

## Appalachian Trail North of Route 17A in Warwick, NY

### Overview

This out-and-back hike climbs to two fascinating puddingstone rock outcrops, with panoramic views.

Details Time: 3 hours Difficulty: Moderate Length: 4.8 miles

### Driving Directions

Take the New York State Thruway to Exit 15A. Turn left at the bottom of the ramp onto N.Y. Route 17 and head north, through Sloatsburg and Tuxedo. Continue for about 2.5 miles beyond the village of Tuxedo to a traffic light at the intersection of N.Y. Route 17A. Bear left at the traffic light and continue up the ramp, then turn left at the top of the ramp onto Route 17A. Follow Route 17A west for 7.5 miles to the village of Greenwood Lake, and continue uphill on Route 17A. Park in a gravel parking area near the top of the hill on the left side of the road, about 1.5 miles from the village (the parking area, with small yellow and white signs indicating that it is for Appalachian Trail hikers, is just before the intersection of Route 17A and Continental Road).

### Description

This hike traverses a two-mile section of the famous Appalachian Trail (A.T.), which extends for about 2,170 miles from Georgia to Maine. This short trail section includes two spectacular rock formations, which makes it one of the most interesting segments of the A.T. in New Jersey and New York.

From the parking area, cross Route 17A and follow the white blazes of the A.T. into the woods. Almost immediately, you'll notice a blue-blazed side trail on the left. Turn left and follow this trail, which leads in about 1,000 feet to the Hawk Watch platform. The platform was constructed to permit volunteers to monitor spring and fall raptor migration, and it affords panoramic views to the west and north. After taking in the views, retrace your steps to the junction with the A.T. and continue ahead. At first, the trail parallels the noisy Route 17A, but the road soon bends to the right, away from the trail, and the sounds of traffic disappear.

The A.T. proceeds gently uphill, crosses a gas pipeline, and continues through an area with dense hemlock and mountain laurel. It then begins a gradual descent. About 1.3 miles from the start, you'll notice the start of a blue-blazed side trail. You're now just below a spectacular outcrop of puddingstone rock known as the Eastern Pinnacles, and the side trail is provided so that A.T. thru-hikers won't have to climb up the rock outcrop in bad weather (the rocks can be very slippery when wet). Hopefully, you've picked a day with good weather for your hike, and you'll want to follow the white blazes ahead and scramble up the rock outcrop, which offers magnificent views to the north and east over the hills of Sterling Forest.

The A.T. continues along the exposed rocks, with more views. You'll have to use both your hands and your feet to negotiate this trail section. At the end of the rock outcrop, the white-blazed A.T. heads gently downhill. It goes through dense mountain laurel thickets and traverses a wet area, then climbs to Cat Rocks – another dramatic rock outcrop. Again, there is a blue-blazed trail that bypasses this feature, but you'll want to follow the white blazes to the top of these fascinating puddingstone rocks. The east-facing view from Cat Rocks has largely grown in, but this outcrop is even more spectacular than Eastern Pinnacles because of the sheer drop from the top of the outcrop and the deep crevice on the left at the north end.

The trail now begins to descend. In another third of a mile, just after crossing a stream, you'll notice a blue-blazed side trail on the left, with a sign "shelter." This trail passes through a dense rhododendron thicket, crosses a small stream, and leads in about 600 feet to the Wildcat Shelter. This wooden three-sided shelter, built by volunteers in 1992, is a favorite stop for many thru-hikers on the A.T. At this writing, the side trail is in poor condition (it will soon be replaced by a relocated trail), but it can be followed with care.

After resting at the shelter (and perhaps meeting a few thru-hikers, on their way from Georgia to Maine), retrace your steps to the A.T., turn right and head south to return to your car.