

Grand Loop Trail

Overview

This loop hike, suitable for snowshoeing or cross-country skiing when the ground is covered with snow, follows rolling terrain around this historical park, passing several interpretive sites.

Details Time: 3.5 hours Difficulty: Easy to Moderate Length: 6 miles

Driving Directions

Take Interstate Route 287 to Exit 30B. At the first traffic light, turn right onto Route 202. Proceed north for 1.8 miles, and turn left onto Tempe Wick Road at a traffic light. Continue along Tempe Wick Road for 1.4 miles to the park entrance on the right side of the road. The visitor center parking area is just ahead.

Description

From the parking area, proceed to the visitor center. After viewing the exhibits and obtaining a trail map, exit the back door, and continue ahead on a paved path, passing the Wick Farm Garden. Follow the paved path to the entrance to the Wick Farmhouse, which is usually open and staffed by volunteers. After visiting the farmhouse, turn right and retrace your steps on the paved path until you reach a split-rail fence. Here, you should turn right and head downhill on a wide, grassy road (shown as the Mendham Road Trail on the park map), which soon narrows to a footpath. Near the bottom of the hill, before reaching Tempe Wick Road, turn right at a sign "To Grand Loop Trail." The Grand Loop Trail will be your route for the remainder of the hike.

Upon reaching the white-blazed Grand Loop Trail, turn right and proceed uphill for 0.2 mile. This is the steepest climb you will encounter and is not typical of the terrain on the remainder of the trail. The trail levels off and descends to reach a junction, marked by Signpost #3 (trail junctions in this park are marked by numbered signposts, which will be referred to in the hike description). Here, the trail bears left, passes a wire enclosure, and climbs to the top of a hill, where it proceeds through thick barberry bushes and begins to closely parallel the park boundary. After a descent into a valley, it climbs to reach a junction (Signpost #4), where the Patriots' Path (blue tree-and-river logo on white) joins from the right. A sign to the right points the way to the restored Soldiers' Huts, which are worth a short side trip.

Follow the Grand Loop Trail as it continues ahead, now running concurrently with the Patriots' Path. When the Patriots' Path leaves to the left in another 900 feet (Signpost #5), turn right and continue to follow the Grand Loop Trail as it descends, passing Signpost #6 and continuing across an open field. After crossing paved Sugarloaf Road, the trail reenters the woods at Signpost #7. It ascends gradually, levels off, then bears right and descends across the side of a hill, with views through the trees to the left. At

the next intersection, marked by Signpost #8 -- about two miles from the start -- the Grand Loop Trail turns left and soon levels off. It crosses paved Jockey Hollow Road, passes Signpost #9, and reenters the woods. The trail now runs close to the park boundary, with private homes visible just to the left.

After descending gradually and bending sharply to the left, the Grand Loop Trail turns right at Signpost #10, joining a blue-blazed trail. The joint white/blue trail follows a wide dirt road and passes a small pond on the left. A bench has been placed here, making it an attractive spot for a break. Just beyond, a Y intersection is reached (Signpost #22). Here, the blue-blazed trail leaves to the right, but you should take the left fork, continuing along the white-blazed Grand Loop Trail, which descends gradually and begins to parallel a stream on the left. Then, about three miles from the start, the Grand Loop Trail arrives at a T intersection (Signpost #21), where it turns left. It is now joined by the Patriots' Path and a blue-blazed trail, both of which come in from the right. The joint trails cross a wooden bridge over a stream and soon arrive at Signpost #20. Turn sharply right here, following the Grand Loop Trail and the Patriots' Path (the blue-blazed trail continues straight ahead).

The joint Grand Loop Trail/Patriots' Path descends to cross the red-blazed Primrose Brook Trail at Signpost #30. Just beyond, the trail crosses Primrose Brook on a wooden bridge, crosses a feeder brook on another wooden bridge, and again crosses the Primrose Brook Trail at Signpost #31. As the trail continues ahead, Mt. Kemble is visible through the trees on the left. After a gradual ascent, the trail bears left and passes an interpretive sign with the story of the Connecticut Line. Then, just ahead, the Grand Loop Trail/Patriots' Path crosses the wide, unblazed Mendham Road Trail (Signpost #55).

Just before reaching paved Tempe Wick Road, the trail bears left and descends to cross the road (Signpost #56). After descending to cross a stream on a wooden bridge (Signpost #57), the trail climbs to a junction (Signpost #58). Here, the Patriots' Path (following the route of the New Jersey Brigade Trail) continues ahead, but you should turn right, following the white blazes. The Grand Loop Trail heads west and then north, roughly parallel to Tempe Wick Road. At Signpost #59, a dirt road joins from the left, and the Grand Loop Trail descends to end at Tempe Wick Road. To return to the parking area where you began the hike, turn right onto the road marked with a "Do Not Enter" sign and proceed ahead past the Wick Farm to the visitor center.