

# Laurel Pond and Wawayanda Furnace from Cherry Ridge Road

## Overview

This relatively level loop hike passes through unusually beautiful foliage, including groves of rhododendron and hemlock, and goes by two scenic lakes.

Details Time: 4 hours Difficulty: Easy to Moderate Length: 6.7 miles

Take Warwick Turnpike (County Route 511) to Clinton Road in West Milford. (If coming from the east, Clinton Road is just beyond a causeway over Upper Greenwood Lake, about two miles west of the intersection of Warwick Turnpike with White Road.) Proceed south on Clinton Road for 0.8 mile, then bear right onto Cherry Ridge Road (at a Y-intersection). After 0.7 mile on Cherry Ridge Road, the pavement ends. Continue on the dirt road for another 0.3 mile to a circular turnaround on the left side of the road. (The yellow-blazed Banker Trail, which will be your return route, begins here to the right.) Park your car here (take care not to block the road).

## Description

Proceed west on unpaved Cherry Ridge Road. You will soon pass through beautiful rhododendron thickets, which are a unique feature of this park. The road descends to cross a stream, ascends to pass a swamp to the left, then crosses another stream on a wooden bridge. Although you are walking along a dirt road, the trees form a canopy overhead, and the hiking is very pleasant.

After about a mile of hiking along the road, you will notice a sign on the right marking the start of the Red Dot Trail. Continue ahead on Cherry Ridge Road for another few minutes until you reach a T-intersection (ignore the woods road that leaves to the left about two minutes after the intersection with the Red Dot Trail). At the T-intersection, turn left onto the red-blazed Old Coal Trail, another woods road. In about 0.4 mile, you will arrive at a Y-intersection. Bear right onto the white-blazed Lookout Trail, which follows a slightly narrower woods road down to Lake Lookout. The grassy area at the north end of this secluded lake is a good place to take a break.

Continue ahead on the white-blazed trail, which diverges from the woods road and follows a footpath. The trail climbs steadily, then turns sharply right and descends gently through maples, with an understory of ferns. After turning left, the trail levels off, then descends through a thick hemlock forest to end at Cherry Ridge Road.

Turn right onto Cherry Ridge Road, then - after about two minutes - turn left onto the yellow-blazed Laurel Pond Trail. This trail follows an old woods road (first laid out as a public road in the beginning of the nineteenth century), passing some interesting rock outcrops as it ascends gently. In 0.7 mile, you will reach a high point on the trail, with a limited view to the east over the Wawayanda Plateau. Just beyond, the blue-blazed Wingdam Trail leaves to the left. Continue ahead on the yellow-blazed Laurel Pond Trail, which now begins a steady descent. Near the base of the descent, you will see a yellow blaze on a brown wand on the left side of the trail. Turn left here, and follow an unmarked trail which leads through tunnels of rhododendron and hemlock thickets to a rocky overlook and then down to the shore of scenic, spring-fed Laurel Pond. This is a good place to stop for lunch.

Retrace your steps back to the Laurel Pond Trail and turn left, proceeding north on the yellow-blazed trail. After traversing another beautiful rhododendron stand, the trail crosses a wide wooden bridge and emerges on a grassy area. Continue ahead to the remains of a stone furnace, built in 1845-46 by Oliver Ames and his sons. This charcoal blast furnace, which smelted iron ore from local mines, was used to supply the Union Army during the Civil War.

After taking a good look at the furnace, retrace your steps to a junction, with restrooms to your left. Turn left here, cross another bridge, and pass another signpost marking the start of the yellow-blazed Double Pond Trail. Bear right, proceed through a group campsite, and continue along the yellow-blazed woods road. Soon, you will cross a swamp on a boardwalk and wooden bridge and, immediately beyond, pass the northern terminus of the Red Dot Trail. Continue ahead on the yellow trail, passing through highbush blueberry bushes and more rhododendron.

About half a mile beyond the swamp crossing, you will reach a Y-intersection. Bear right, now following the blue-blazed Cedar Swamp Trail. After passing through a deciduous forest, the trail descends to cross the Cedar Swamp -- with its unusual stand of tall, rare inland Atlantic white cedars growing in a very wet environment -- on an 800-foot long boardwalk, then tunnels through extensive rhododendron thickets. After a mile and one-half of walking through some of the most spectacular foliage in the park, the Cedar Swamp Trail turns sharply left at a T-intersection and soon ends at a junction with the yellow-blazed Banker Trail. Turn right and follow the Banker Trail for 0.4 mile to its terminus on Cherry Ridge Road, directly opposite the parking area where the hike began.