts, mountains, canyons, forests, communities and people. The Arizona Trail Association is a 501(c)3 Non-Profit Organization whose mission is to protect, maintain, enhance, promote and sustain the Arizona Trail as a unique encounter with the land.

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INTRODUCTION

The Completion Survey was published online in November 2015 and has been completed by 464 people as of February 12, 2019, the date of this report. This survey asks 35 questions ranging from gender, to income, ratings on trail conditions, to favorite Gateway Communities. The intention of this survey is to hear feedback from the people who have seen the Arizona Trail in its entirety (or “finishers”) and to draw conclusions from its results and to help improve the trail in the future.

The latest version of the survey can be found online here:

<https://aztrail.org/the-trail/completion-award/>

NOTES

- These results do include some backdated data from those who completed the AZT before November 2015 (when the survey became available online), with the earliest finisher reporting a completion on May 5th, 1985.
- The survey questions and answer options changed slightly when the Arizona Trail Association updated their website. If pertinent, these changes have been noted in the various sections of this report.
- There were some duplicate entries in the data set. Those that seemed to be resubmissions for the same trek were deleted. Many however, were unique enough to indicate a second completion by the same person and were included. Outliers and bad data were also sorted out with care.

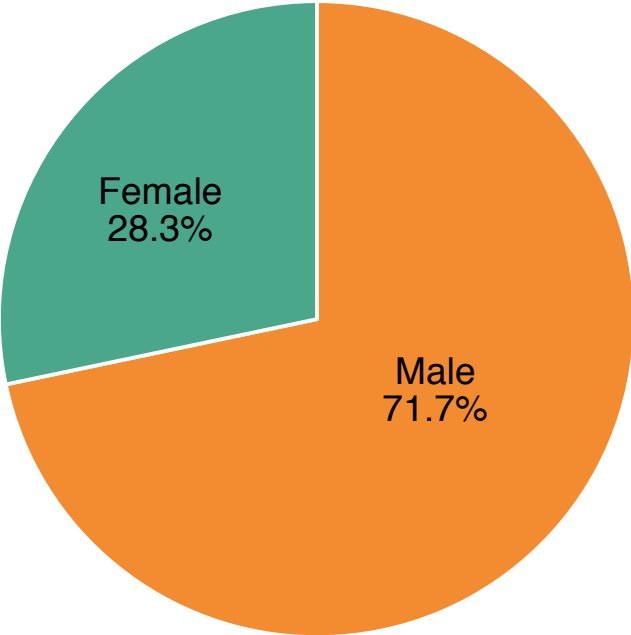
DEMOGRAPHICS

What is your gender?

- 71.7% Male
- 28.3% Female
- 1 person did not answer

Only two options were given, either “male” or “female.”

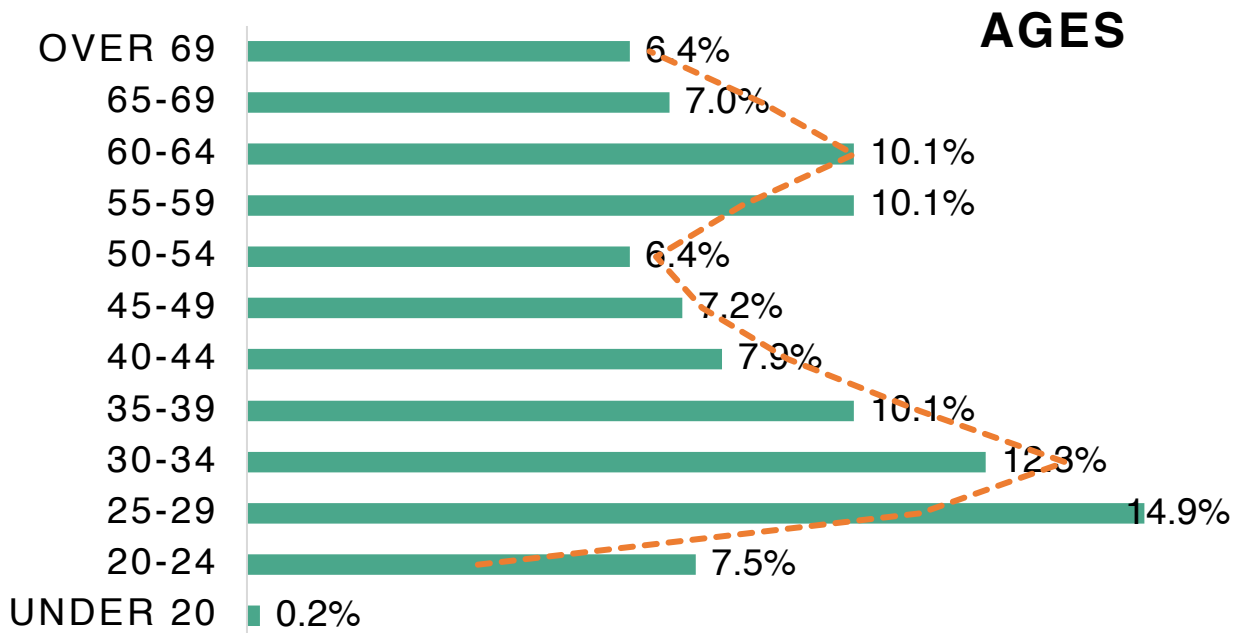
GENDER



What is your age? Average Age: 44.9 years, Youngest: 17 years, Oldest: 85 years

- Under 20: 0.2%
- 20-24: 7.5%
- 25-39: 14.9%
- 30-34: 12.3%
- 35-39: 10.1%
- 40-44: 7.9%
- 45-49: 7.2%
- 50-54: 6.4%
- 54-59: 10.1%
- 60-64: 10.1%
- 65-69: 7.0%
- 65-69: 7.0%
- Over 69: 6.4%

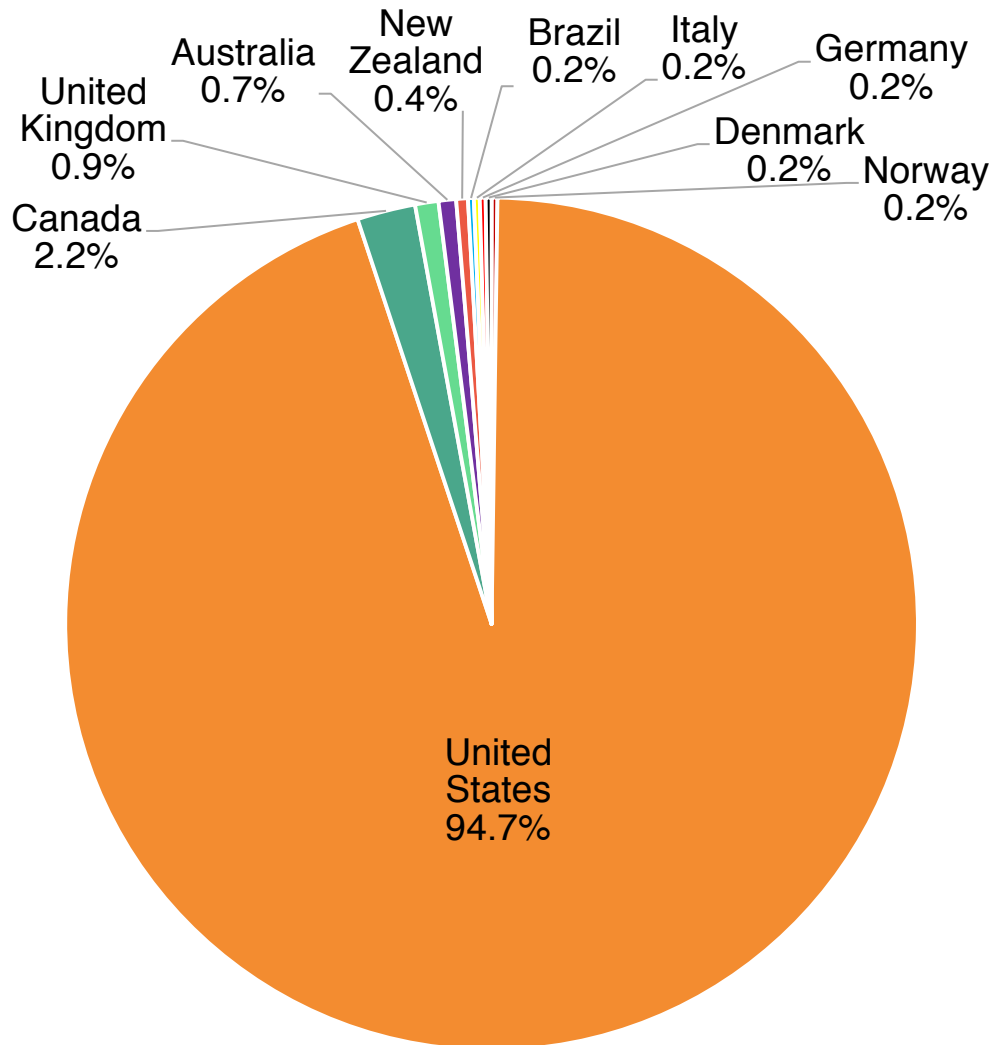
Age was broken down into equal spans of 5 years for comparison, except for the categories “Under 20,” and “Over 69.” Adding a moving average trend-line to the data, reveals two peaks, or the two most common age ranges completing AZT treks: between 25-34 years old and between 55-64 years old.



Where are you from?

Trekkers have come from 10 different countries, and 4 continents.

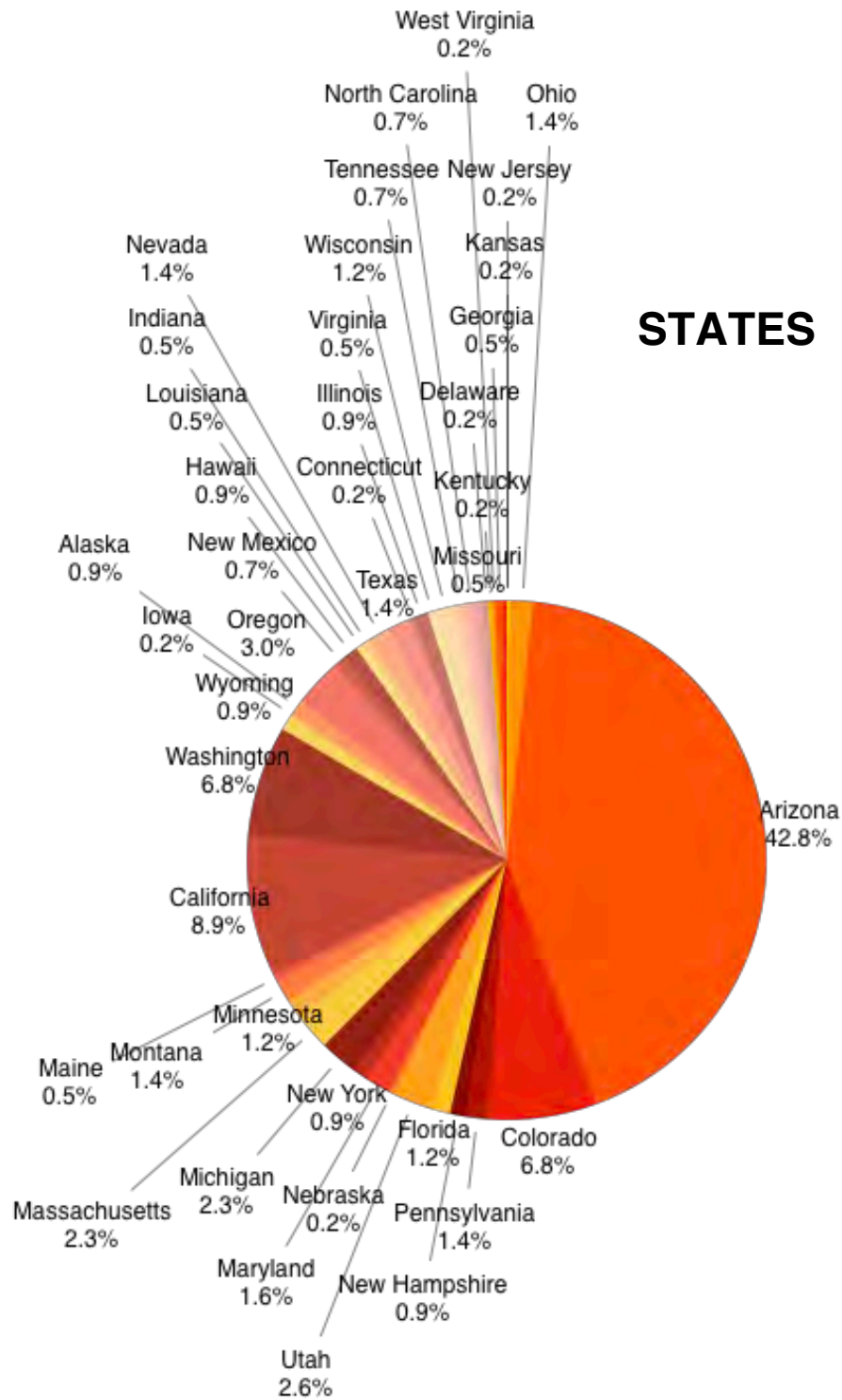
- United States: 428, 94.7%
- Canada: 10, 2.2%
- United Kingdom: 4, 0.9%
- Australia: 3, 0.7%
- New Zealand: 2, 0.4%
- Brazil: 1, 0.2%
- Italy: 1, 0.2%
- Germany: 1, 0.2%
- Denmark: 1, 0.2%
- Norway: 1, 0.2%



HOME COUNTRY

If you are from the United States, which state?

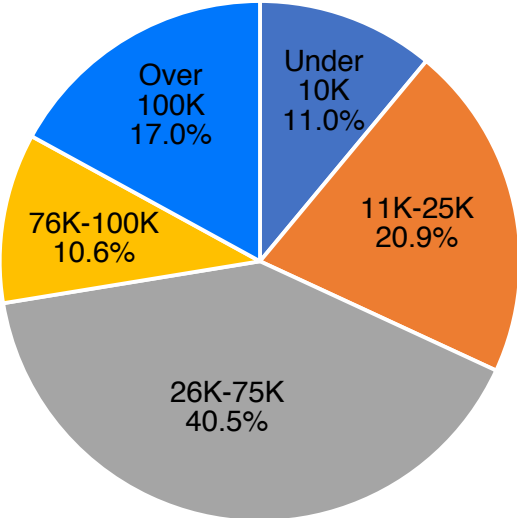
40 states were represented. The top 5 states represented were: Arizona: 183, 42.8%, California: 38, 8.9%, Colorado: 29, 6.8%, Washington: 29, 6.8% and Oregon: 13, 3.0%.



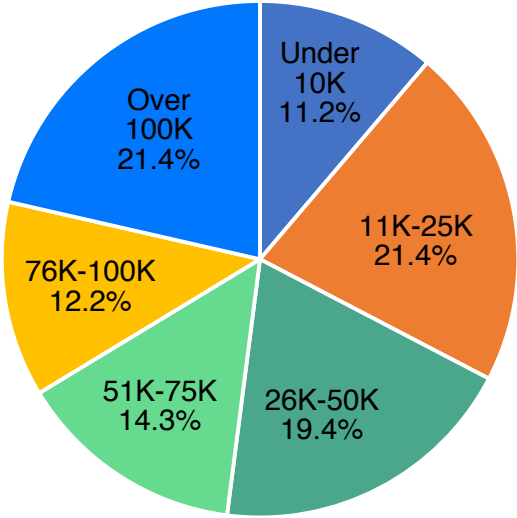
On average, what is your annual income?

Unfortunately, survey answer options prior to March 2018 lumped income categories “26K-50K and 51K-75K together into a large range: 26K-75K. The “Average Income” pie chart represents all average income data for respondents since 1985. The “2018 Average Income” pie chart was created to show how a last year’s average income compares to the overall average income of an AZT finisher through the years.

AVERAGE INCOME



2018 AVERAGE INCOME



TREK BASICS

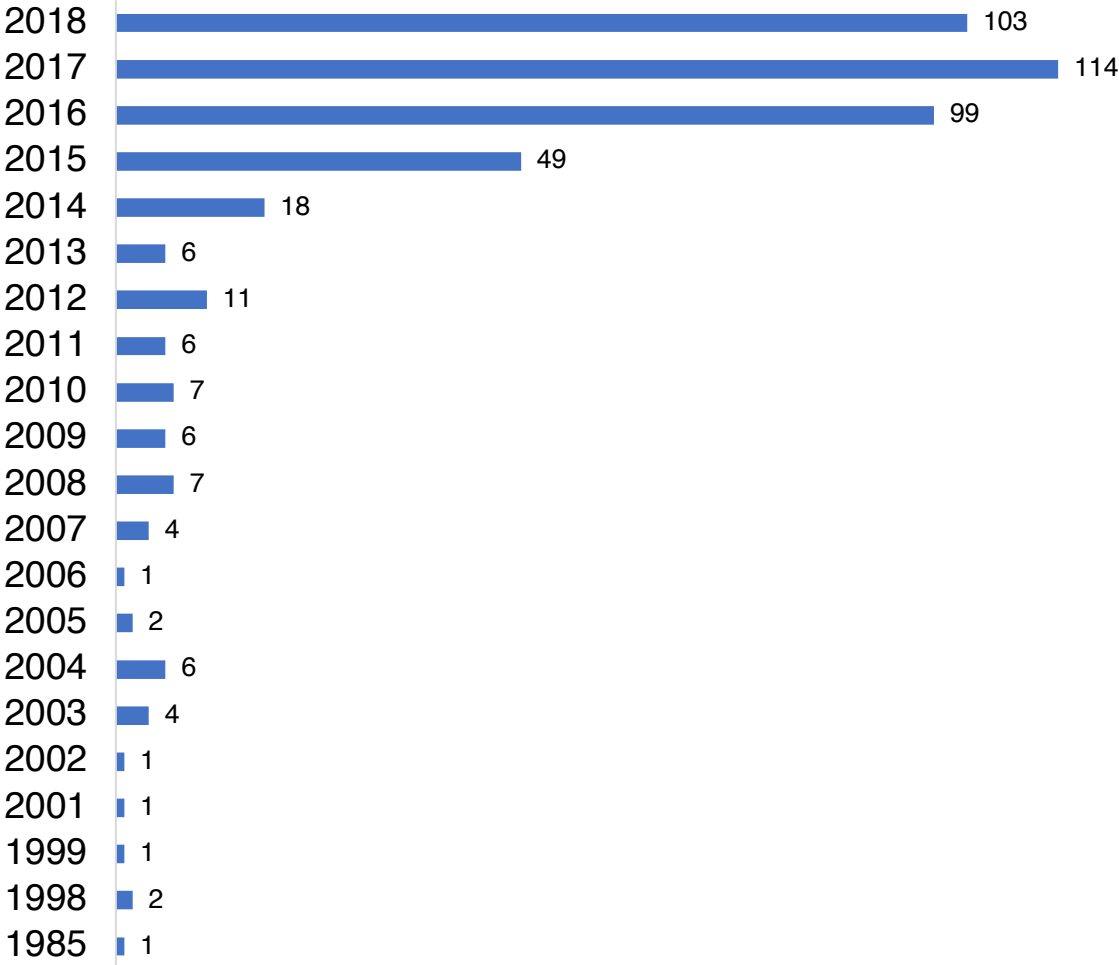
When did you complete your trek?

According to survey results, in the 27 years prior to 2012, the AZT saw a small number of finishers each year, with 2012 being the first finisher year in the double digits (11 people finished in 2012). The last 3 years (2016, 2017, and 2018) represent 70.4% of those who have completed the AZT.

This survey became available online in November 2015. It is likely there are some finishers that completed the AZT prior to the survey’s launch that are not represented in this data set, simply because the form was unavailable when they finished.

14 finishers did not list a finish year, and 2 finishers who have already completed a trek in 2019 were not included in the finish year data set.

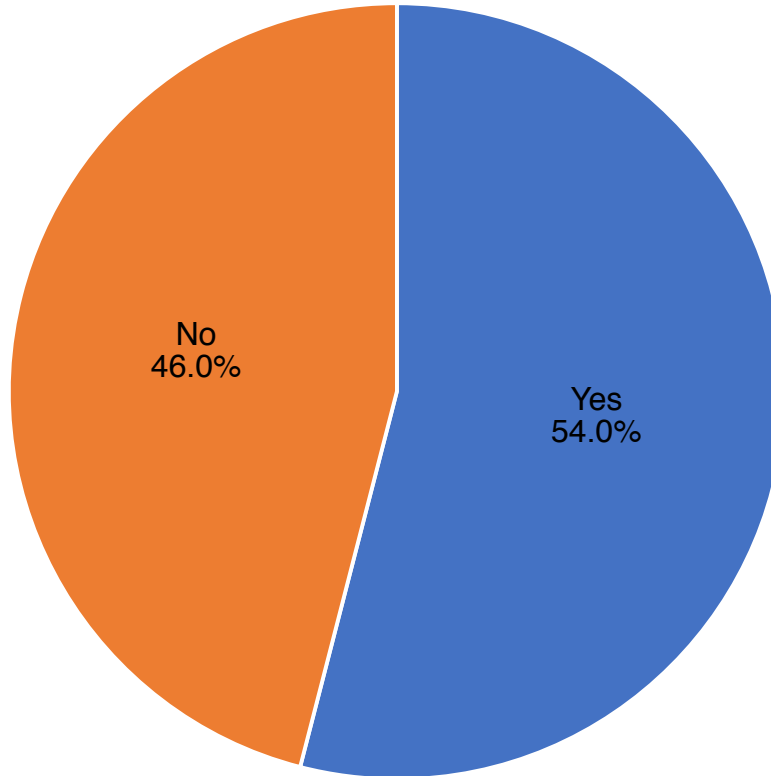
FINISH YEAR



Have you completed other long-distance treks?

- Yes: 249, 54.0%
- No: 212, 46.0%

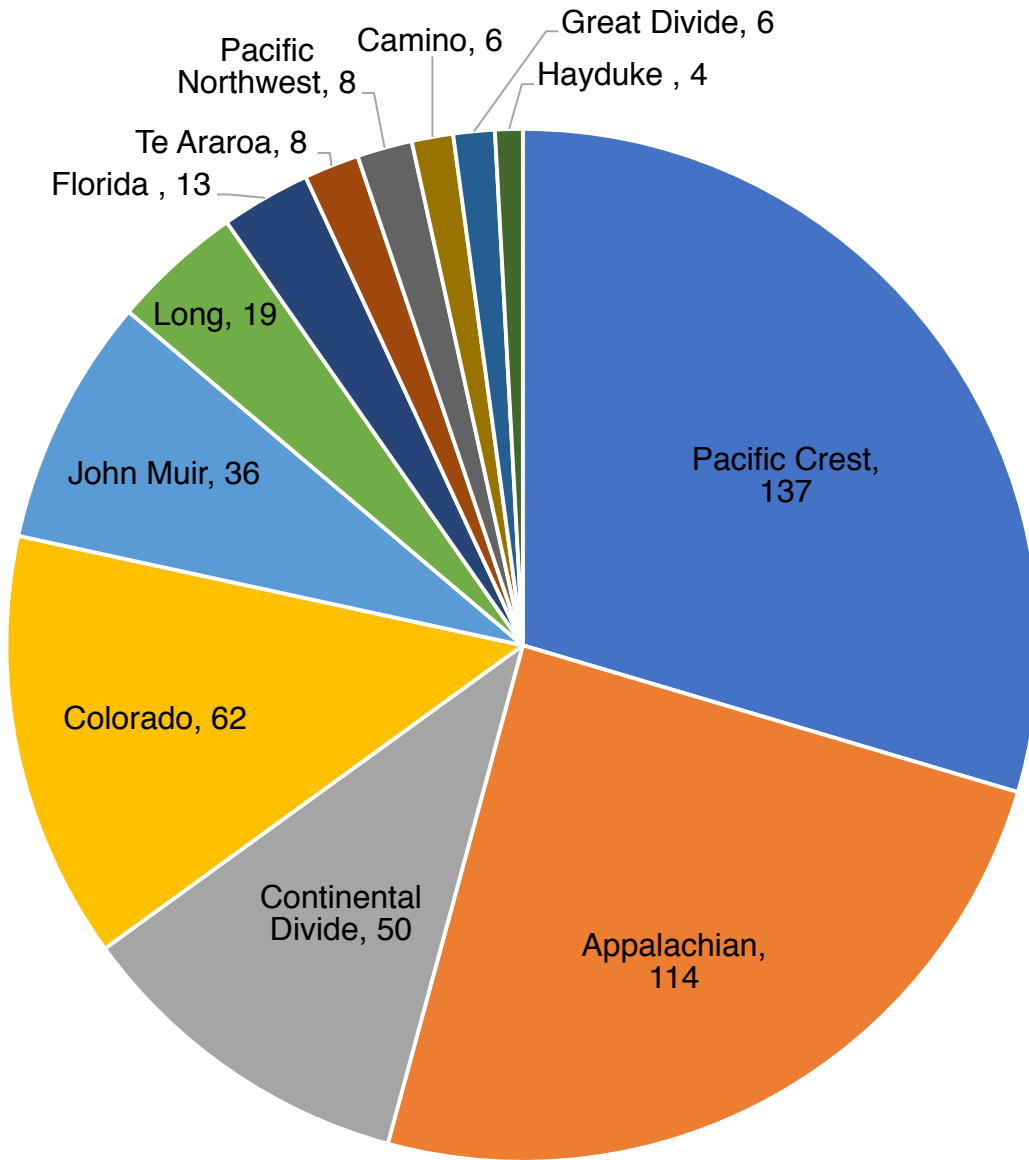
OTHER LONG-DISTANCE TREKS?



What other long-distance trails have you completed?

Several trails were listed in this section. To simplify analysis, results shown in the pie chart below only include trails/routes over 200 miles long, which were completed by more than 4 people.

- Pacific Crest: 137 people
- Appalachian: 114 people
- Colorado: 62 people
- Continental Divide: 50 people
- John Muir: 36 people
- Long: 19 people
- Florida: 13 people
- Te Araroa: 8 people
- Pacific Northwest: 8 people
- Camino de Santiago: 6 people
- Great Divide: 6 people
- Hayduke: 4 people

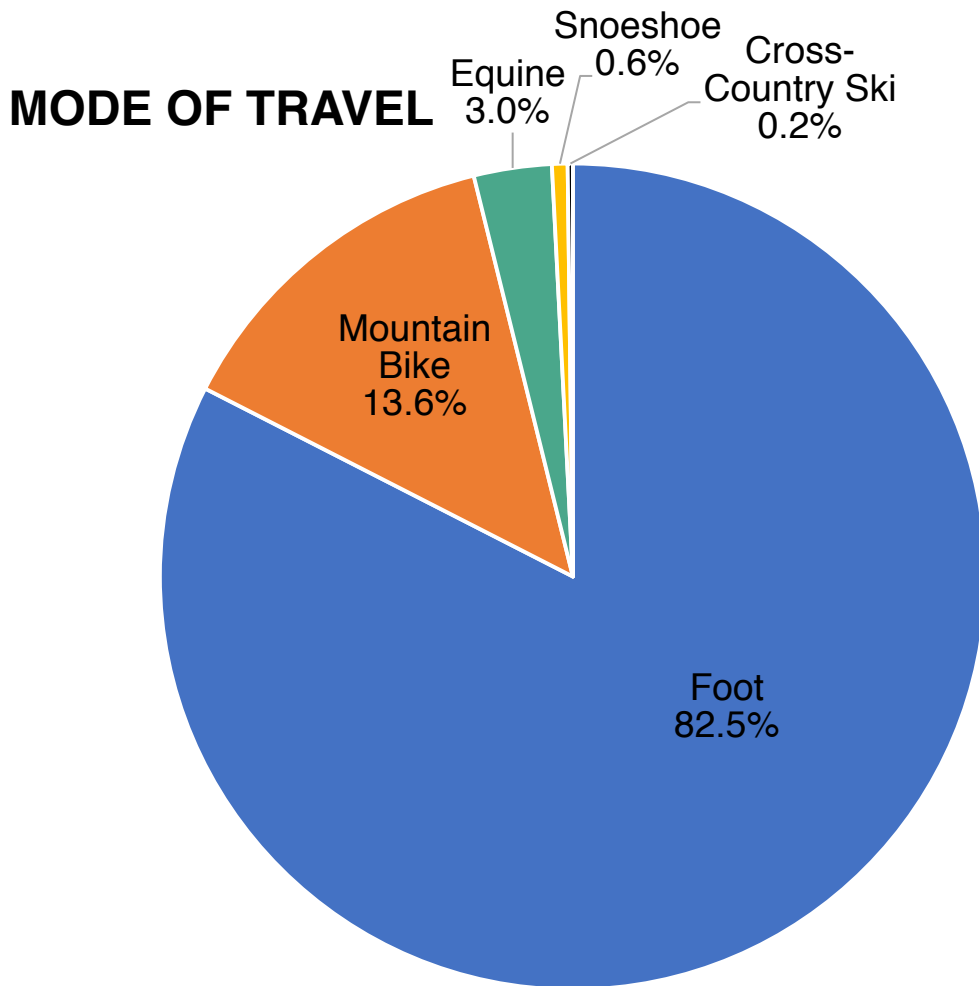


OTHER TRAILS COMPLETED

What was your mode of travel on the AZT?

- 82.5% were hikers
- 13.4% were mountain bikers
- 3.4% were equestrians
- 0.6% were snowshoers
- 1 respondent, or 0.2% was a cross-country skier

Finishers were asked to check all that applied. 23 respondents selected more than one mode, including one who selected all five modes.

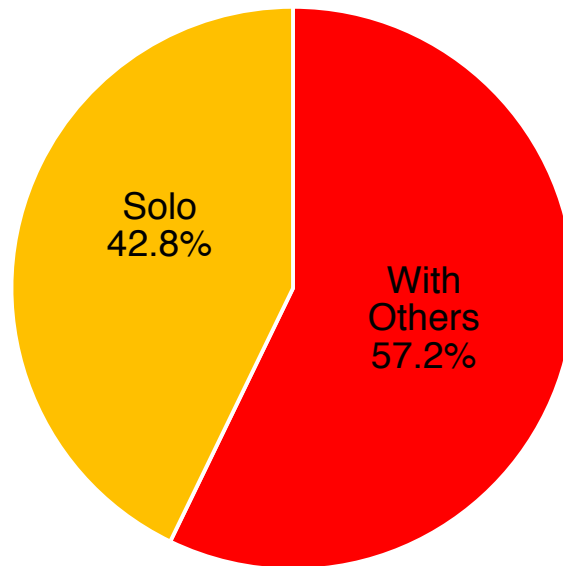


Did you complete your trek solo or with other people?

- 42.8% were solo
- 57.2% were with others

Note: Question no longer asked in current survey. Data represents respondents prior to March 2018.

SOLO or WITH OTHERS?



Did you travel with a dog?

A very small amount of people brought a dog with them on the trail. Dogs are not allowed on the trail in Saguaro National Park, Pusch Ridge Wilderness, Coronado National Memorial, or Grand Canyon National Park. In addition, the harsh and rugged the Arizona Trail traverses through also make having a canine companion difficult.

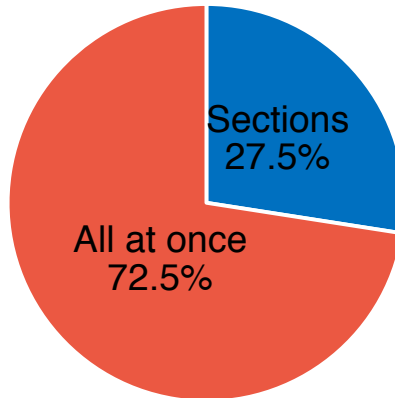
- Yes: 15, 3.2%
- No: 449, 96.8%

Did you complete the trail in sections or all at once?

- All at once: 317, 72.5%
- Sections: 120, 27.5%

For those completing the trail all at once, the trail took an average of 43 days to complete, with the most common amount of time reported being 2 months (60 days).

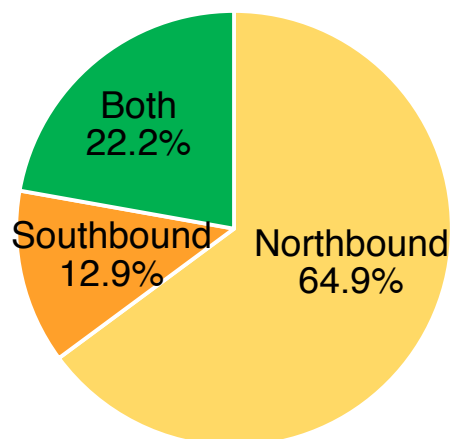
SECTIONS or ALL AT ONCE?



Did you travel northbound, southbound, or in both directions?

- Northbound: 64.9%
- Southbound: 12.9%
- Both: 22.2%

NOBO, SOBO or both?



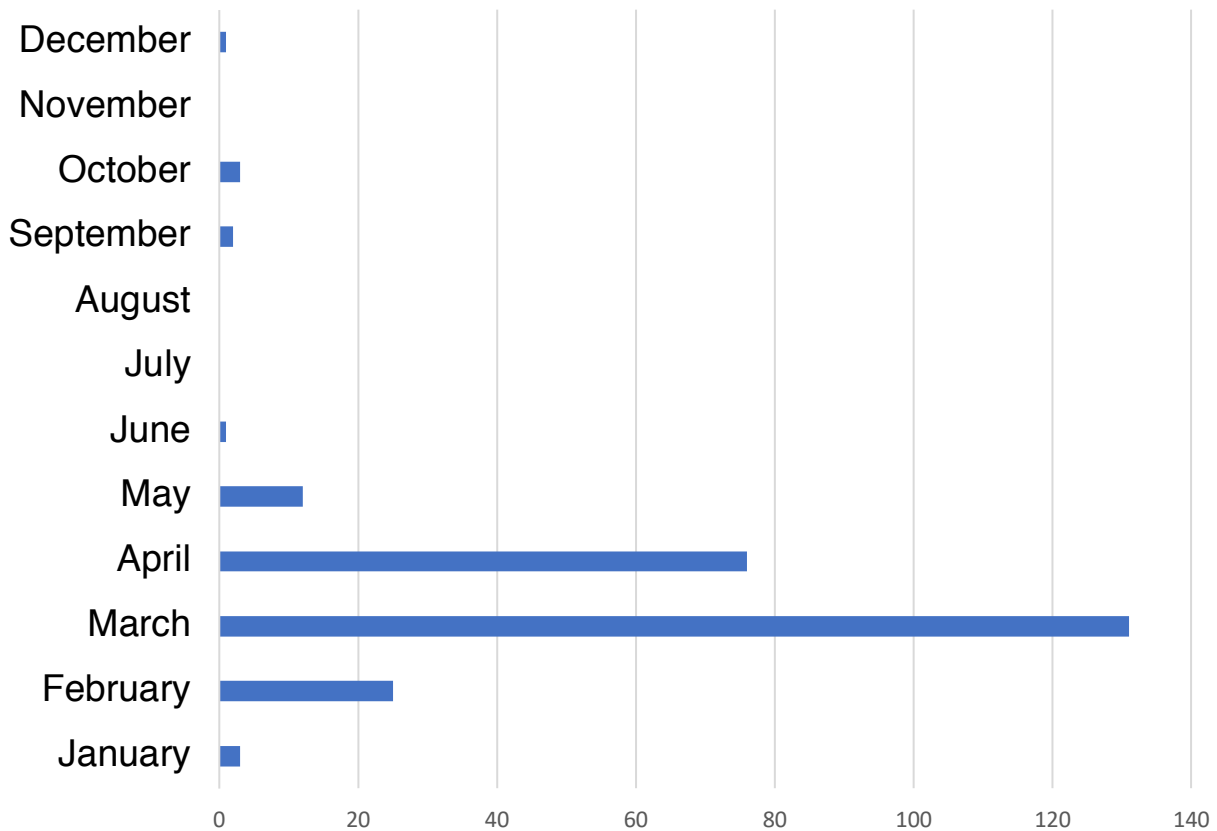
NOBO STATS

For northbound thru-trekkers (those who completed the trail all at once), we find the majority begin their treks in the spring, with March taking over half the start dates.

Here are the top 5 months to start northbound:

- March: 131, 51.6%
- April: 76, 29.9%
- February: 25, 9.8%
- May: 12, 4.7%
- January: 3, 1.2%

NOBO START MONTH



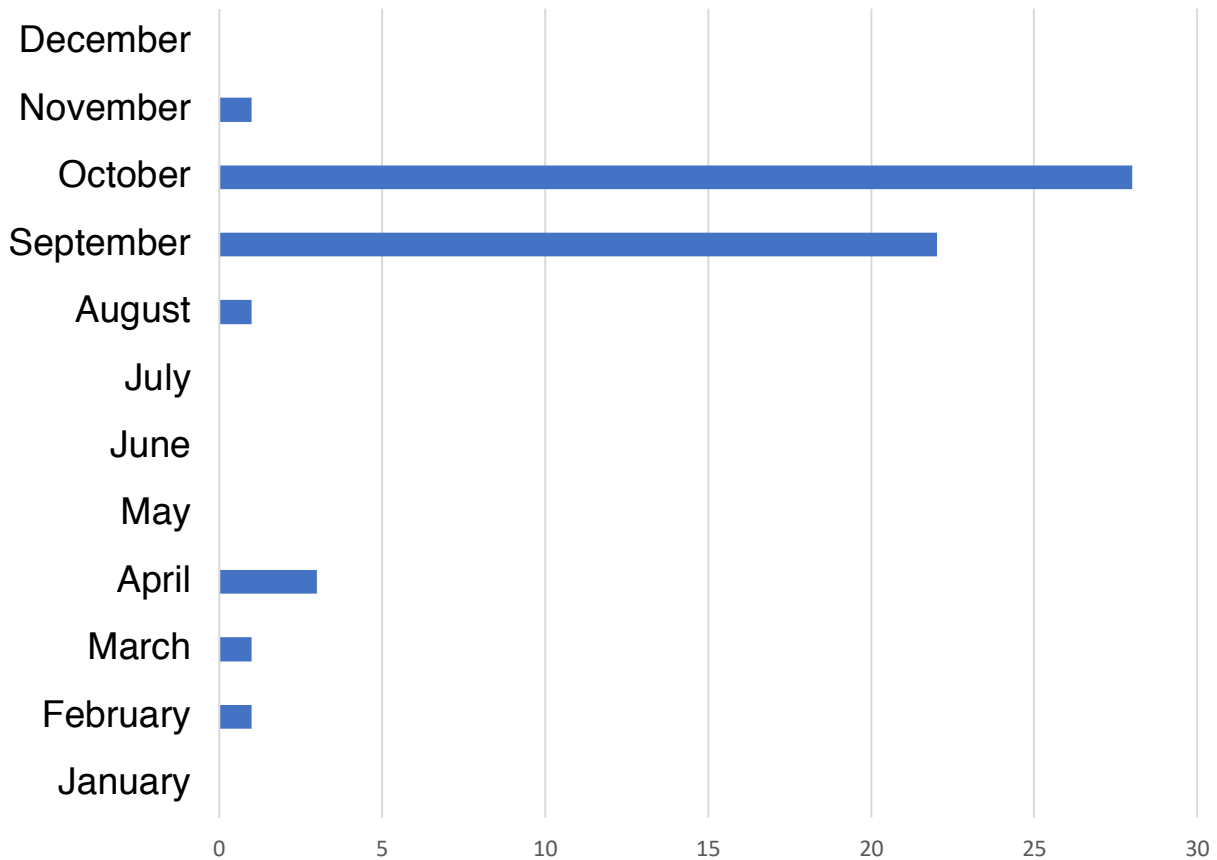
SOBO STATS

For southbound thru-trekkers (those who completed the trail all at once), we find the majority begin their treks in fall, with nearly half choosing to start in October.

Here are the top 3 months to start southbound:

- October: 28, 49.1%
- September: 22, 38.6%
- April: 3, 1.8%

SOBO START MONTH

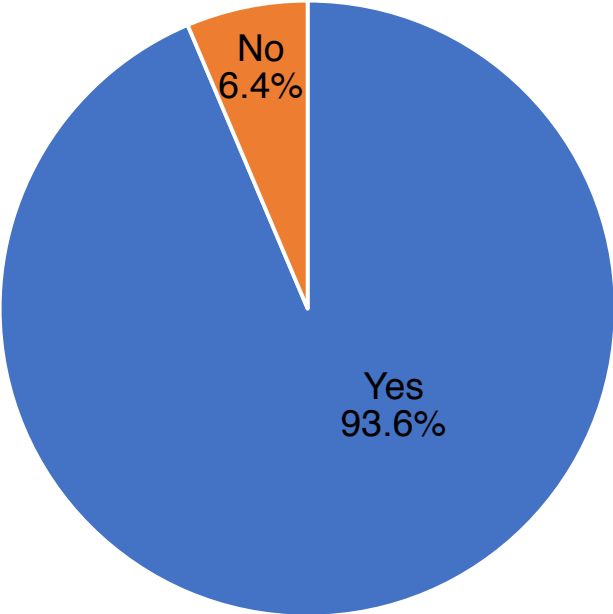


Were you pleased with the time frame you chose for your trek?

361 finishers completed the AZT on a time frame. The vast majority who responded were happy with their timing.

- Yes: 338, 93.6%
- No: 23, 6.4%

**PLEASED WITH TIME
FRAME?**

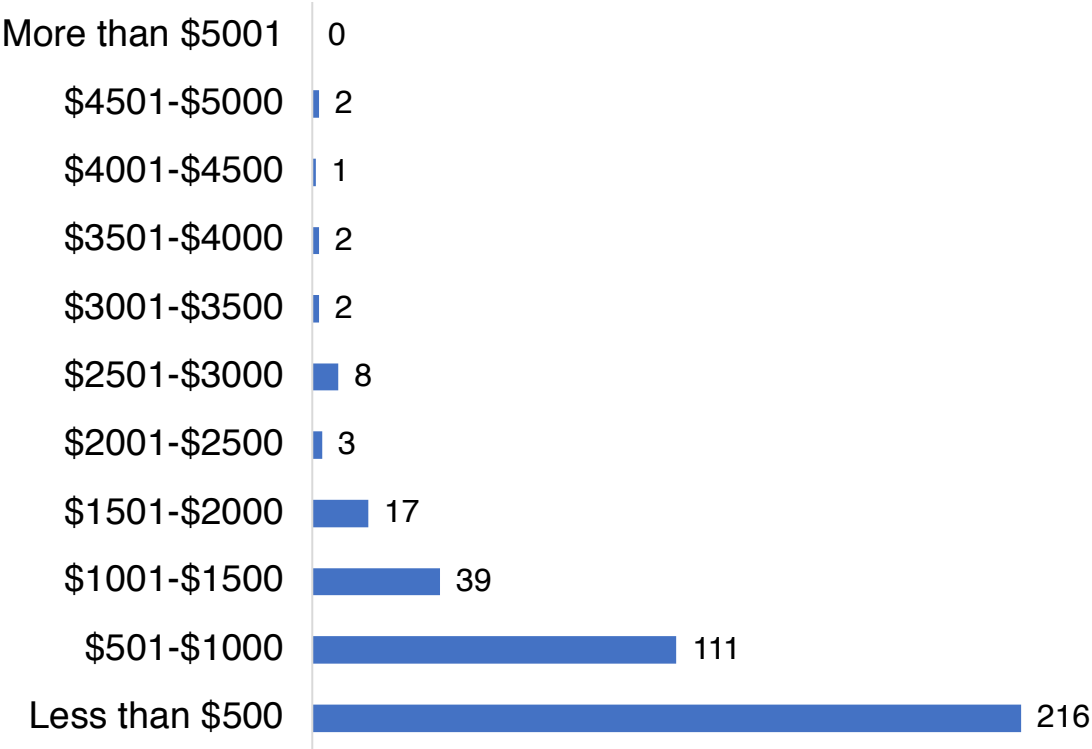


Approximately how much money did you spend preparing for your trip?

The majority of finishers spent under \$1000 on gear and preparations for their trek, with an average of \$730.24 spent. 23 respondents listing \$0 in preparation expenses having already had all the gear they needed.

Expenses were broken down into \$500 increments for comparison.

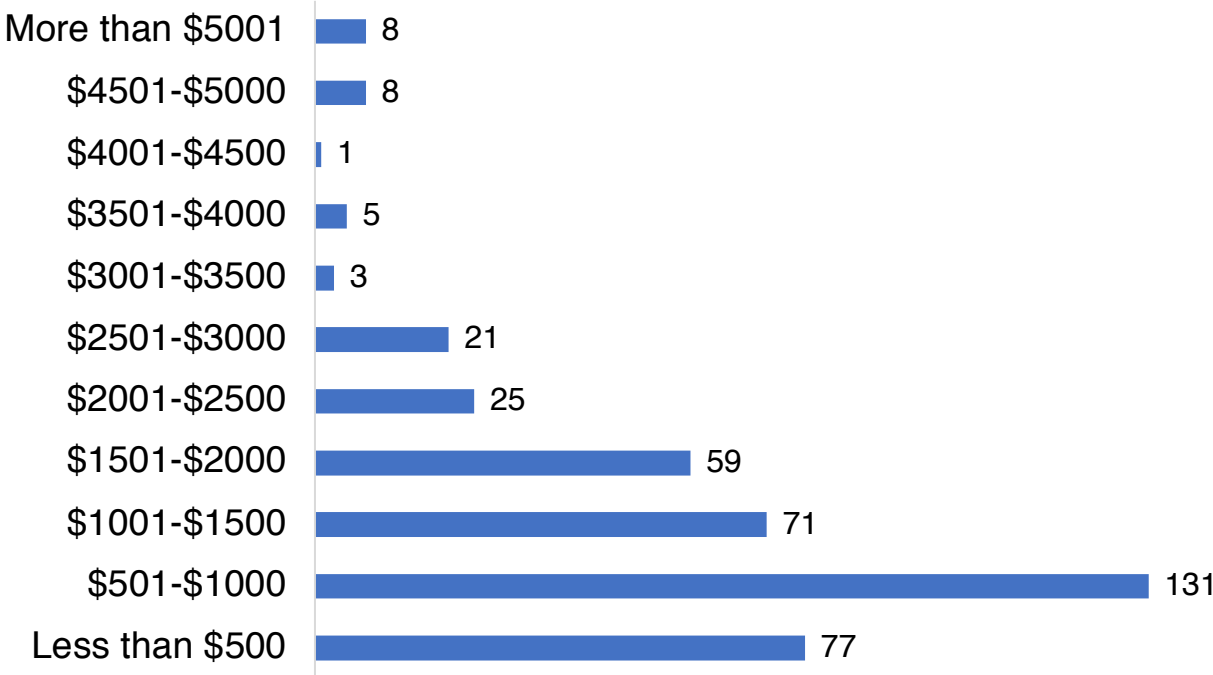
PREPARATION EXPENSES



Approximately how much money did you spend while on the trail?

On average, finishers spent \$1505.70 on their trip, while the majority of finishers were in the \$500-\$1000 range. This high average is due to a few outliers left in the results which quoted trip expenses in the \$10,000 range. When these >\$5001 finishers were cross-referenced with their status as either section trekkers, or thru-trekkers, 7/8 (87.5%) reported completing the trail in sections. When cross referenced with their listed home country, all 8 reported being from the U.S., which indicates that their trip expenses most likely did not include international airfare.

TRIP EXPENSES



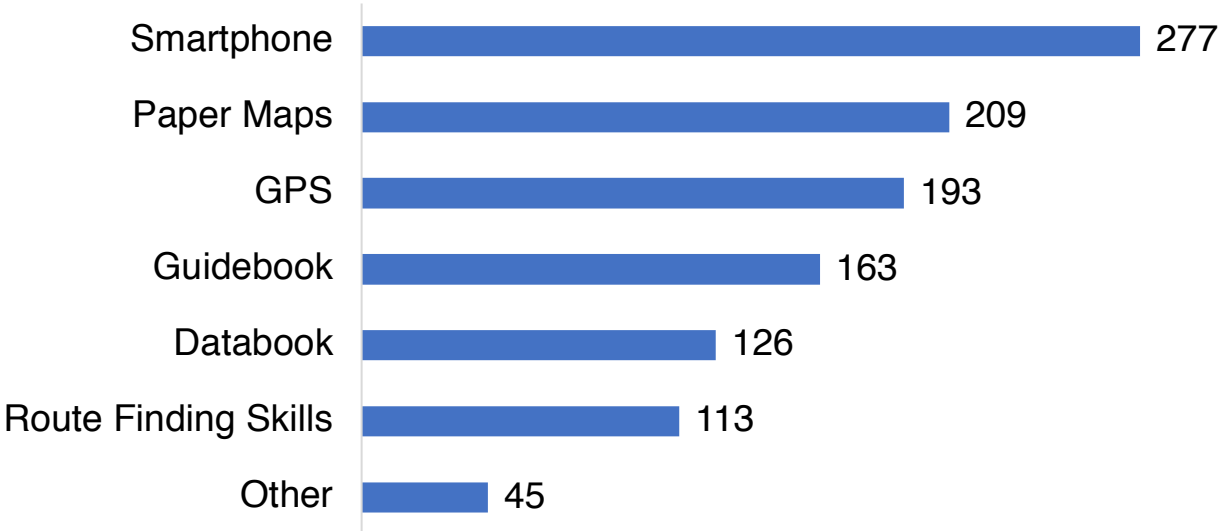
RESOURCES

What navigational resources did you use on the AZT?

332 finishers, or 71.6% of finishers used more than one resource to complete their trek.

- 59.7% used the smartphone app
- 49% used paper maps
- 41.6% used GPS devices
- 35.1% used the guidebook
- 27.2% used the databook
- 24.4% used intuition and keen route-finding skills
- 9.7% used another resource

NAVIGATIONAL RESOURCES UTILIZED



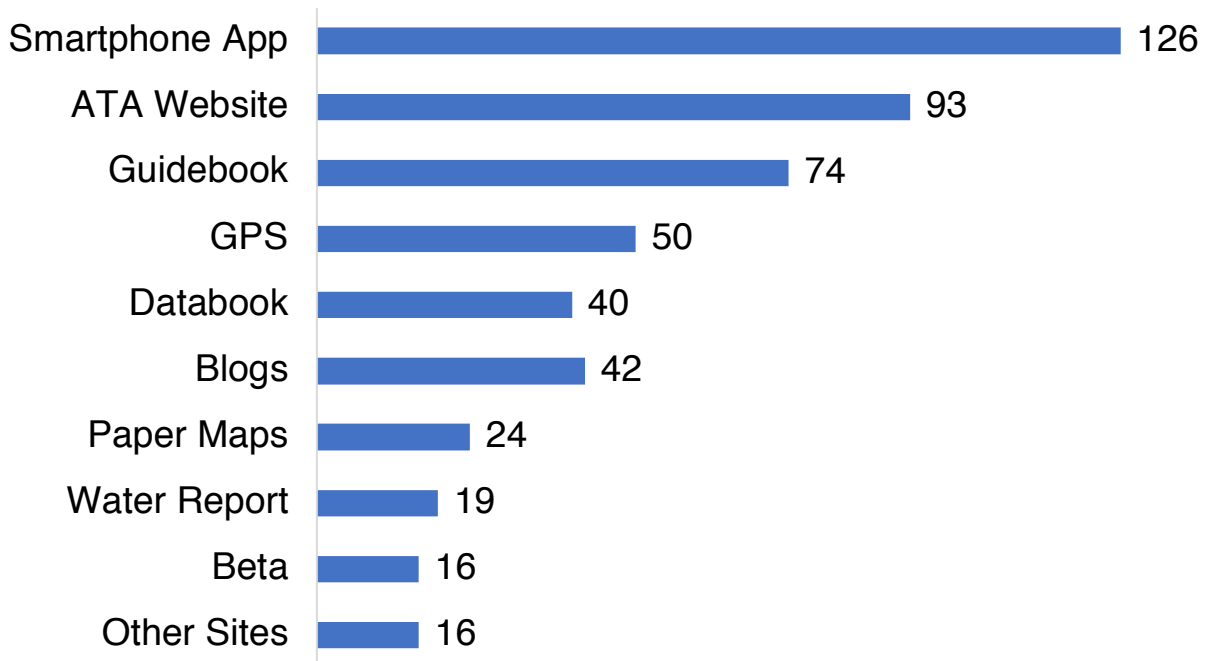
What was the most helpful resource?

In some cases, finishers also listed more than one “most helpful resource.” The ATA’s Smartphone App took the lead as both the most utilized and the most helpful resource.

Here are the top 5 most helpful finisher resources:

- 32.1% preferred the smartphone app
- 23.7% preferred the ATA website
- 18.9% preferred the guidebook
- 12.8% preferred the GPS
- 10.7% preferred blogs (nearly tied with the “databook”)

MOST HELPFUL RESOURCE



In these results, the resources names were shortened. Here are their full titles:

Smartphone App	<i>Guthook Guide's</i> with Arizona Trail in app purchase
ATA Website	All information available at aztrail.org and subdomains
Guidebook	<i>Your Complete Guide to the Arizona National Scenic Trail,</i> By Matthew Nelson
Databook	<i>Arizona Trail Data Book</i> and <i>Arizona Trail Bike Data Book</i>
Blogs	Online journals, blogs, and forums
Paper Maps	Passage maps By Aaron Seifert
Water Report	<i>Water Sources on the Arizona Trail by Passages</i> By Fred Gaudet

TRAIL ATTRIBUTE RATINGS

For these results, the last 5 years (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018) were analyzed. This was done to show recent changes in the trail and its current status in the following categories:

- Trail condition and Trail Corridor
- Trail Signage and Markers
- Availability of Water
- Trailheads and Trailhead Amenities
- Availability of Information from the ATA
- Biodiversity
- Scenery and Scenic Vistas
- Amount of Trail Users Encountered
- Amount of Wildlife Encountered

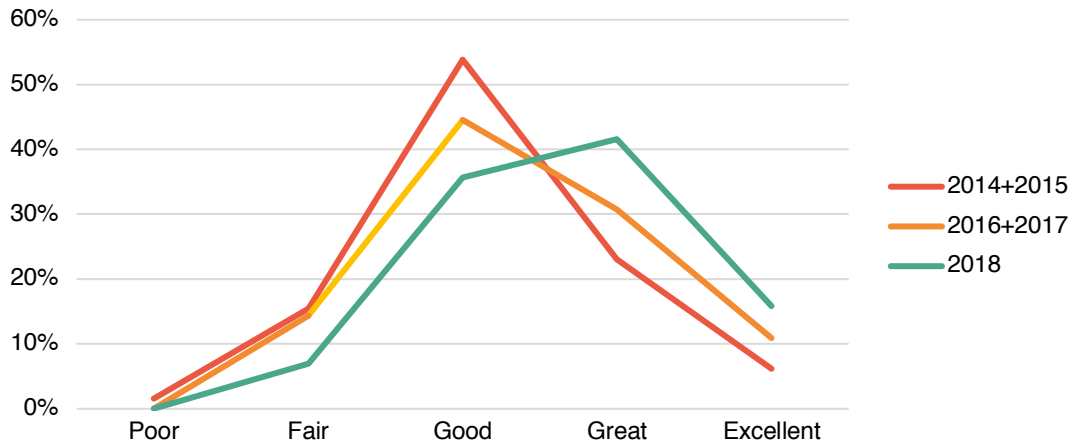
For simplicity, results from 2014 and 2015 were combined, as were results from 2016 and 2017. Data from 2019 was excluded, since there were only two entries. Survey respondents were asked to give a score of either “poor,” “fair,” “good,” “great,” or “excellent” for each category.

In general, natural aspects about the trail like the biodiversity and scenery were rated as overwhelmingly excellent. Information from the ATA was also rated extremely highly. The infrastructure around the trail and the trail itself, such as: trail condition, signage and water availability, received the mostly “good” ratings, with steady improvement from year to year. The amount of other trail users and wildlife encountered in 2018 seemed to be the amount that suited most finishers.

How would you rate the trail condition and the trail corridor?

The trail's condition has been steadily improving over the last 5 years, with an increasing percentage of "great" and "excellent" ratings into 2018. This can be seen as a shift of the trend line's curve to the right from one year to the next.

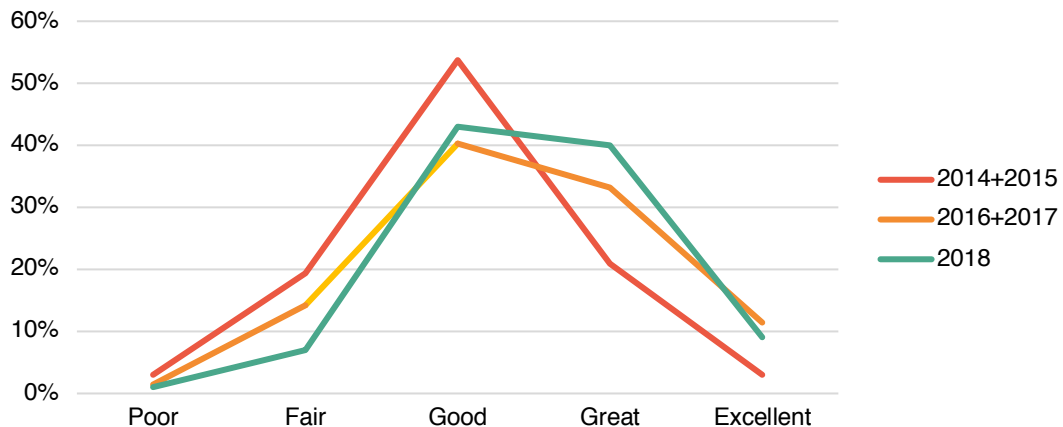
TRAIL CONDITION RATING



How would you rate the trail's signs and markers to aid in navigation?

In the same way as the previous graph, these ratings reflect steady improvement, with 2018 having the highest average score.

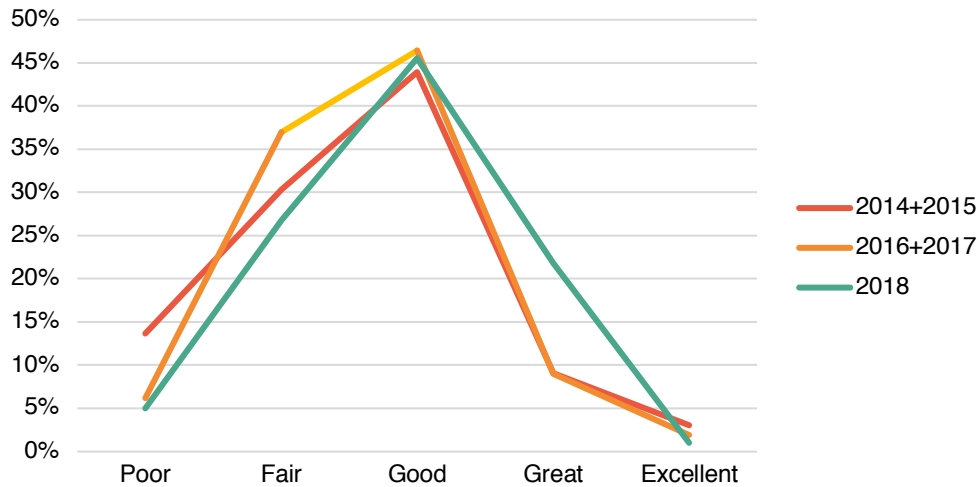
SIGNS AND MARKERS



How would you rate the availability of water along the trail?

Water availability will never be “excellent” along the Arizona Trail. In the graph below, only a slight improvement can be seen in 2018. Each year, between 40% and 45% of finishers feel the water availability is “good.”

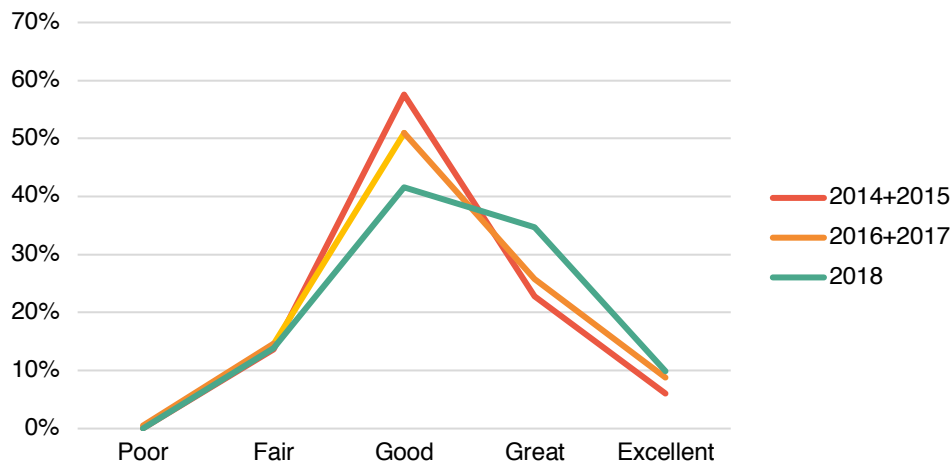
WATER AVAILABILITY



How would you rate the trailheads and trailhead amenities?

In the same way as with the trail condition and signage ratings, these ratings reflect steady improvement, with 2018 having the highest average score.

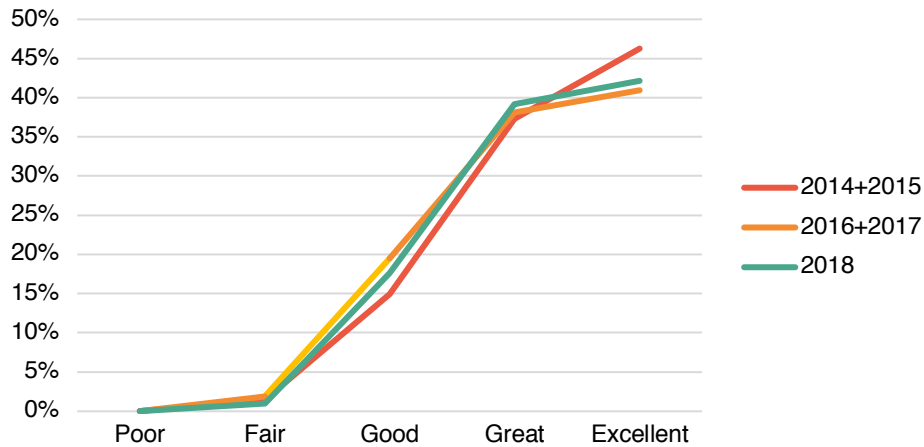
TRAILHEADS



How would you rate the availability of information from the ATA?

The majority of finishers cite the availability of information from the ATA as either “great” or “excellent.” This has remained consistent over the last 5 years.

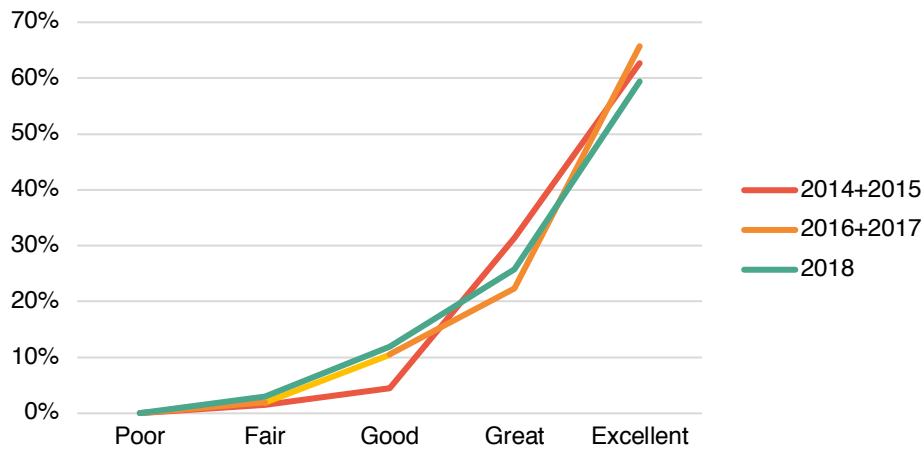
INFORMATION FROM ATA



How would you rate the biodiversity along the trail?

The biodiversity has been consistently rated high, with 2016 and 2017 just edging out the other years with the most “excellent” votes from 65.7% of finishers.

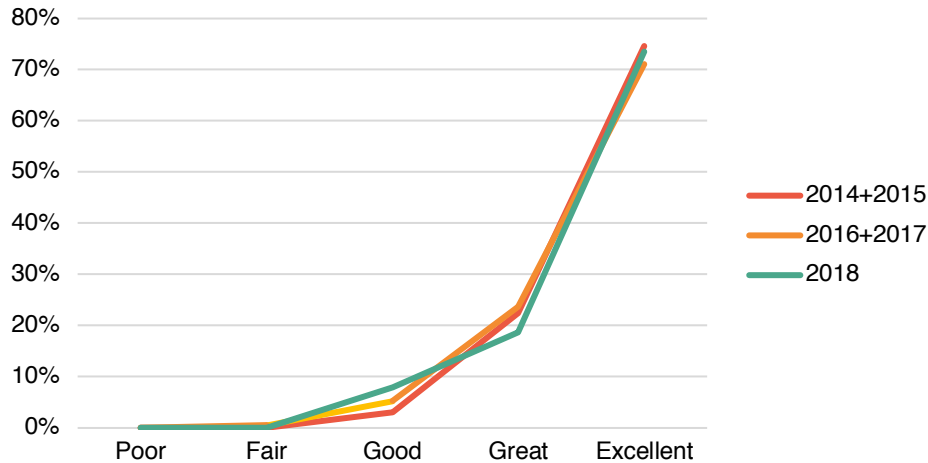
BIODIVERSITY



How would you rate the scenery and scenic vista?

Again, we see a huge swing toward the positive side of the spectrum, with over 70% of users rating the scenery as “excellent” year after year.

SCENERY AND VISTAS

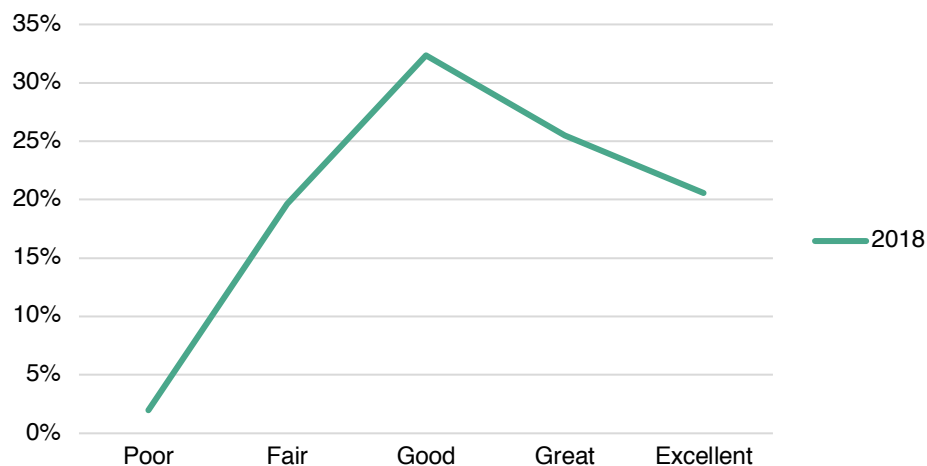


How would you rate the number of other trail users encountered?

In general, the overall feeling was that the number of other users encountered on the trail was either “good,” “great” or “excellent.” In other words, most finishers were seeing the amount of people that made for a good trek. However, this does not directly correlate to the amount of people on the trail, because encountering 100 people over 800 miles may be too few for someone who enjoys trekking with company, but too many for one who enjoys more solitude.

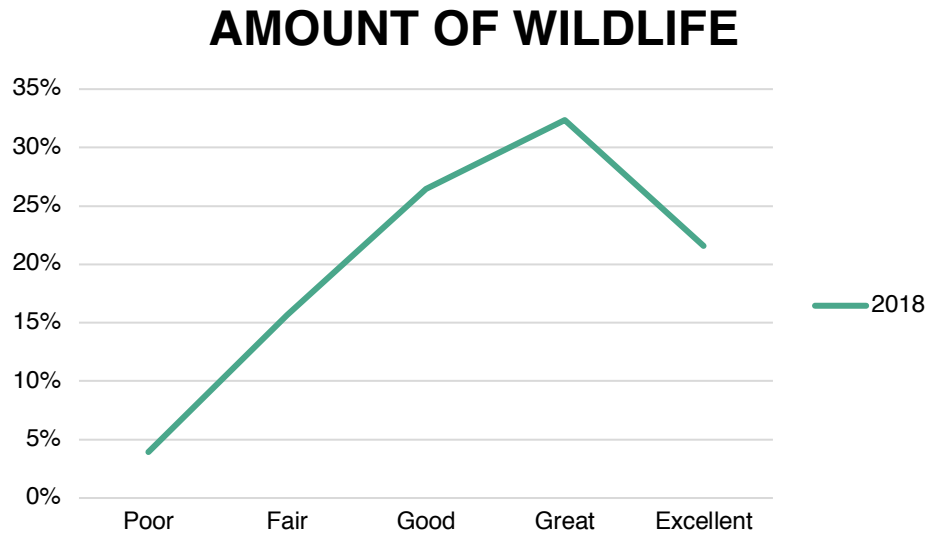
There was no previous year data to compare directly, since the phrasing of the question and answer choices changed in 2018.

OTHER USERS ENCOUNTERED



How would you rate the amount of wildlife you encountered?

There was no previous year data to compare directly, since the phrasing of the question and answer choices changed in 2018. Overall, finishers were satisfied with the amount of wildlife they were seeing.



What kinds of wildlife did you see?

The majority of finishers encountered wildlife, including but not limited to: big horn sheep, buffalo, elk, deer, mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, bear, foxes, ringtails, coatimundi, skunks, javelina, turkeys, snakes, gila monsters, desert tortoises, frogs, horny toads, humming birds, wrens, woodpeckers, various birds of prey, tarantulas, and centipedes.

HIGHLIGHTS AND NEGATIVES

What was your favorite place or passage?

The Grand Canyon, and surrounding areas were the favorite passages amongst AZT finishers by far, mentioned by 34.7% of finishers. Because this question was an open response, many finishers simply wrote “Grand Canyon.” However, because the question asked for a place and/or passages, and “Grand Canyon” is included in 3 passage names (South Rim, Inner Gorge and North Rim), it was unreasonable to tell if finishers meant all three, or specifically the “inner gorge.” As a result, “Grand Canyon Non-Specified” is listed as a separate category in the graph below to avoid confusion.

The next most popular areas listed by finishers included sky islands, wilderness areas, Alamo and the Gila River Canyons, the Mogollon Rim, Walnut Canyon, the San Francisco Peaks, and the Kaibab Plateau.

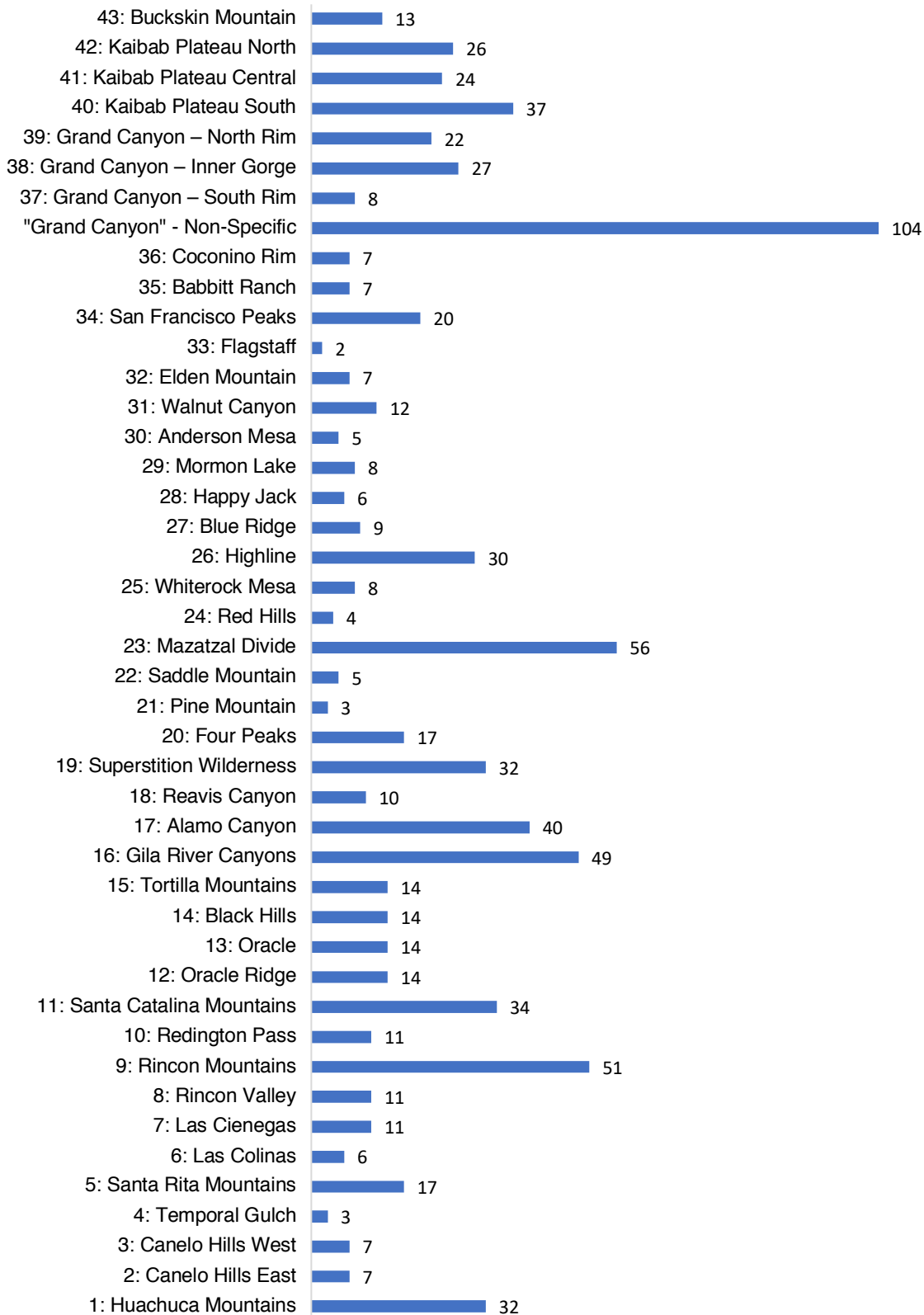
The majority of finishers listed more than one favorite place or passage, with 412 finishers responding with some preference. The remaining 52 either did not provide an answer or noted not having a favorite passage.

When a finisher listed a specific place rather than a passage, the entry was renamed with its corresponding passage in order to compare with other entries.

TOP 15 FAVORITE PLACES (BY PASSAGE)

- 1st: 37, 38, 39: Grand Canyon 34.7% of finishers (104 “Grand Canyon” non-specified responses, 27 “Inner Gorge” responses, 22 “North Rim” responses, 8 “South Rim” responses)
- 2nd: 23: Mazatzal Divide, 56, 13.6%
- 3rd: 9: Rincon Mountains, 51, 12.4%
- 4th: 16: Gila River Canyons, 49, 11.9%
- 5th: 17: Alamo Canyon, 40, 9.7%
- 6th: 40: Kaibab Plateau South, 37, 9.0%
- 7th: 11: Santa Catalina Mountains, 34, 8.3%
- Tied for 8th:
 - 19: Superstition Wilderness, 32, 7.8%
 - 1: Huachuca Mountains, 32, 7.8%
- 9th: 26: Highline, 30, 7.3%
- 10th: 42: Kaibab Plateau North, 26, 6.3%

FAVORITE PLACES (BY PASSAGE)

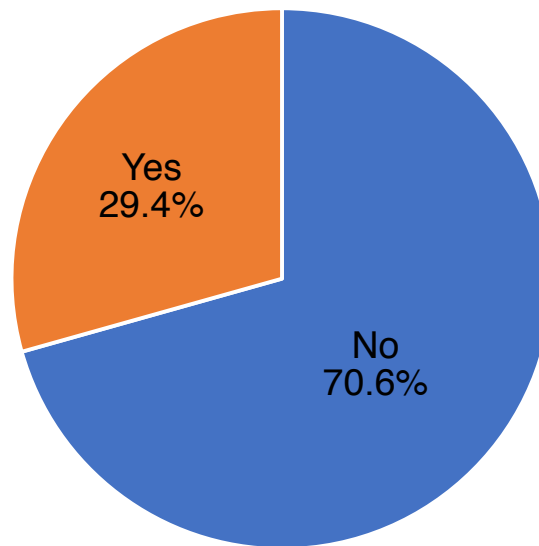


Did you have any negative encounters or experiences?

The majority of finishers reported no negative encounters or experiences. For this question, data was analyzed from the last 3 years (2017, 2018 and 2019), with only two entries from 2019.

- No: 154, 71.1%
- Yes: 64, 28.9

ANY NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES?



What was your negative experience?

Only 62 finishers out of 218 had a negative experience. Here are the 5 most common negative experiences or encounters that finishers from 2017, 2018 and 2019 faced.

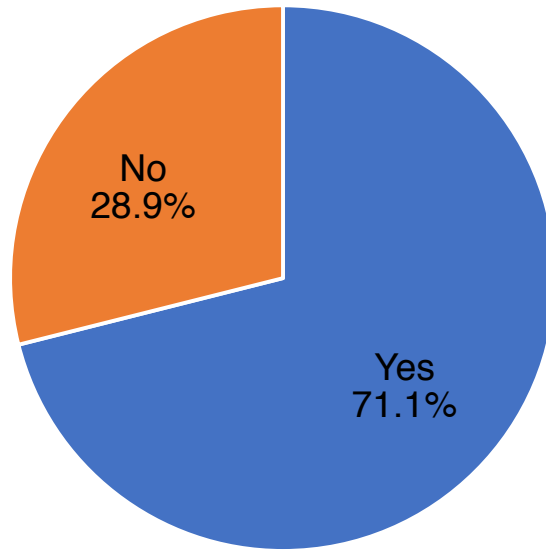
- 27.4%, 17, felt the trail condition was unmaintained or too rough
- 9.7%, 6, felt the signage was inadequate
- 8.1%, 5, felt unsafe due to hunter encounters
- 6.5%, 4, felt unsafe around a fellow trail users
- Tied for 5th most common:
 - 4.8%, 3, experienced litter
 - 4.8%, 3, experienced issues with water
 - 4.8%, 3, had issues getting to town

Other negatives noted include issues/feeling unsafe with the general public, run ins with public land officials, unsafe or poor trail infrastructure, cattle, crowds, wildlife/domestic animal attacks, weather, border patrol, personal injuries, controlled burns, flora, complaints from other trekkers (whining), and specific areas such as Happy Jack, LF Ranch and Colossal Cave.

Would you attempt the AZT again?

- Yes: 317, 71.1%
- No: 129, 28.9%

WOULD YOU DO IT AGAIN?

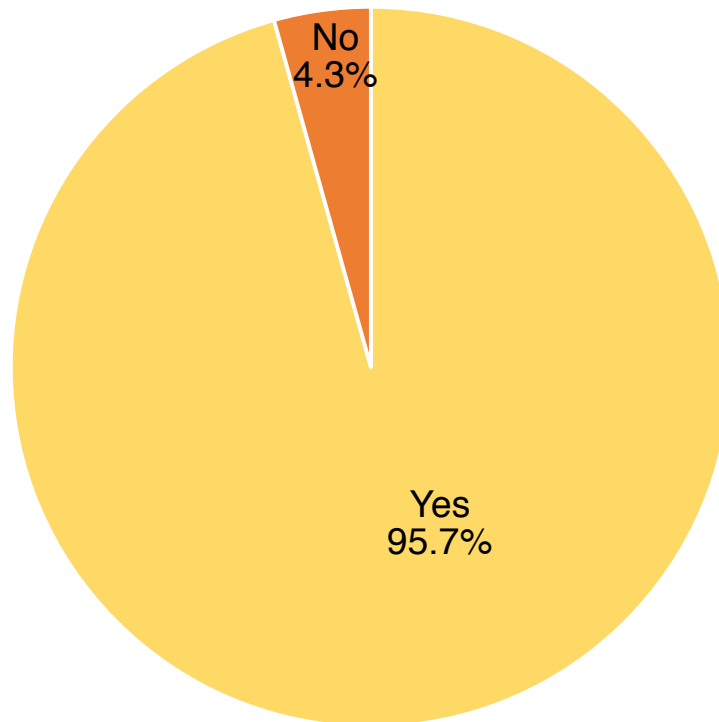


GATEWAY COMMUNITIES

Did you utilize the amenities in the Gateway Community?

- Yes: 95.7%
- No: 4.3%

DID YOU UTILIZE AMENITIES IN GATEWAY COMMUNITIES?



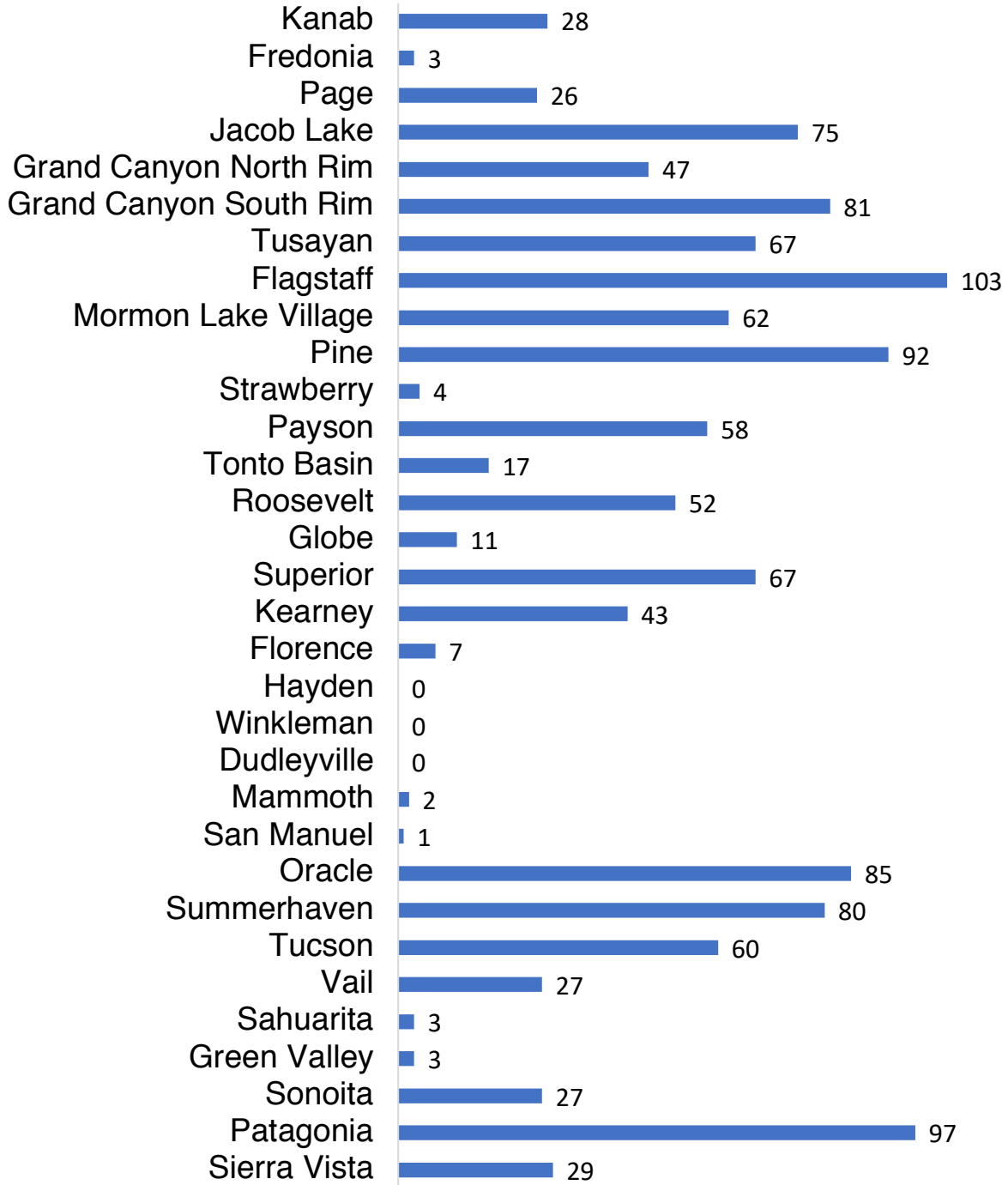
What Gateway Communities did you visit during your trek?

The top 5 most visited Gateway Communities were:

- Flagstaff: 131, 25.0%,
- Patagonia: 97, 23.5%
- Pine: 92, 22.3%
- Oracle: 85, 20.6%
- Grand Canyon South Rim: 81, 19.7%

*Winkelman, Dudleyville and Hayden were the only towns not to be visited by finishers.

GATEWAY COMMUNITIES VISITED



Are there any Gateway Communities you would return to? 444 finishers responded

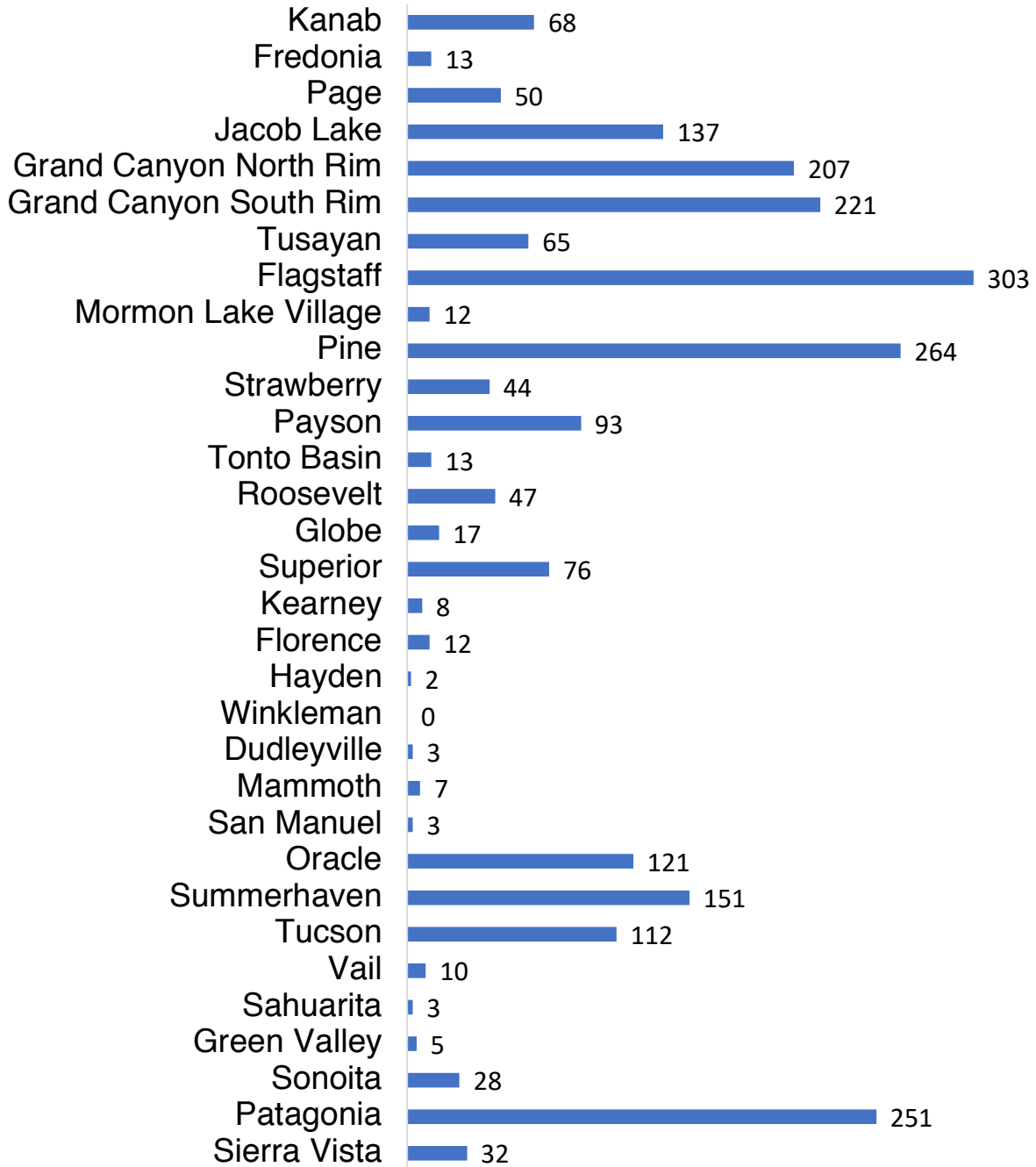
- Yes: 417, 93.9%
- No: 27, 6.1%

If yes, which ones?

Finishers were allowed to list as many Gateway Communities as they wanted. Here are the top 10 most popular Gateway Communities:

- 75.4% would return to Flagstaff
- 65.7% would return to Pine
- 62.4% would return to Patagonia
- 55.0% would return to Grand Canyon South Rim
- 51.5% would return to Grand Canyon North Rim
- 37.6% would return to Summerhaven
- 34.1% would return to Jacob Lake
- 30.1% would return to Oracle
- 27.9% would return to Tucson
- 23.1% would return to Payson

GATEWAY COMMUNITIES TO RETURN TO



SUGGESTIONS FROM THE FINISHER CLASS OF 2018

Signage

Slightly more signs in tricky crossings. This may exist, but information on trail etiquette/nuances/problems that are specific to the AZT that may not be obvious

More trail markers and new stickers on them that are legible.

In the north when you are on a lot of forest roads there should be more signs when you are turning onto another forest road. I found myself missing turns frequently.

Since I've been hiking the AZT for almost 8 years, it seems like things have improved over time. I was disappointed in the (minimal) signage for many of the passages, especially the remote locations like the Mazatzals. It was easy to get off the trail several years ago when I hiked it.

Some places REALLY needed signs. I would not have made it without Guthooks.

The dirt roads in between the Mogollon Rim and Flagstaff are a little confusing, to be honest. More signs/ cairns would be nice.

More trail markers SE of Patagonia and between Oracle/Superior.

I would just like to comment that what you have accomplished in such a short time with this trail is phenomenal! The trail is in excellent condition, well routed, and you have done an amazing job with outreach to the local communities. To explain my "fair" rating for navigational markers--the trail is well-marked for normal season travel, but in snow when the tread was not visible, it was sometimes very hard to follow.

Needs better signage in many sections, particularly at junctions.

This trail could benefit from more blazes/markings. Quite often another trail would intersect and there would be an AZT sign in the middle of the fork which tells a hiker nothing at all.

It would be great if some actual hikers would go out with a couple hundred blazes (not all at once of course) and mark the confusing spots.

Trail Conditions and Road Walks

I was a little disappointed with the amount of two-track trail up north, particularly through the Coconino NF because it is so large and nice, it just would have been more enjoyable to be off the forest service roads. There were a couple sections in the southern area that were a little overgrown (however I understand often only volunteers, or one steward maintains an area and it's a big task). That being said, I had a wonderful experience and loved the trail, and it's very obvious there are many people involved with the trail and so many people who love and care for the trail. Hopefully I will find myself in Arizona again soon and can contribute some volunteer time to the trail too, and water drops for fellow hikers!

Well, it would be tough to de-rock the northern portion of the Mazatzal Divide Trail, but maybe one day. Also, I'm not sure de-rocking it would do much good! Haha. Some great work was put in on the rocky sections of Saddle Mountain Trail, though. I was thoroughly impressed by the majority of the trail. A couple of carsonites need replacement, but that's the nature of carsonites. The app kept me on track when signage or cairns were absent, though (only got "lost" about four times - mainly in ranch lands or areas with braided two-tracks). That re-route south of Mormon Lake was great. The re-route dropping into Walnut Creek wasn't quite finished and I ended up on it accidentally. But it looks like it's coming along nicely, too.

There were a lot of downed trees over the trail north of Pine all the way through the Kaibab.

The trail is great but needs better maintenance.

Sections of the trail are extremely difficult on a mountain bike. This is the main reason I wouldn't do it again.

Going down from the Superstition Mountains was pretty hard, the rocks are really slippery. I fell 4 times and met a guy that fell 5 on the same section.

Some sections of trail were easily passable, while others were not. (Four Peaks/Mazatzals had over-grown vegetation and lots of loose rocks that are frustrating and exhausting to traverse.)

I was often disappointed with how much of the trail is on two-track roads, especially in the Coconino NF. That Forest is massive and much of the trail is road walking - I was very disappointed by trail placement in that particular section. Much of the trail is overgrown in the southern passages. I realize stewards are hard to come by but trimming the brush back from the trail would be

a godsend. Overall, I loved my time on the trail. You can tell that the trail angels, and others, really care for the trail and the people who use it!

Keep up the good work and keep improving the trail conditions. The trail is constantly evolving and needs the ATA to keep up with fire, wind, and rain damage.

I understand that it's difficult to do, but I think the best improvement that could be made to the trail would be to get it off as many of the forest service roads as possible. The trail was lovely near 100% of the time it was on single track. Some of the forest service roads, however, are in pretty bad shape, and were often harder going than the proper trail.

I found hiking long sections of two-tracks for me was tiresome. I hope overtime the trail will be moved to a single track to break the boredom.

Get the trail off of steep loose rocky roads.

You guys do great work! North of the North Rim has quite a few blow downs when we went through.

Better single-track trail in many areas. Eliminate long stretches of roads.

The trail thru the Mazatzals is still rough, narrow, and in need of work, esp. along the Divide. Good job clearing brush, sprucing up springs and signage. But a non-scientific poll of hikers I met all said this was the worst part of the trail.

Mazatzals to Pine still need a lot of work. Section in Superstitions for NOBO after Walnut Spring a mess.

Work to make the southern sections more friendly by reworking trails to conform to the maximum 10% grade used on the PCT. It may help to cut down on erosion and 'baby heads' on the gullies our parts of the trail.

You have made many improvements in the last 5 years and have put much effort in maintaining and improving the trail. I wish I lived closer to the trail and could help with the work days etc.

Website

It's a fantastic trail with so many nice touches. The Arizona Trail Association does a fine job making for a unique, magical and every-changing walk. Having something on the Arizona Trail Association site to show the Native American land history would be a very good thing for non-indigenous hikers to grasp and learn. I did this myself and it made for a richer experience.

Update your webpage more often

I wish you still had the track and waypoint change dates to see if they have changed since I last downloaded them.

Overall, I cannot say enough about the ATA or the website. The quality of the material, services, and trail effort is terribly impressive. I am SO PROUD to have been a part of it.

Water

If you could put more wildlife watering tanks along the trail that we could use, that would be neat.

With water sources drying up this trail could become un-hikeable without some reliable water caching.

Some trail angels are leaving too many water caches, diminishing hiker self reliance and possible safety by depending on unreliable water caches.

Decide how you want to deal with the water caches. I heard so many people flip flopping as to whether you need to take your empties. I carried mine out to err on the side of LNT, but the message is unclear, and of course hikers will take the easy way out if you confuse them.

Put water somehow at Utah border, or a cache box. Lots of empties along N Kaibab sections.

I would say that the Association needs to recognize that it will be growing quickly over the next couple of years and issues such as water caches, impact on communities, and the need for more reliable water north of the rim will need to be addressed.

Water was the biggest issue in my hike. Lots of tanks were dry and this could be solved with more water caches

Infrastructure (gates, trailheads) + Cattle

Some of the wire gates were too hard for me so I crawled under. I like the ones with leverage bars.

There are many wire gates that are very difficult to open/close for women.

A few gates are in rough shape and could use replacement (one between Cedar Ranch trailhead and San Francisco peaks is particularly bad). More bathrooms at trailheads would be nice.

A good amount of the tension gates were pretty frustrating/ dangerous to open, I know that the ATA is working on replacing the gates, which is much appreciated!

Oh, those gates! I am not sure you should focus on getting the very nice, expensive gates in everywhere. There might be a less expensive design that could be deployed more broadly. As a 5ft tall, 67-year-old solo woman...well, I gave up and slithered under a lot of barbed wire. At least one gate was too high for me to even reach the latch, and those barbed wire loops are just too tight. I talked to lots of folks who needed two people to re-close gates, but you already know all this...But, in the main it is a well-marked, well-maintained trail. The heat, water availability and terrain make it a challenge, but it's Arizona.

Not to get too political, I'm also torn about the trail gates. While the large AZT gates are beautiful and well made, they seem to contribute to reducing wildlife habitat and make travel more difficult for everyone. Simply keeping cattle in range to be slaughtered would appear to be a silly reason to have them around...

When you enter Babbit there were bulls and I had no notice, and since we shared the same water source I had to get pretty close to them. I think if there could be a sign before you enter the ranch, warning you if its all bulls that could be helpful. If not, its no big deal because it spread word or mouth to other hikers. Keep replacing some of the worst/most difficult wire & branch gates with metal gates. (There were some I simply could not open/close by myself, being pretty petite.)

I love the metal AZT gates and hope to see more of them installed as time goes on.

Not really. I think the new Gates and trail improvements are great. The section from the Superstitions to Roosevelt lake was tough but being a AZ native it seem to fit in.

Volunteering

I've been a member for a few years and I think the association is doing a great job. I would like to see more volunteer opportunities made public through working with outdoor retailers.

On two occasions I encountered Wendy Lotze, a trail steward hosting trail maintenance education courses on site. She welcomed me into her camp, cooked dinner, and provided great company. Please recognize her kindness and generosity - it really added to my experience of the trail.

Resource and Navigational Guides

Even though I am a long time, experienced map-using backpacker, I found the Topo Maps for purchase to be difficult to use. Hard to find important waypoints or even your location. I carried them but never referenced them.

A new edition of the guidebook would be amazing. There were definitely a few areas where the guidebook info did not match the actual trail (I wish I had marked these spots so I could send along the locations to you all). Thank you for everything ATA!!!!

The GPX tracks were wonderful and incredibly accurate. The Day Hike Guide was excellent. The Passage Maps were very useful.

Encourage more frequent comment-posting on water sources on Guthook-- makes a big difference in planning water to have 3 day old vs 4 wk old comments.

The passage beginnings and ends aren't always sensible for a section hiker.

Just keep up the good work. I used the Arizona National Scenic Trail by Matthew Nelson as my planning document and with all the changes on the trail someone should release an update.

Adopt the Guthooks method of identifying waypoints as a distance from the start. The book was pretty useless since it only used distances from trailheads.

Outreach

More education and communication with ranchers

Just further educate the users in proper backcountry leave no trace principles. Seems like trail users can never seem to get enough.

Please continue efforts to remove cattle from the AZT and our public lands.

Better communication of events on or near the trail. Past thru several fun events that were on the trail, races etc.

Work with NPS to allow mountain bikes to travel on road out of park after obtaining north rim rather than try to travel snow covered AZT (while park is closed)

Keep this trail a secret. I cringe at the time this trail becomes like it's bigger siblings and has tons of traffic like Disney world. This is my favorite trail ever! It was honestly everything I have ever wanted from a trail experience.

Gateway Communities, Hostels and Trail Angels

Tell people to stay away from TA Jon Phipps

Loved the trail. Community support was always upbeat and helpful. Resources in one way or another we're always available. Everything seems to be right on track (pun intended)!!

General Kudos

Keep up the good work.

I believe you are doing a fantastic job already!

Great job. Thank you. Awesome Trail!

Keep doing what you're doing! The trail has evolved in so many amazing ways in the last decade since I started spending quite a bit of time on it.

You all have a positive, active staff supported by engaged volunteers. Thank you...please keep up the great work.

It was an amazing experience and I am grateful for all the planning and hard work it has taken to make the AZ Trail a reality! Thank you!

SURVEY RECCOMENDATIONS

Gender

There are people who identify as non-binary, defined by neither of the genders “male” or “female.” Adding an “other” option will allow anyone who identifies in another way to have a box to check.

Solo or With Others

The question “did you complete your trek solo or with others?” is no longer asked in the survey; however, it would benefit to bring it back. Furthermore, an additional question, “why did you choose to trek solo or alone?” could be asked, providing check box responses: safety, companionship, solitude, another reason, or no reason.

Income Ranges

One minor adjustment needs to be made to the answer options for this question such that the two lowest income ranges do not overlap at 10K.

Favorite Place or Passage

The question, “what is your favorite place or passage?” provides a fill-in box for answers. While this does allow for more specific answers, the data is more difficult to analyze, and attempts to streamline the data is likely to lead to skewed results. Simply asking, “what was your favorite passage?” and providing checkboxes with all of the passages would improve this question greatly. There could still be no limit to how many are “checked.”

More Data

During the write up of this report, this survey’s 2018 data was compared to Double Orca’s 2018 thru-hiker survey and report found at this web address:

<https://jandjnorthbound.com/2019/01/22/arizona-trail-thru-hiker-survey-2018/>.

There are places where the responses she received are more diverse than the responses to this survey, even though this data set was bigger. Pushing this survey out through social media, including Double Orca’s base, is likely to make for more complete results.