

Old Croton Aqueduct from Ossining to Quaker Bridge

Overview

This hike follows the route of the historic Old Croton Aqueduct from Ossining to Quaker Bridge, continues through parkland in the Village of Croton, and returns via Metro-North train.

Details Time: 4 hours Difficulty: Easy to Moderate Length: 5.5 miles

Driving Directions

(From west of the Hudson): Take the New York State Thruway and get off at Exit 9 (Tarrytown). At the top of the ramp, turn right onto South Broadway (US 9) and proceed north for about seven miles to the Village of Ossining. Turn left at Broadway, proceed past the the Ossining Community Center, continue under the aqueduct bridge, and turn right onto Ann Street. Follow Ann Street until you see a large stone building to the right, which marks the aqueduct crossing. Parking is available along the street.

Description

Begin the hike by descending the steps to the left of the stone building, known as the Double Arch Weir. This structure, built in 1892, permitted the water in the aqueduct to be drained into the river below for maintenance purposes. Continue across the Double Arch Bridge over the Sing Sing Kill - so named because the Broadway bridge passes through the arch of the aqueduct bridge. Constructed in 1839, the Double Arch Bridge was regarded at the time as an engineering landmark. On the south side of the bridge, stairs lead down to the Ossining Heritage Area Visitor Center (in the Ossining Community Center building), which contains interesting and informative exhibits on the construction of the Old Croton Aqueduct. The exhibits are open daily except Sunday.

After viewing the exhibits, climb back up to the aqueduct, recross the Double Arch Bridge, climb the steps to the right of the weir, and cross Ann Street. The aqueduct route climbs some more steps and continues ahead on a macadam path. After crossing the next street, it continues along a wide grassy strip, soon passing ruins of a brick root cellar to the left. The trail crosses Snowden Avenue -- marked by a fire house - diagonally to the right. It continues along a grassy embankment and passes a stone structure (whose origin and function is unknown).

After crossing Beach Road, the aqueduct route passes through the property of the Englehard Corporation on a wide grassy expanse. A modern office building is to the right, and the historic Kane Mansion (built in 1843) is to the left. The small white marble marker in the middle of the lawn was placed to mark the actual location of the aqueduct tube.

The aqueduct goes across an embankment and crosses North Highland Avenue diagonally to the left (a sign indicates the continuation of the route). After crossing another embankment, it follows a wide path between residential back yards and then climbs up a slope to cross Piping Rock Drive. It now descends very steeply to reach a chimney-like stone tower. These towers, known as ventilators, were constructed along the aqueduct route about every mile. Their purpose was to keep the water fresh and equalize the pressure along the route.

Soon, you'll pass a garage (used as a maintenance building for the aqueduct) to the right and reach Ogden Road. The aqueduct route continues ahead, but a green "OCA" signpost indicates that you should turn left, as the route ahead dead-ends at Route 9A. Turn left and follow Ogden Road down to Old Albany Post Road, then turn right and follow Old Albany Post Road under Route 9A. Just before the overpass, you'll pass on the left Parker Bale American Legion Post 1590, formerly a one-room schoolhouse.

On the north side of the overpass, turn right onto Shady Farm Lane Road. Follow the paved road for only 50 feet. When you see a black-clad chain-link fence on the left, turn left and follow along the left side of the fence, which skirts a training center of the General Electric Corporation. Continue following the fence as it makes several turns, climbs a rise, and then descends. At the base of the descent, you'll pass a locked gate to the right. Continue ahead for a short distance, then turn left where indicated by a green "OCA" post. You're now back on the aqueduct route. A short distance ahead, you'll cross Quaker Bridge Road and pass another stone ventilator.

The next section of the route is one of the most beautiful sections of the entire 26-mile Old Croton Trailway State Park. The wide path -- uninterrupted by road crossings for about a mile -- follows a route carved into the hillside, with the Croton River visible through the trees far below to the left.

In about three-quarters of a mile, you'll pass a sign marking the Croton Gorge Unique Area, managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Just beyond, you'll hear the roar of the stream below as it passes through the rocky gorge.

Soon you'll reach a second intersection with Quaker Bridge Road. Turn left, leaving the aqueduct route, and follow Quaker Bridge Road downhill to the Quaker Bridge, built in 1894. Turn left and cross this picturesque bridge over the Croton River. About 50 feet beyond the west end of the bridge, you'll see an unmarked but clearly defined footpath that leads sharply left. Follow this footpath as it climbs the hill, heading south, parallel to the river.

In a few minutes, you'll reach a wide gravel road at the top of the hill. This is the Croton River Gorge Trail, maintained by the Village of Croton. Turn left and follow this road, which runs along the Croton River Gorge. In about ten minutes, you'll pass a dam to the left and reach Silver Lake Park, with a swimming area along the river. Signs indicate that the park is for residents only, but the intent is only to limit use of the swimming and parking areas provided for village residents. The village welcomes hikers who pass through this park as part of a longer walk.

After walking through the parking area, continue along Truesdale Drive, a pleasant residential street. Follow Truesdale Drive for about a mile to its end at a traffic circle, then bear left and continue along Benedict Boulevard for several blocks. Turn left onto South Riverside Avenue for one block, then turn right at the Exxon station, following signs to the Croton-Harmon railroad station. Continue past the Route 9 overpass and make the second left, which leads to the station, where southbound trains to Ossining leave every half hour (for schedules, call 1-800-METRO-INFO). When you arrive at Ossining, follow Secor Road uphill to Main Street, then continue ahead on Main Street until you reach the aqueduct route (marked by a sign to the left). Turn left onto the aqueduct route and follow it across the Double Arch Bridge to Ann Street.