

Turkey Mountain Loop via Butler-Montville/Red/Yellow/Valhalla Trails

Overview

This loop hike follows woods roads and footpaths up Turkey Mountain, passing remains of old quarries.

Details Time: 3.5 hours Difficulty: Moderate Length: 5.2 miles

Driving Directions

Take Interstate Route 287 South to Exit 47 (Montville/Lincoln Park) and turn left at the bottom of the ramp onto Main Road (Route 202). In 0.6 mile, just before reaching a fire station, turn right onto Taylortown Road and continue for 1.8 miles to Boonton Avenue (County 511). Turn right and continue for 0.7 mile to the entrance to the Pyramid Mountain County Park Natural Historic Area, on the left, opposite Mars Park.

Description

NOTE: Some of the trails followed by this hike are temporarily closed due to the construction by PSE&G of an upgraded power line in the area. It is expected that the closures will remain in effect until the fall of 2013. For more information, please call the Park Visitors Center, (973) 334-3130.

Walk back to the entrance to the parking area and cross Boonton Avenue opposite Mars Court. At a sign for "Turkey Mt. 100 Steps Trail," the blue-blazed Butler-Montville Trail begins. Follow this trail, which parallels the road at first, then turns right and continues beneath overhead power lines. It soon begins to ascend, first moderately and then more steeply over a series of rock steps, known as the "100 Steps," with a west-facing view near the top of the climb.

Continue to follow the blue-blazed trail along the ridge for about 300 feet, then turn left onto the Red Trail, which descends a little and then climbs gradually, paralleling and crossing several old stone walls. A stone wall just to the right of the trail marks the summit of Turkey Mountain (892 feet). Continue ahead on the Red Trail to a large rock outcrop (which offers a limited east-facing view). Here, the Red Trail turns right and begins to descend, but you should turn left onto the Yellow Trail.

Follow the Yellow Trail as it descends on an old woods road. At a T-intersection near the base of the descent, the Green Trail begins to the right, but you should continue on the Yellow Trail, which turns left onto another woods road, soon crossing a stream on a plank bridge. After skirting a wetland to the right, the trail reaches a paved road. It turns right and crosses North Valhalla Brook on the highway bridge, then turns right again and reenters the woods. The trail now heads south, with North Valhalla Brook below on the right and Stony Brook Road above on the left.

After crossing a tributary stream on rocks, the Yellow Trail moves away from the paved road and heads southwest on a woods road, with Turkey Mountain visible through the trees on the right. Soon, it crosses North Valhalla Brook on a footbridge, then bears left. It goes by a large quarry pit on the left and crosses under power lines.

Passing Botts Pond below on the left, the Yellow Trail descends to cross a small stream and reach a woods road, known as the Horse-Shoe Trail. The Yellow Trail turns right and follows this road, which first climbs a little, then descends, with a long ravine (a remnant of quarry operations in the late nineteenth century) to the left. At the base of the descent, the trail crosses a footbridge over a stream and reaches a junction where a signpost shows a recent relocation.

Bear right, leaving the woods road, and follow the Yellow Trail as it climbs along the hillside. Soon, the white-blazed Valhalla Overlook Trail begins to the left. Turn left onto the white trail, which follows a rather steep and winding route to the top of a peak which overlooks Lake Valhalla below. Through the trees, you can see quite a distance to the east.

The trail now descends rather steeply. After passing a huge glacial erratic, the trail turns left and continues along the hillside. Continue on the white trail when a blue-blazed trail leaves to the right. The white trail now climbs a little, then descends and turns right to parallel a wetland.

Soon, the white-blazed Valhalla Overlook Trail ends at a junction with the Yellow Trail. Turn left and follow the Yellow Trail to Boonton Avenue, then cross the road to the Visitors Center and the parking area where the hike began.