

Loop Hike to Patterson Mine

Length: 4.0 miles **Difficulty:** Moderate **Time:** 3.0 hours

Directions to trailhead

Take I-287 to Exit 57 and continue on Skyline Drive to its western end at Greenwood Lake Turnpike (County Route 511) in Ringwood. Turn right and proceed for about 4.6 miles to the parking area for the Long Pond Ironworks visitor center (the parking area is on the right side of the road, immediately after crossing over the Monksville Reservoir, and is marked by a large sign “Long Pond Ironworks Historic District”). (This is not the parking area for a boat launch, east of the reservoir.)

Hike Description

This hike follows a series of woods roads through an important center of the iron industry in the 1800s. Some of these woods roads are unmarked, and although they can easily be followed, those who are not confident of their route-finding ability might wish to choose another hike. The route of the hike passes through not only Long Pond Ironworks State Park, but also Tranquility Ridge County Park (owned by Passaic County but managed by the New Jersey Section of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission) and the Wanaque Wildlife Management Area.

Begin the hike by stopping at the kiosk adjacent to the parking area, where brochures on the Long Pond Ironworks Historic District and the Hasenclever Iron Trail are available. (The hike will pass Stops 1 to 6 on the Hasenclever Iron Trail.) Proceed west on a footpath that passes in front of an historic home, behind a second home, then in front of three other historic buildings. Past the third building, the footpath joins an old road and curves to the right.

After crossing a stream on a bridge, the blue-on-white-blazed Sterling Ridge Trail and the teal-diamond-blazed Highlands Trail join from the left. Ahead, you'll come to the ruins of the company store and Hewitt Post Office. Here, you should bear right, following the blue-on-white and teal blazes.

A short distance beyond, the trail turns right to cross the Wanaque River on a footbridge, constructed in 2016 to replace a former bridge destroyed by Hurricane Irene in 2011. Before crossing the bridge, continue ahead, where you'll notice an open area, with the remains of the historic Long Pond Ironworks furnaces around its perimeter. Built between 1766 and 1865, these furnaces were used to convert iron ore from nearby mines into bars of iron. Behind the furnaces, the remains of waterwheels which harnessed the Wanaque River to power the furnaces' air-blast machinery are visible within protective coverings.

After spending some time viewing the remains of the ironworks, return to the trail and turn left, crossing the Wanaque River on a wooden footbridge. In addition to the Sterling Ridge and Highlands Trails, you are now following the yellow-blazed Hasenclever Iron Trail, which begins on the west side of the footbridge.

In 300 feet, follow the yellow blazes as the Hasenclever Iron Trail turns right, leaving the Sterling Ridge/Highlands Trail. The Hasenclever Iron Trail follows the route of an old road that was built to connect the Ringwood mines with the Long Pond Ironworks. This road was abandoned many years ago, and today, some sections are barely recognizable, while others are badly eroded. While the marked trail generally follows the road, there are places where it detours slightly to avoid wet or eroded sections.

In about half a mile, the Hasenclever Iron Trail begins a steady descent, with the Monksville Reservoir visible ahead through the trees. Just before reaching the reservoir, the trail turns sharply left and begins to parallel the reservoir. Soon, you'll reach Stop 2 of the trail (these stops are described in the brochure and marked by numbers on the trees), where the ruins of a lime kiln are visible to the left. A short distance beyond is Stop 3, where the trail departs from the original route of the Ringwood-Long Pond road (which is now submerged under the reservoir).

Soon, the trail turns left, leaving the woods road it has been following, and enters the woods on a footpath to skirt a private home. It eventually turns right on another woods road and descends to reach a junction with the dirt Beech Farm Road (this junction is Stop 4 on the Hasenclever Iron Trail).

Turn right onto Beech Farm Road, following the yellow blazes, and cross a stream on a wide bridge. About 500 feet beyond the bridge, the trail turns left, leaving the road, and reaches Stop 5, where a 200-year-old tree to the right marks the site of an old homestead. The trail continues along a woods road, with a detour around an eroded section.

In another third of a mile, you'll reach Stop 6. Here, the yellow-blazed Hasenclever Iron Trail bears right, but you should turn left onto another woods road that intersects just beyond the tree with the number "6." As indicated in the brochure, this unmarked road leads to the Patterson Mine. Follow the road as it heads downhill towards a stream. You will notice occasional red and blue arrows along the route.

The stream crossing can be a little difficult in times of high water, and you might want to go a short distance upstream and cross just below a cascade. Just beyond the stream, you'll reach a T-intersection with another woods road. Here, the red and blue arrows indicate a turn to the right; however, you should turn left on the woods road. In a short distance, you'll reach a fork, where you should bear right. The woods road now climbs along the side of a mountain, first rather steeply, then more gradually.

When you reach the crest of the rise, you'll notice a deep pit to the right of the trail. This is one of the openings of the Patterson Mine, which was opened around 1870 and last worked in 1903. To the left of the trail are two water-filled pits, also part of the mine complex. Adjacent to each opening is a pile of tailings – the waste rock excavated during the mining process.

After spending some time exploring this interesting area (use caution when approaching the open mine pits), return to the woods road and continue ahead, now proceeding downhill on the road. Soon, the joint Sterling Ridge/Highlands Trail (blue-on-white and teal diamond blazes) joins from the right.

Continue along the marked trail, which heads downhill through a hemlock grove, paralleling a stream on the right. At the next junction, marked by a triple yellow blaze, the Jennings Hollow Trail begins to the right, but you should bear left and continue ahead on the joint Sterling Ridge/Highlands Trail. In three-quarters of a mile, you'll reach the footbridge over the Wanaque River. Cross the bridge, then turn left and retrace your steps back to the parking area where the hike beg