



Nota de prensa

The International Appalachian Trail gets off the ground in Spain
SIA-Spain and Mirlo Positive Nature will study the viability of what may well be the first section between the cities of Leon and Gijon.

17/07/2014. The Appalachian Trail is a long-distance signposted hiking route in the Eastern United States that stretches for some 3500 km. In 1994, former Maine Governor Joseph E. Brennan, with technical support provided by Maine conservationists Dick Anderson and Don Hudson, came up with the idea of extending the trail under the name “International Appalachian Trail”, in order to unite all the countries and regions where the geology of the Appalachians can be found.

The mission of the International Appalachian Trail is to create, develop and maintain a long-distance trail that extends beyond the geographical frontiers of the Appalachian Mountains, formed more than 400 million years ago, and to bring together people and places that are thousands of kilometres away from each other, but that have a common origin.

Here in Spain, SIA-Spain has been working on this project from 2011. SIA Spain is a non-profit association that is promoting the introduction of the International Appalachian Trail along different routes that go all the way to Portugal and the north of Morocco.

SIA-Spain has joined forces with Mirlo Positive Nature, a Company specialising in the generation of positive ecological footprint, in order to jointly undertake the study of what may well be the first section of the International Appalachian Trail in Spain, running for approximately 280 kilometres between the cities of Leon and Gijon.

This stretch of the trail is an exceptional example of Europe’s natural, geological and cultural richness. It is particularly of note due to the fact that it crosses the Picos de Europa Mountains, a region of Spain of outstanding value that has been declared a National Park and a Biosphere Reserve, among other protective categories.

Its route crosses zones that are populated by highly singular animal species such as the European brown bear, the Cantabrian Capercaillie, the chamois or the mountain goat. Among its other marvels, are the forests de beech and sessile oak, the geological formations of the Beyos Mountain Pass and the Cares Gorge, or its ancient farming culture that produces cheeses of international fame and repute. Once it leaves Gijon, the trail follows the Road to Santiago along the coast, in such a way that its historical and cultural value is enhanced by this Jacobean route that pilgrims have walked along for centuries.

By introducing the Spanish IAT into this setting, SIA in Spain hopes to contribute to its awareness and its preservation, and to develop a positive environmental footprint culture, and a sustainable economy for local communities.

Field study

In order to study how viable the Leon-Gijon section really is, as part of the International Appalachian Trail in Spain, experts from SIA-Spain and Mirlo Positive Nature are going to walk along the route checking out the viability of the layout.

First of all, our desk-team will revise the proposed layout in order to properly plan the route and the stages. Then it is the turn of our field team, made up by four people. Two of them will undertake a stretch of the route every day, marking out the layout and its unique elements (signposting, fountains, crosses) with the help of a GPS. A third member will be responsible for checking out the logistical aspects such as accommodation, identifying possible Mirlo positive footprint projects and providing back-up for the people walking the trail on foot; and the fourth person will be busy telling everybody about the progress made on a daily basis, in the social networks. We estimate that it will take us six weeks to walk the trail, and to draw up the detailed report (between August and the beginning of September 2014).

The members of the team that will be studying the Leon-Gijon stretch include Sonia Ibáñez, the first Spanish woman to walk the Appalachian Trail in 2013, from Maine to Georgia (USA). Also forming part of the team are the certified forester, Montes Olga Herranz (Mirlo) and geologist and keen hiker, Verónica Álvarez.

SIA-Spain and Mirlo Positive Nature have set up a [crowdfunding campaign](#) to raise funds to pay for the study of the Leon-Gijon section. If, as we trust will be the case, this public participation campaign exceeds its objectives, any extra money will be dedicated to Mirlo's positive footprint projects. Until these projects are carried out, the money will be generating positive footprint in a savings account in the Triodos Bank, a bank that only finances real economy and sustainable development projects.

More information

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