

America's hardest hikers blaze new long-distance trails

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

It's tough to find a tougher hiker than Mary Kwart.

The 64-year-old former wildland firefighter has tackled some of America's roughest routes, including the Pacific Crest, Grand Enchantment and Hayduke long distance trails.

But Kwart, of Ashland, Ore., nearly met her match last year in the Siskiyou Wilderness, a 180,000-acre swath of remote mountains and forest in northwestern California.

That's where she found herself dragging her backpack while crawling beneath dense brush during a through-hike of the newly-designed Bigfoot Trail.

Such is life for people at the forefront of hiking and backpacking in America, many of whom gathered recently in Nevada City for the American Long Distance Hiking Association West's annual get-together.

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