

Pyramid Mountain Loop #1 (Tripod Rock, Bear Rock, New York City Skyline viewpoint)

Overview

This loop hike passes two unusual glacial erratics - Tripod Rock and Bear Rock - and climbs to several panoramic viewpoints.

Details Time: 3 hours Difficulty: Moderate Length: 5 miles

Driving Directions

Take Interstate Route 287 to Exit 44 (Main Street, Boonton). Proceed west along Main Street and turn right onto County Route 511 (Boonton Avenue). Continue on Route 511 for 3.3 miles to the parking area for the Pyramid Mountain Visitors Center, on the left side of the road (the Visitors Center is opposite Mars Park, about 0.8 mile north of the intersection of Route 511 and Taylortown Road).

Description

From the southern end of the parking area, follow the access trail, which starts just north of a large bulletin board and immediately passes a memorial plaque for Stephen Klein, Jr. In 400 feet, you'll reach a junction with the blue-blazed Mennen Trail (part of the Butler-Montville Trail). Continue ahead on the blue-blazed trail, which soon crosses the Stony Brook on a wooden footbridge. In another 125 feet, the Yellow Trail begins on the right. Turn right and follow the Yellow Trail, which crosses under power lines and heads north along a nearly constant contour, with huge boulders above on the left and a camp recreation area (with a grassy ballfield, a picnic area and a small pond) below on the right.

In a quarter of a mile, the Orange Trail leaves to the right. Continue along the Yellow Trail, which soon bears left and begins to climb rather steeply. At the top of the climb, there is a viewpoint over Turkey Mountain to the east. The trail now heads back into the woods, bears right and descends slightly.

Almost a mile from the start, you will again reach the blue-blazed Mennon Trail. Turn right here and follow the joint blue and yellow trails through deep stands of mountain laurel. After a short distance, the Yellow Trail leaves to the left. Keep to the right here, and continue along the blue-blazed trail. In 250 feet, a blue-and-white side trail goes off to the left. Follow this short trail, which leads in a short distance to Lucy's Overlook, a west-facing viewpoint from open rocks, named for Lucy Meyer, the leader of the fight to save this mountain.

After enjoying the view, return to the blue trail and turn left. In less than a quarter of a mile, you will arrive at a junction with the white-blazed Kinnelon-Boonton Trail. Continue straight ahead (north) here, leaving the blue trail, and now following white markers. In about 500 feet, you will come to Tripod Rock - a huge boulder, perched on three smaller stones. Geologists explain that this boulder was deposited here by glacial action, although some believe that it may be a Native American calendar site. This unusual feature helped galvanize public support to preserve the mountain when it was threatened by development. This is a good place to take a break. When you're ready to continue, follow the white trail north for 0.4 mile to a junction with the Red-on-White Trail.

Turn left onto this trail, which goes through interesting, remote and rugged mountain scenery. In about a third of a mile, you will see a house directly ahead. Here the trail turns sharply left and climbs to the top of Eagle Cliff. After passing a huge balanced rock to the left - a glacial erratic known as Whale Head Rock - the trail bears left and begins a steep, rocky descent through mountain laurel thickets.

At the base of the descent, the trail turns right and heads north for about 0.2 mile. It then bears left, crosses a branch of Bear House Brook and reaches a junction with the blue-blazed Mennon Trail. Turn left onto the blue trail, following the sign for "Visitors Center," and cross Bear House Brook on a wooden bridge. The blue trail continues south, paralleling Bear House Brook, which runs through the valley below to the left and eventually widens to form Bear Swamp.

In another half mile you'll reach the huge Bear Rock. This massive glacial erratic, which can be said to resemble a giant bear, has been a local landmark for centuries. It was probably used as a shelter by Native Americans, and today it marks the boundary between Kinnelon Borough and Montville Township.

From Bear Rock, turn left and follow the yellow, blue and white trails across Bear House Brook on a wooden footbridge. A short distance beyond, at a fork, the blue and white trails bear left, but you should bear right, following the Yellow Trail. At first, the trail is level, but it soon bears left and climbs rather steeply up to the ridge, where it meets the blue-blazed Mennen Trail.

Turn right at this T-intersection, briefly retracing your steps along the joint yellow/blue trail. A short distance beyond, the Yellow Trail leaves to the left, but you should continue ahead on the blue trail, which gradually climbs to the highest elevation on the Pyramid Mountain ridge (934 feet). Here, a sign indicates that the trail turns right, but first bear left and head to an east-facing overlook from open rocks, with the New York City skyline visible on the horizon.

After taking in the view, return to the blue trail and follow it as it gradually descends the southwest face of the mountain on switchbacks. At the base of the descent, a large cairn marks the start of the Red Trail on the right, but you should continue ahead on the blue trail, which bears left, climbs a little, then continues to descend gradually, passing another large cairn that marks the start of the white-blazed Kinnelon-Boonton Trail. Continue to follow the blue trail, which soon crosses under the power lines. At the next intersection, where the Yellow Trail begins to the left, bear right, continuing along the blue trail, which crosses a footbridge over Stony Brook and proceeds ahead to the access trail that leads to the parking area where the hike began.