

Pyramid Mountain Loop #2 (Tripod Rock, Bear Rock, Taylortown Reservoir)

Overview

This loop hike runs along a scenic reservoir, goes by two unusual glacial erratics – Tripod Rock and Bear Rock – and reaches two panoramic viewpoints.

Details Time: 3 hours Difficulty: Easy to Moderate Length: 4.1 miles

Driving Directions

Take Interstate Route 287 to Exit 44 (Main Street, Boonton) and bear right onto Lathrop Avenue. Turn right at the stop sign onto Main Street (County Route 511), proceed along Main Street for 0.3 mile, then turn right onto Boonton Avenue. Continue on Boonton Avenue, still designated County 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.

After a quarter of a mile, you'll notice a large cairn and a triple-orange blaze to the right. This marks the start of the Orange Trail. Turn right and follow the Orange Trail, which continues on a relatively level path for another quarter of a mile, then bears right and descends to the shore of Taylortown Reservoir. It continues along the shore of this scenic reservoir, soon reaching a rock ledge overlooking the reservoir. You'll want to stop here to enjoy the view. After briefly detouring inland and passing cliffs to the left, the trail returns to the shore of the reservoir. At a rock ledge overlooking an island in the reservoir, the trail turns left and begins to climb Pyramid Mountain. Soon, you'll notice a huge tree, with four trunks, just to the left of the trail. Here, the climb steepens for a short distance, but the grade soon moderates.

At the top of the climb, the Orange Trail reaches a viewpoint to the east from a rock ledge, marked by a lone cedar tree. The trail now bears left and, 100 feet beyond, ends at a junction (marked by a cairn) with the white-blazed Kinnelon-Boonton Trail. Turn left onto the white trail, which runs along the ridge of Pyramid Mountain, passing through dense stands of mountain laurel. Soon, the Red-on-White Trail begins to the right, but you should continue ahead on the white trail.

In about half a mile, you'll reach 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.

Continue ahead on the white trail. In about 500 feet, you'll reach a junction. Here, the white trail turns right, but you should continue straight ahead, now following the blue-blazed Mennen Trail. In a quarter of a mile, you'll notice three blue-and-white blazes to the right, which mark the start of a short side trail. Turn right and follow this rocky trail for about 300 feet to Lucy's Overlook, named for Lucy Meyer, who spearheaded efforts to preserve Pyramid Mountain. You'll want to stop here for a short while to enjoy the panoramic west-facing view.

After taking in the view, return to the blue trail and turn right. In a short distance, you'll come to a Y-intersection. Turn right, leaving the blue-blazed trail, and follow the Yellow Trail, which soon begins a steady descent. After a short level stretch, the Yellow Trail reaches a junction with the joint blue and white trails. Turn left, now following yellow, blue and white blazes, and cross Bear House Brook on a wooden bridge.

Directly ahead is 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. Here, the trails split. You should turn left and follow the white-blazed Kinnelon-Boonton Trail and the Yellow Trail, which follow an old woods road, bordered with a rock wall on the right. Soon, the Yellow Trail departs to the right, but you should continue ahead on the white-blazed trail.

In about a quarter of a mile, three red blazes on the left mark the start of the Red Trail. Turn left onto the Red Trail and recross Bear House Brook on a wooden bridge. Continue along the Red Trail for about half a mile until - after a short climb - it ends at a large cairn that marks the junction with the blue-blazed Mennen Trail.

Turn right onto the blue-blazed 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.