

Garret Mountain Reservation Loop via Yellow and White Trails

Overview

This loop hike visits less-used areas of this popular park, passing several outstanding views over northern New Jersey and the Manhattan skyline.

Details Time: 2 hours Difficulty: Easy to Moderate Length: 2.8 miles

Driving Directions

Take Interstate Route 80 to Exit 57A. Proceed south on NJ 19, and take the first exit (Valley Road). Turn right at the top of the ramp, then make the first right turn, which leads into the parking area for Lambert Castle. Continue past the castle, then turn sharply left and proceed to the southern end of the parking area. (If you have additional time, you may also wish to visit the historic castle; check open hours. An admission fee is charged to enter the castle, but there is no charge for parking.)

Description

From the southern end of the parking area, follow the yellow-blazed Garret Mountain Trail, which proceeds rather steeply uphill on a macadam path and stone steps. The trail turns right onto a wide, paved path, which switchbacks up to the top of the mountain.

At the top of the climb, you'll pass through an opening in a stone wall. Turn sharply right here, briefly following the stone wall, then turn right again. You're now heading north. The trail soon begins to descend on a rocky path and stone steps. After paralleling the paved park road (which runs to the left) for a short distance, you'll notice a well-worn side trail to the right. Follow this trail, which leads to an expansive east-facing viewpoint from the edge of a cliff. (A police firing range is located directly below, so don't be startled to hear some gunshots!) Paterson may be seen directly below, with much of southern Bergen County beyond, and the Manhattan skyline visible in the distance on a clear day. The Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge is at the extreme right of this broad panorama.

After spending some time here, enjoying the view, return to the yellow trail and turn right. The trail soon passes a small gravel parking area to the left and, about 300 feet beyond, follows along the right side of a grassy field. At the end of the field, the trail descends on a footpath to reach an intersection with the White Trail at the entrance to an overlook. Turn right onto the White Trail, which follows a paved path along the right side of the overlook. It turns right and descends stone steps, then turns left and follows the stone wall along the edge of the overlook. The view to the south and east is more limited here, but downtown Paterson is visible directly below, and High Mountain may be seen to the north.

At the end of the wall, the trail descends into the woods, then climbs slightly to skirt an open area, with a radio tower visible through the trees to the left. The trail continues to descend, soon bearing left. At the base of the descent, the trail briefly parallels an intermittent stream to the right, then turns left and ascends, soon joining a vague woods road. At a huge boulder, the trail turns left, leaving the woods road, and climbs on a footpath.

After leveling off, the White Trail reaches a junction with the yellow-blazed Garret Mountain Trail at a rock ledge that overlooks a ravine to the right. Follow the White Trail as it bears left, soon reaching a gravel parking area along a paved park drive. Here, the trail bears right, turns left to cross the park drive, and continues ahead on a gravel road. In 200 feet, the white blazes bear left at a fork and follow a bridle path for 250 feet. The White Trail then turns right onto another bridle path, passing a line of unusual flat-sided boulders to the left.

In 250 feet, the White Trail bears right at a fork and continues along the bridle path. Then, in another 800 feet, the white blazes bear left onto a footpath, but soon rejoin the bridle path. The White Trail continues along the bridle path for another third of a mile until it ends at a junction with the yellow-blazed Garret Mountain Trail.

Turn left here, now once again following the yellow-blazed trail, which runs along another bridle path. As the trail approaches the paved park road, the bridle path bears left, but you should continue ahead, climb the embankment and cross the paved road. Follow the yellow blazes which indicate that the trail turns right and runs along the grassy shoulder of the road, bearing left past two road intersections. (Do not follow the paved road leading ahead to the park stables.) In about 800 feet, near the park boundary, the yellow-blazed trail turns left, leaving the road, and ascends into the woods on a footpath.

Just before reaching the access road to the stables, the trail bears right and passes between several concrete tank supports. It curves to the left and begins to run along the ridge of Garret Mountain, with the stables to the left. At the end of the stables, the trail bears left, makes a short but steep descent, and then turns right, continuing along the ridge.

About 0.2 mile beyond the stables, the trail reaches an unobstructed viewpoint to the east from the edge of the ridge. The view is similar to that afforded by the first viewpoint that you reached earlier in the hike, but you're a little further away from the urban bustle of the City of Paterson. This is a good place to take a break.

Follow the trail as it continues north along the ridge, passing several more viewpoints. Soon, you'll reach a stone observation tower, built in the 1890s by a wealthy silk manufacturer as part of Lambert Castle, at the base of the mountain. The trail skirts to the right of the tower, which has recently been restored, following a stone wall. Near the end of the wall, the trail turns left. Just ahead, at a break in the wall, turn right and descend the paved path and steps that lead back to the parking area where the hike began.