

# Black Rock Mountain and Sphagnum Pond Loop from Mine Hill Road

## Overview

This loop hike climbs to the summit of Black Rock Mountain, with panoramic views, and passes by scenic Sphagnum Pond.

Details Time: 3.5 hours Difficulty: Moderate Length: 5 miles

## Driving Directions

Take the New York Thruway north to Exit 16. Follow N.Y. Route 32 north for seven miles to Mountainville, and turn right onto Angola Road. After 0.8 mile, you will come to a stop sign. Turn left to continue on Angola Road. In another 0.8 mile, turn right onto Mine Hill Road. Follow Mine Hill Road uphill for 0.9 mile to a parking turnout on the right side of the road, just beyond a very sharp, steep hairpin turn.

## Description

The hike begins by following the yellow-diamond-blazed Mine Hill Trail, which starts on the opposite side of the road, just beyond the parking turnout. The trailhead is marked by a triple blaze. Follow the trail uphill, soon reaching viewpoints over the Shawangunks and Catskills from open rocks. After a switchback turn, the trail heads south and soon ends at a junction with the yellow-circle-blazed Sackett Trail. (You'll encounter four different yellow-blazed trails on this hike, so it's important to note the *shape* of the blazes, in addition to their *color*.) Turn left and follow the Sackett Trail, which climbs to reach two more viewpoints, then begins a steady descent. After crossing two streams in a wet area, you'll notice a stone chimney to the left of the trail - the remnant of an old cabin, built many years ago as a family camping retreat.

A short distance beyond, the yellow blazes turn left and follow the grassy Hall Road for about 150 feet. Where the road bears left, continue along the yellow-blazed trail as it bears right, leaving the road. It descends to a low point, with several huge uprooted trees, then ascends gradually, climbing several rock outcrops on the way. About a mile and a half from the start of the hike, the Sackett Trail turns right onto Continental Road, another woods road, which it follows for a short distance to its junction with Hulse Road (Continental Road is blocked off with a cable immediately before this junction).

Here, the Sackett Trail ends. You should turn left onto Hulse Road, now following the route of the Stillman Trail, blazed with yellow rectangles, which is co-aligned with the Highlands Trail (teal-diamond blazes). The trail follows the road for only 150 feet. Just past a stream crossing, watch carefully as the yellow and teal blazes bear right, leaving the road, and continue ahead on a footpath. Follow the Stillman and Highlands trails through a thick stand of mountain laurel and then steadily uphill. After a while, the grade moderates. About 0.4 mile from the last intersection, the trail climbs steeply over a rock outcrop and reaches the 1,410-foot summit of Black Rock Mountain, after which the forest is named. The summit affords expansive views to the north and east over the Hudson River, with a side trail (marked by blue footprints) leading to a particularly fine view to the northeast.

After you've rested for a while, turn right and follow the teal and yellow blazes as they descend rather steeply on a wide footpath. At one point, the trail has been rerouted to the left to avoid a badly eroded section of the original footpath. At the base of the descent, the trail makes a sharp left turn. Here, you should turn right, leaving the yellow-and-teal-blazed trail, and turn right on a grassy path that leads for 50 feet down to White Oak Road, a wide gravel road. Turn right on White Oak Road and follow it as it climbs gently, paralleling the outlet stream from Arthurs Pond to the left. After crossing a culvert in an open area, with a swamp to the right, you'll reach a T-intersection, with a giant white oak tree (after which the road is named) in the middle of the intersection. A bench has been placed here, affording another opportunity for a short break.

Turn left at the road intersection onto Continental Road, passing a pine plantation to the left. In 200 feet, you'll reach a junction with the white-blazed White Oak Trail. Turn right and follow the white blazes, which run along a chained-off woods road for a short distance, then continue ahead where the main woods road turns left. The White Oak Trail soon narrows to a footpath. In about a third of a mile, it crosses a stream and reaches the stone impoundment of Sphagnum Pond. The trail skirts the dam, passing through a wet, grassy area, and climbs to cross Sutherland Road. Continue ahead on the White Oak Trail, which climbs along a grassy woods road that soon narrows to a footpath. At the top of the climb, the White Oak Trail ends at a junction with the yellow-rectangle-blazed Stillman Trail (co-aligned with the teal-diamond-blazed Highlands Trail), a grassy woods road.

Turn left and follow the Stillman/Highlands Trail south along a ridge, passing two interesting swamps to the right. In about half a mile, you'll reach a junction where the blue-blazed Compartment Trail comes in from the south and the teal-blazed Highlands Trail continues straight ahead. Turn right at this junction, continuing to follow the yellow-rectangle-blazed Stillman Trail, which now heads downhill, joined by the blue-blazed Compartment Trail. Just before reaching an intersection with the grassy Hall Road, the Compartment Trail leaves to the right. Follow the yellow rectangle blazes, which turn right and continue along Hall Road. (Note that the yellow- *triangle* -blazed Short Cut Trail begins at this intersection; make sure that you follow the yellow rectangles, not the yellow triangles!) Near the crest of a rise, the yellow rectangle blazes turn left, leaving the road.

Follow the yellow-rectangle-blazed trail as it proceeds through dense mountain laurel thickets and soon reaches a T-intersection, where the yellow-circle-blazed Sackett Trail begins. Turn right and follow the Sackett Trail past another west-facing viewpoint. When you reach the next intersection, where the yellow-diamond-blazed Mine Hill Trail leaves to the left, turn left and follow the Mine Hill Trail down to Mine Hill Road, where you began the hike.