

Trash Collectors

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Seth Orme, founder of the Pack It Out Crew, on North Carolina's Mountains-to-Sea Trail | Photo by Mike Belleme

By [Aaron Carnes](#)

A few years ago, Seth Orme was working his dream job as an outdoor guide in Minnesota. The only problem was, he kept seeing garbage everywhere he hiked. It ruined the experience for him and the people he took into the woods. So he started bringing a bag with him.

“I was tired of complaining about the trash I was seeing,” Orme says. “When you’re outdoors, it doesn’t matter whose trash it is.”

Though Orme had always wanted to hike the Appalachian Trail, he put it off because he would have to quit his job. But the idea of completing the trail while improving everyone else’s experience motivated him.

In 2015, he talked his pals Paul Twedt and Joe Dehnert into taking on the 2,190-mile trail with him and carrying out as much trash as they could. They dubbed themselves the Pack It Out Crew, and ended up removing a total of 1,095 pounds of garbage along the route. They even found an old mattress, which they hauled for two and a half miles.



Paul Twedt, Seth Orme, and their friend Keri "Turkey" George. Keri packed out over 20 pounds of trash on that load over a distance of 14 miles. | Photo by Paul Twedt

In 2016, Orme and Twedt tackled the Pacific Crest Trail with the same goal. In the course of hiking the 2,650-mile route, the two packed out 720 pounds, sometimes carrying garbage up to 100 miles before unloading it. They cleaned up toilet paper, cigarette butts, cans, bottles, and food wrappers. Some of the weirder items they found were a plastic tricycle, leather boots, and a beer bottle with a dead mouse inside.

The work was hard but worthwhile. The feedback from hikers they've met along the trail and from those who have read about their efforts has been overwhelmingly positive. "Our goal was always to inspire others," Orme says. "People come up to us and say, 'I pick up trash now because of you guys.'"

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