

# Castle Point Trail - Longer Loop

## Overview

This loop hike runs along the shore of Ramapo Lake and climbs to the ruins of an old stone castle and tower.

Details Time: 3 hours Difficulty: Moderate Length: 4 miles

## Driving Directions

Take Interstate Route 287 to Exit 57 (Skyline Drive) and proceed north on Skyline Drive for about one mile to the upper parking area for Ramapo Mountain State Forest on the left side of the road, opposite the entrance to Camp Tamarack.

## Description

Cross to the east side of Skyline Drive and find three white blazes on a telephone pole opposite the southern end of the parking area. This triple blaze marks the start of the Todd Trail, which you will follow as it winds downhill on a rocky footpath and then ascends from a shallow ravine. In half a mile, the trail turns right onto a woods road. Follow the white blazes as they turn left onto another woods road, soon passing the trailhead for the Yellow Trail on the left, and then turn right into the woods. (The buildings ahead on the left are the remnants of Camp Todd, formerly operated by the Hudson-Hamilton Council, Boy Scouts of America.) The trail, which is now also marked with silver triangle blazes, ascends to a grassy knoll. As the trail descends, the silver triangle blazes depart to the left. Bear right, following the white blazes, to reach a viewpoint over Oakland, with Crystal Lake in the foreground.

From the viewpoint, the trail makes a short, steep descent and then follows along the side of a hill. Soon, it crosses a woods road, and then turns left on another woods road. Continue to follow the white blazes as the trail passes several intersecting woods roads, turns left, and climbs to cross Skyline Drive, a mile and a half from the start of the hike. On the other side of Skyline Drive, the Todd Trail ascends a knoll and descends through a mountain-laurel thicket to cross a stream. It proceeds through a wet area, passes the foundation of an old building the left, and ends at a junction with the blue-blazed MacEvoy Trail, which runs along a woods road. Turn right at the junction and follow the blue blazes towards Ramapo Lake.

Soon, you will reach a paved road. Turn left and then immediately right, and continue along the shore of Ramapo Lake on a gravel road marked intermittently with blue blazes. After passing a private home to the right and then an attractive cascade, the trail reaches the northern tip of Ramapo Lake. Bear right at the fork in the road and pass between two concrete pillars. Just ahead, the blue-blazed MacEvoy Trail leaves to the left. Continue ahead on the road, now marked with the red blazes of the Cannonball Trail. The road curves to the right, and just beyond, you will notice another set of three white blazes. These blazes mark the start of the Castle Point Trail.

Turn left and follow the white-blazed trail as it climbs steadily, and rather steeply, to the stone ruins of a mansion. Known as Foxcroft, it was built around 1910 by William Porter, a stockbroker. Her widow occupied it until her death in 1940, and it fell into ruin in the late 1950s. Use caution if you wish to explore the area. The trail continues to the north, passing the remains of a concrete swimming pool, and it soon reaches a stone tower. Contrary to what one might think at first glance, this was not a lookout tower; rather it held a cistern that supplied water to the mansion (note the rusted pipes adjacent to the tower). Just beyond, there is a good view from an open rock ledge over the Wanaque Reservoir to the west.

Before reaching the route of a gas pipeline, the trail turns right and begins to descend. It briefly joins a woods road (using a footpath to shortcut a bend in the road), then turns right and continues along the pipeline. After following the pipeline for 350 feet, it turns right, crosses a stream, and climbs rather steeply through mountain laurel to a rock ledge, which provides a view of the stone tower you passed about half a mile back.

A short distance beyond, the Castle Point Trail ends at a paved road, the route of the Cannonball Trail. Turn left and follow the road for 125 feet to Skyline Drive, then cross Skyline Drive and enter the woods, following the red blazes (with a white "C"). Soon you will reach an intersection with the yellow-blazed Hoeflerlin Trail. Turn sharply right and follow the yellow trail as it ascends through mountain laurel. After descending steeply from a rock outcrop, a sign points the way to an Indian shelter, believed to have been used by the Native Americans during their hunting season. From here, it is only a short distance ahead to Skyline Drive and the parking area where the hike began.