

Manor Trail from Ringwood Manor

Overview

This loop hike passes a scenic pond and several features of historical interest.

Details Time: 2 hours Difficulty: Easy to Moderate Length: 3 miles

Driving Directions

Take Skyline Drive to its northwestern end at Greenwood Lake Turnpike (County Route 511). Turn right and proceed north for 1.5 miles to Sloatsburg Road. Turn right onto Sloatsburg Road and continue for 2.4 miles to the entrance to Ringwood Manor, on the left side of the road. Park in the parking area adjacent to the manor house. A parking fee is charged on weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Description

From the parking area, follow the footpath that leads along the rear of the manor house. Near the end of house, turn right and climb the stone steps. At the top of the steps, turn left on a dirt road. You now begin to follow the blue blazes of the Manor Trail, which will be your route for the rest of the hike.

In another 300 feet, you'll reach a Y-intersection where the Manor Trail divides into two routes. Bear right onto a grassy woods road to follow the loop in a counter-clockwise direction. Soon, you'll reach another Y-intersection. The White Trail begins on the right, but you should bear left to continue on the blue-blazed Manor Trail. After passing through an area where the thick understory forms a canopy overhead, the trail bears right, leaving the road (which has been blocked off by branches). It continues on a footpath through a rocky, wet area, crossing several small tributary streams. After crossing a wider stream, you'll notice a flooded 30-foot-wide excavation on the right.

The Manor Trail now traverses undulating terrain, with several minor ups and downs. After leveling off, it crosses the yellow-blazed Hasenclever Iron Trail, then descends to cross another wide stream. It briefly parallels the stream, then bears left, away from the stream, and ascends gradually on a rocky footpath.

At the top of the climb, the trail crosses the route of a gas pipeline (not marked on the ground) and reaches a woods road. The trail turns left here, but you should turn right and follow the woods road a short distance to reach a west-facing viewpoint, with power lines in the valley below. The hills across the valley are part of the section of Sterling Forest purchased by Passaic County in 1990 as a county park and now administered by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission. The valley once was the site of several iron mines, including the Hope and Peters Mines. The Peters Mine was opened around 1740 and produced iron ore for over 200 years. You have now reached the midpoint of the hike.

After taking in the view, retrace your steps to the trail and continue ahead on the road as the blue blazes join from the left. Soon, the trail begins a gradual descent. In half a mile, you will notice long strands of one-inch-thick twisted-strand wrought iron cables imbedded in the trail. These iron cables are remnants of mining activity during the nineteenth century at the nearby Hope and Peters Mines. It is possible that they were intended for use in a gravity conveyor system for the iron ore, constructed in 1858 but apparently never put into successful operation.

The trail now approaches Margaret King Avenue, and the sounds of the traffic can be clearly heard. The trail swings to the left, away from this busy road. Soon, the trail passes an occupied residence on the right and joins a wide gravel road. After passing tennis courts on the right, you'll reach a Y-intersection. The road on the right leads out to the Ringwood Municipal Building, but you should take the left fork and go around a locked gate.

Just ahead, the trail passes a grassy area on the right, with Sally's Pond beyond. A short distance ahead, you'll pass a cemetery on the right. The two large graves nearest the trail are those of Robert Erskine and his assistant. Erskine, a Scottish engineer, was hired to run the local mines in 1771, and he sided with the Colonies during the American Revolution, serving as Surveyor General to the Continental Army. Near the pond are the graves of members of the Hewitt family, owners of the manor house in the late nineteenth century. An iron gate adjacent to the trail marks the graves of the Morris family.

Beyond Sally's Pond, the trail crosses bridges over two streams. These streams, which lead to Sally's Pond, are the same streams that you crossed earlier in the hike. Between the two bridges, the yellow-blazed Hasenclever Mine Trail crosses. At the next fork in the road, marked by two abandoned buildings on the left, the trail curves to the right. Follow the road ahead, past the manor house, to the parking area, where the hike began.