

Iron Mines Short Loop

Overview

This hike in Harriman State Park leads to interesting remnants of old iron mines and climbs to a viewpoint from open rocks.

Details Time: 2.5 hours Difficulty: Easy to Moderate Length: 3.8 miles
Driving Directions

Take N.J. Route 17 north to the New York State Thruway and take the first exit, Exit 15A (Sloatsburg). Turn left at the bottom of the ramp onto N.Y. Route 17 north, and continue through the Village of Sloatsburg. Just past the village, turn right at the traffic light, following the sign for Seven Lakes Drive/Harriman State Park. Follow Seven Lakes Drive for about 8 miles to the parking area for Lake Skannatati, on the left side of the road. The turnoff to the parking area is 0.7 mile beyond the Kanawauke Circle.

Description

At the northwest corner of the parking area, find the aqua-blazed Long Path, marked at the trailhead with a distinctive circular disk featuring the Long Path logo. Follow the Long Path along the north shore of the lake on a rocky footpath through a mountain laurel thicket. After about ten minutes, the trail bends away from the lake, crosses Pine Swamp Brook, and passes by a huge rock ledge to the right. A little over a mile from the start, you'll climb to a junction with the yellow-blazed Dunning Trail.

Follow the joint Long Path-Dunning Trail for about 100 feet, then bear right where the trails diverge, continuing on the aqua-blazed Long Path. Just before reaching a massive boulder (known as Cape Horn), you'll see remnants of 19th century mining activity below to the left. Directly below the trail is a shaft of the Hogencamp Mine, which was active from 1870 to 1885. Use caution if you wish to explore this interesting area.

The Long Path now begins to climb, passing a split boulder on a hill to the left and entering an area devastated by a forest fire in 2001 (many burned trees are still visible). After a level section through a valley, the trail climbs slightly and passes stone foundations. A tramway from the Hogencamp Mine, used to transport the iron ore to a mine road, passed through this valley, and the stone foundations are probably remnants of structures built for the tramway. You'll also notice some old bricks embedded in the treadway of the trail.

After descending through an area with many young hemlocks, you'll reach a junction with the Arden-Surebridge (A-SB) Trail, marked with inverted-red-triangle-on-white blazes. Turn sharply right and follow the A-SB Trail, which begins a steady descent through a valley on an old mine road, passing through an area with many trees felled by Hurricane Sandy in October 2012. (NOTE: If you pass a large rock on the right with the inscription "Times Square," or if you find yourself following a route blazed with *both* the aqua blazes of the Long Path and the inverted-red-triangle-on-white blazes of the A-SB Trail, you have gone too far. Turn around and follow the inverted-red-triangle-on-white blazes in the opposite direction, taking care to continue following these blazes as you head east.)

In half a mile (2.5 miles from start of the hike), you'll reach the northern end of the yellow-blazed Dunning Trail. Continue ahead on the A-SB Trail, which crosses a stream below an attractive cascade. Just beyond the stream crossing, you'll notice a large rectangular cut in the hillside to the left of the trail. This excavation is part of the Pine Swamp Mine, another mining venture in the area, which was opened about 1830 and was worked intermittently until 1880. As you continue along the trail, several other excavations and open pits (now filled with water) may also be seen.

Just beyond these mine openings, the trail bears right and descends into the woods. Soon, you will pass a stone wall and several stone foundations to the left of the trail. These are remnants of the village that once housed the workers at the nearby mine.

After passing the northern end of the Pine Swamp, the A-SB Trail begins a steady ascent of Pine Swamp Mountain. Just beyond the summit, a viewpoint affords a panorama to the south over Lakes Skannatati and Kanawauke. Continue along the A-SB Trail as it descends steeply to end at the parking area at Lake Skannatati, where the hike began.