

New York City Skyline from Rifle Camp Park

Overview

This loop hike encircles Rifle Camp Park, passing panoramic viewpoints over Paterson, Bergen County and the New York City skyline.

Details Time: 2 hours Difficulty: Easy to Moderate Length: 3 miles

Description

This hike follows the yellow-blazed Rifle Camp Trail in a counter-clockwise direction. From the circle, proceed uphill on a paved path, following both yellow and red blazes, and pass the park's Nature Center on the right. Just beyond, the trail bears left and reaches an expansive overlook to the east and south, with Paterson and Bergen County visible directly below, and the New York City skyline in the distance. In another 400 feet, follow the yellow blazes as they bear right at a fitness station, leaving the paved path, and continue parallel to the fence that runs along the cliff line. After bearing left, away from the cliff line, the trail crosses a seasonal stream and bears right onto a woods road.

Soon, the yellow trail begins to run along a black metal fence. In about 500 feet, it bears left, away from the fence, and heads through the woods. The yellow trail turns right onto a gravel road, crosses a stone culvert over a stream, and joins another gravel road that comes in from the left. It curves left at a fitness station, with a large apartment building visible beyond a black metal fence on the right. A short distance beyond, the yellow trail turns right, leaving the gravel road, and continues on a footpath.

Almost a mile from the start, the yellow trail crosses the paved park entrance road and reenters the woods on a footpath. After passing a grassy amphitheater and a small building on the left, the yellow trail descends on a gravel road to a valley, where it begins to parallel a 500-foot-long concrete toboggan slide. At the top of the slide, the trail curves left, then immediately bears right, away from an eroded gravel road. After making several turns, the trail descends and turns right onto a paved path, rejoining the red-blazed trail. It curves right at the base of the descent and soon continues on a gravel path. With the Great Notch Reservoir visible ahead, the trail bends left and crosses a stone culvert over a stream. It bears left at a fitness station, then bears right at a fork (leaving the red-blazed trail) and continues on a dirt path. Just ahead, the trail follows a woods road along a berm, with a ditch on the left. Soon, the trail passes between interesting basalt rock formations, bears right, and passes above a steep cliff.

The trail now descends, passing below a massive rock formation on the right, and follows another berm. Soon, it begins to parallel a high chain-link fence on the right, with the Great Notch Reservoir visible beyond. At the end of the reservoir, the trail bears right, passing a spillway, then descends a little and parallels the reservoir's cascading outlet stream. The trail now climbs a little and curves left, then bears right and continues on a footpath through the woods.

Soon, the yellow trail comes out at a black metal fence, with a cliff ahead on the left and a housing development (built on the site of a former quarry) below. The trail continues to follow along the fence line, eventually passing more views of the New York City skyline. Finally, the trail turns left, away from the fence, and descends to a T-intersection with a gravel road. Turn right onto the road, which curves around a pond and becomes a wide paved path. About 200 feet beyond the end of the pond, the yellow trail turns right, leaving the paved path, and climbs to reach a low chain-link fence, with an unobstructed panoramic view of the New York City skyline. The yellow trail continues along the fence, then descends on a gravel path to come out at the paved circle where the hike began.