

Carpenters' Trail/Dyckman Hill Trail Loop from Englewood Boat Basin

Overview

This hike begins by following the shoreline of the Hudson River and continues along the top of the Palisades cliffs, with outstanding views.

Details Time: 2.5 hours Difficulty: Moderate Length: 3.5 miles

Driving Directions

Take the Palisades Interstate Parkway to Exit 1 (Palisade Avenue, Englewood). Turn left at the bottom of the ramp and descend to the Englewood Boat Basin on the park entrance road. When you reach the traffic circle at the base of the descent, proceed north, entering the boat basin area (a fee is charged during summer months). Park in the first parking area on the right.

Description

From the parking area at the south end of the Boat Basin, proceed past a stone refreshment stand and continue south on the Shore Trail, a wide path that runs along the shore of the Hudson River. The Spuyten Duyvil - spanned by a steel-arch bridge that carries the Henry Hudson Parkway and a low-level swing bridge that is used by Amtrak - is across the river to the left, and the George Washington Bridge is visible directly ahead. As you proceed along the trail, you'll notice several sets of stone steps that lead into the river. These were once used to access swimming beaches along the river.

After about 25 minutes of walking, you'll reach Ross Dock -- a large picnic and recreation area recently rebuilt by the park. Here, the route of the Shore Trail is marked by white blazes that lead through the area. (The entire Shore Trail is officially blazed white, but the blazing is sparse up to this point.) At the south end of the Ross Dock area, the trail bears right and goes through a pedestrian tunnel under the entrance road. On the other side of the tunnel, the trail again bears right and continues south along a paved road (which leads to a boat launching ramp just south of the George Washington Bridge).

In about 700 feet, you'll see a flight of stone steps to the right. A sign identifies these steps as the route of the Carpenters Trail, marked with blue blazes. Turn right and climb the steps. You'll soon reach the imposing stone wall which supports the approach road leading into Ross Dock. Here, the trail turns left and ascends a wide stone staircase which leads to two stone-arch tunnels - first, under the approach road, then under the Henry Hudson Drive. The trail now turns right and proceeds north, parallel to the Henry Hudson Drive, soon reaching a switchback turn with a panoramic view across the river. Note the red lighthouse across the river, adjacent to the New York tower of the George Washington Bridge.

The trail now ascends less steeply on switchbacks, following broad rock-lined steps. After another short but steep ascent on rather uneven rock stairs, the trail reaches the top of the cliffs, where it joins the aqua-blazed Long Path. Turn right and follow the Long Path northward. In a short distance, a path to the left (marked with blue blazes) leads to an overpass which spans the northbound lanes of the Palisades Interstate Parkway. You should follow a short unmarked trail to the right that leads to a viewpoint over the river, with Ross Dock directly below to the north. After taking in the view, return to the Long Path and continue north, parallel to and just below the level of the Parkway, with views through the trees over the river to your right.

After passing a stone parapet to the right, you'll notice a concrete base to the right of the trail. The cannon from the Spanish-American War that formerly was mounted here has been moved to a park in Fort Lee. Continuing ahead, the Long Path passes several stone walls, which mark old property lines. In another half a mile, the trail passes to the right of a gas station along the Parkway, where water, restrooms and snacks are available.

Just north of the gas station, the Long Path crosses a wooden bridge which spans a stream. The trail soon reaches the iron fence surrounding Allison Park, where it turns left, then turns right and follows the paved access road leading to the park. Although the Long Path skirts the park, the park is open to the public (pets not permitted), and you might want to take a side trip into the park, which offers views over the Hudson River.

At the next intersection, the park access road turns left and goes under the Parkway. Just beyond, the Long Path bears left and heads uphill. It continues north along a parapet which overlooks the grounds of St. Peter's College to the right. This parcel is the only one along the Palisades that remains in private ownership. After passing St. Michael's Villa, the Long Path follows the shoulder of the Parkway, then bears right and reenters the woods. It soon turns left and follows an abandoned paved road. As the trail once again approaches the Parkway, the pavement ends, and the Long Path continues ahead on a footpath below the level of the Parkway.

After crossing a bridge over a wide stream, the Long Path descends stone steps and reaches Palisade Avenue in Englewood Cliffs. Turn right, leaving the Long Path, and follow the sidewalk along the park entrance road. You will see a sign which marks the start of the yellow-blazed Dyckman Hill Trail. Continue along the park entrance road, which curves to the right and begins to descend, passing excellent views of the river, with the Englewood Boat Basin visible directly below. Just beyond a waterfall to the right, follow the yellow blazes as they turn left and descend stone steps, passing by another waterfall and then going through an underpass beneath the entrance road. The trail then turns right and continues to descend on stone-paved switchbacks. Be cautious as you descend, as the stone paving may be uneven, and the route may be slippery when wet or covered by leaves. When you again reach the park entrance road, cross the road, turn right, then descend stairs to the left. Upon reaching the river level, head across the picnic area to the parking area where you left your car.