

Ramapo Lake Loop

Overview

This hike loops around scenic Ramapo Lake.

Details Time: 2.5 hours Difficulty: Easy Length: 4Plus miles

Driving Directions

Take Interstate Route 287 to Exit 57 (Skyline Drive/Ringwood) and proceed north on Skyline Drive (following the signs to "Ringwood"). Just ahead on the left is the Ramapo Mountain State Forest parking area (top of Skyline Drive parking area on left).

Description

From the southern end of the parking area, follow the blue blazes of the MacEvoy Trail, which passes stone ruins, turns right onto a woods road and climbs a steep pitch. The trail continues to climb on a wide, rocky path, paralleling a cascading brook (particularly attractive after heavy rains). About half a mile from the start, the white-blazed Todd Trail begins to the right, but you should continue ahead on the blue-blazed trail, which crosses a tributary stream.

Near the crest of the rise, the yellow-blazed Hoeflerin Trail joins from the right. Continue ahead, now following both blue and yellow blazes. After a short descent, the trail reaches a paved estate road. Turn left and follow the road downhill to the dam. Here, the blue blazes turn right, but you should continue ahead across the dam of Ramapo Lake, following the yellow blazes.

On the other side of the dam, the red-blazed Lookout Trail begins on the left, and in about 500 feet, the yellow-blazed Hoeflerin Trail leaves to the left. Continue ahead along the wide gravel road, now unmarked, which runs close to the lakeshore, with views across the lake. To the north, atop a hill with several pines, you can see the ruins of Foxcroft, a mansion built in 1910 which fell into disrepair in the 1950s.

The road proceeds through dense laurel thickets, crosses a causeway over an arm of the lake, and passes a swamp to the left and several interesting rock outcrops. It then moves away from the lakeshore but continues to parallel it, with views over the lake through the trees.

Just past the southern end of the lake, about a mile from the dam, the road reaches a T intersection, where you should turn right. Then, in another 300 feet, bear right at a Y intersection. Here, the Cannonball Trail, marked by white-"C"-on-red blazes, joins from the left. You're now heading north through dense laurel thickets, paralleling the western shore of Ramapo Lake. At first, the road runs some distance from the water, but after a while, the lake can be seen through the trees. In half a mile, you'll pass a building on the hillside to the left (formerly used as a ranger station) and, a short distance beyond, a rock ledge to the right of the trail offers a pleasant view of the lake.

Soon, another gravel road joins from the left. Follow the road ahead, crossing a stone causeway that isolates a quiet pond on the left from the main body of the lake. Next, you'll reach another Y intersection. Here, the Cannonball Trail turns left onto an intersecting gravel road, but you should bear right and continue along a winding section of the lakeshore road, now once again unmarked. A short distance ahead, bear left as another road leads right. After passing a small, abandoned stone building to the right, you'll come to another intersection. Here, you should bear right, joining the blue-blazed MacEvoy Trail.

Follow the blue-blazed gravel road that runs close to the shore along the northern end of the lake, passing a private residence on a ledge to the left. When you return to the northern end of the dam, bear left, uphill, on the road, then follow the blue blazes as they turn right, reentering the woods. Continue along the blue-blazed trail, retracing your steps back to the parking area where the hike began.