

# Carris Hill/Wyanokie High Point Loop from Otter Hole

## Overview

This loop hike climbs to panoramic viewpoints on Carris Hill and Wyanokie High Point and returns via pleasant footpaths and woods roads.

Details Time: 4 hours Difficulty: Moderate to Strenuous Length: 5.8 miles Views, Waterfall, Cliffs

## Driving Directions

Take I-287 to Exit 53 (Bloomingdale) and turn left onto Hamburg Turnpike. Upon entering Bloomingdale, the name of the road changes to Main Street. In 1.3 miles (from Route 287) you will reach a fork in the road. Bear right, and in another 0.1 mile turn right (uphill) onto Glenwild Avenue (following the sign to West Milford). Continue ahead for 3.2 miles to a parking area on the right side of the road.

## Description

From the eastern end of the parking area, at the sign "Welcome to Bloomingdale," follow the blue-blazed Hewitt-Butler Trail, which heads north and descends to Posts Brook at Otter Hole, an attractive cascade and waterfall. Here the trail crosses the brook on large boulders.

Just beyond the brook, the light-green-blazed Otter Hole Trail leaves to the left, and the Hewitt-Butler Trail is joined by the Highlands Trail, with teal diamond blazes. Continue ahead, following the blue and teal diamond blazes along a rocky woods road. When you reach the next Y-intersection, take the right fork, following the sign for "Chik Falls." The trail continues to ascend for a short distance, and then begins a steady descent. In about half a mile, the trail turns left, leaving the woods road, and continues to descend. At one point, the yellow-blazed Wyanokie Crest Trail joins briefly, but continue ahead on the blue-blazed trail (also blazed with teal diamonds).

After leveling off and passing through a wet area, the trail approaches Posts Brook, crosses a tributary stream, and reaches a junction with the white-blazed Posts Brook Trail. The Hewitt-Butler Trail and Highlands Trails leave to the left, but you should continue ahead on the white trail, which closely parallels the brook. Soon, the trail reaches the top of Chikahoki Falls and descends to the brook, with a good view of the falls. The trail closely parallels the brook for a short distance, then bears left and heads uphill, away from the brook. After a while, it again descends to the brook and passes through an area with a thick understory of ferns.

A short distance beyond, you'll come to a junction with the Lower Trail, blazed with a black "L" on white. Turn left and follow the Lower Trail a short distance to a junction with the yellow-blazed Carris Hill Trail. Turn left again, now following the yellow blazes.

After traversing a level, rocky area, the Carris Hill Trail crosses a stream and begins a rather steep climb. The grade soon moderates, but after a third of a mile, it again climbs steeply over rocks, coming out at a viewpoint to the southeast from a rock outcrop. The trail continues to climb to another rock outcrop, with a broader view. Here, it bears right and ascends to the left of a 40-foot-high massive rock face.

At the top of the ascent, a short detour to the right leads to a magnificent viewpoint to the east. The Wanaque Reservoir, contained by the Raymond, Wolf Den and Green Swamp dams, is in the foreground, with the Ramapo Mountains beyond, and a long viaduct of I-287 visible to the right. On a

clear day, the New York City skyline may be seen on the horizon. This is a good place to pause and enjoy the spectacular view.

The yellow trail now climbs more gradually, soon reaching another viewpoint (partially blocked by trees), with a ten-foot-high balanced glacial erratic silhouetted against the sky. The trail curves to the right and reaches a fifth viewpoint, this one to the south, with pitch pines and a large glacial erratic. It proceeds through laurel and blueberry bushes to end, on a rock outcrop with views to the north and west, at a junction with the blue-blazed Hewitt-Butler Trail and the teal-diamond-blazed Highlands Trail.

Continue ahead, now following blue and teal diamond blazes. The trail descends steeply through mountain laurel thickets, then more gradually, heading north along the ridge. In about half a mile, you'll reach a rock outcrop with a view ahead of Wyanokie High Point - a rocky dome with pitch pines. This location is known as "Yoo-Hoo Point."

The joint Hewitt-Butler/Highlands Trail now descends to a junction, where the red-on-white-blazed Wyanokie Circular Trail joins. Continue ahead, now following the route of three trails, and soon begin a rather steep climb.

At the next junction, turn right, following the sign to "Hi-Point," and climb steeply, following the red-on-white blazes of the Wyanokie Circular Trail and the teal diamond blazes of the Highlands Trail. In a short distance, you'll reach the summit of Wyanokie High Point, which features a panoramic 360° view amid pitch pines. To the north and west, you can see Saddle, Assiniwikam and Buck Mountains, and the New York City skyline is visible to the east on a clear day.

After spending some time savoring the view, retrace your steps, following the red-and-white and teal diamond blazes as they descend very steeply over bare rock. Extreme care is required here if the rocks are wet. When you reach the junction with the Hewitt-Butler Trail, turn right and follow the blue blazes. After a short, gradual climb, the trail reaches a balanced boulder on a rock ledge. It then descends briefly through laurel thickets to a junction with the white-blazed Macopin Trail.

Turn left and follow the Macopin Trail, which descends through laurel and blueberry bushes. In half a mile, it crosses a stream and ends at a junction with the light-green-blazed Otter Hole Trail. Turn left onto the Otter Hole Trail, which climbs on a woods road. Near the top of the climb, the red-on-white-blazed Wyanokie Circular Trail crosses. Turn left onto the Wyanokie Circular Trail, which ascends on a footpath through dense mountain laurel thickets. At the crest of the rise, a large boulder marks a trail junction. Here, the red-on-white blazes turn left, but you should bear right, now following the orange blazes of the Outlaw Trail, which begins here.

The Outlaw Trail heads across the level ridge and ends in a quarter of a mile at a junction with the yellow-blazed Wyanokie Crest Trail. Turn right and follow this trail, which descends through a second-growth forest of deciduous trees.

In a third of a mile, the trail emerges at a viewpoint that overlooks Buck Mountain to the west. After passing a second viewpoint, the trail continues to descend through dense laurel thickets. It crosses a stream on rocks and reaches a junction with the light-green-blazed Otter Hole Trail.

Turn left onto the Otter Hole Trail (also the route of the teal-diamond-blazed Highlands Trail), which follows a pleasant woods road. After a steady descent, you'll reach a T-intersection with the blue-blazed Hewitt-Butler Trail. Turn right here, now retracing your steps, and follow the Hewitt-Butler Trail across Posts Brook at the Otter Hole and back to the parking area where the hike began.