

## Vista Trail - Hike Description:

The hike begins at a kiosk in the southwest corner of the parking area. Just ahead, you'll notice a triple-yellow blaze on a tree, which marks the start of the Vista Loop Trail. Follow the yellow blazes as they descend wooden steps, join a wide dirt road, and continue ahead to cross the Ramapo River on a steel truss bridge. In another 250 feet, the green-dot-on-orange-blazed River Trail begins on the left, but you should continue ahead on the wide dirt road, following the southern shore of Scarlet Oak Pond (formerly the site of a gravel quarry).

At the end of the pond, you'll notice two sets of double yellow blazes on a tree, which mark the start of the loop. Continue ahead on the wide dirt road to follow the Vista Loop Trail in the counter-clockwise direction. In 200 feet, a triple-blue blaze marks the start of the Ridge Trail, but you should turn right, continuing to follow the Vista Loop Trail. The trail heads north along a dirt road for 500 feet, paralleling the western shore of the pond, then turns left and crosses a wooden footbridge (ahead, the dirt road is the route of the silver-on-white-blazed Pond Loop Trail, which loops around the northern end of the pond).

The Vista Loop Trail now begins to climb on a moderately steep grade. After a short level stretch, followed by a brief climb over a rock outcrop, it arrives at Hawk Rock. This east-facing ledge offers an expansive view over much of Bergen County, with Ramapo College in the foreground on the left. Lake Henry is directly ahead, with Scarlet Oak Pond to the south (right).

The Vista Loop Trail now bends to the left and continues to ascend. After a steep, rocky climb, the trail levels off and soon emerges on an open rock ledge with a panoramic east-facing view. The view from this Cactus Ledge is even broader than that from Hawk Rock, with the New York City skyline visible on the horizon on a clear day. You'll also notice several clumps of prickly pear cactus – the only native American cactus that grows east of the Rocky Mountains. You've climbed about 400 vertical feet to reach this spectacular viewpoint, so you'll want to take a break here.

When you're ready to continue, follow the yellow blazes as they turn right and reenter the woods at the southern end of the viewpoint. Soon, the Vista Loop Trail joins a wider footpath. A short distance ahead, you'll reach a junction. Here, a triple-green-on-white blaze marks the start of the Halifax Trail. Bear right and continue ahead on the Halifax Trail, which begins a gradual descent. It crosses the wide route of a gas pipeline diagonally to the right, reenters the woods, and continues to descend, crossing an eroded woods road along the way. At the base of the descent, the Halifax Trail turns left onto a woods road which traverses Havemeyer Hollow. You're now about two miles from the start of the hike. Continue to follow the Halifax Trail along this relatively level road that goes up the valley, with Havemeyer Brook to the right.

In a quarter of a mile, you'll reach a junction with the purple-blazed Havemeyer Trail. This is the continuation of the hike route, but proceed ahead on the Halifax Trail, crossing Havemeyer Brook on rocks. A short distance ahead, you'll notice terraced stone walls on the hillside to the right, indicating that the land was formerly devoted to agricultural use. Ruins of

several old stone buildings may also be seen along the road (Map #115 designates this site as the "Halifax Ruins").

After examining these interesting ruins, retrace your steps along the Halifax Trail, recross the brook, and turn right onto the purple-blazed Havemeyer Trail, which begins a steady climb. In about 250 feet, you'll notice a mine pit to the left of the trail, with a pile of tailings to its left. Another pit may be seen a little higher on the hillside and further into the woods, and a third pit is 250 feet ahead on the trail, just to the right. Their relatively small size indicates that these were merely test pits.

After crossing a small stream, the grade steepens. In about half a mile, after passing under a fallen tree, the Havemeyer Trail turns right onto a woods road. As the road climbs gently, you'll notice a large stone wall on the left. At the top of the hill, the White Trail comes in from the right, with the stone ruins of a cellar hole visible to the left just beyond the junction. The purple and white blazes run jointly for about 500 feet on a relatively level route, passing more stone walls on the right.

When the purple blazes depart to the right, continue straight ahead on the White Trail, which soon begins to climb very gently. After crossing a wide cleared strip (the route of the same gas pipeline that you crossed earlier in the hike), the trail reaches the crest of Monroe Ridge and begins to descend.

Soon, the White Trail ends at a junction with the yellow-blazed Vista Loop Trail, which comes in from the left. Continue ahead on the road, now following yellow blazes. Then, in 500 feet, the blue-blazed Ridge Loop Trail joins from the right. You now follow both blue and yellow blazes downhill.

In another 500 feet, the trails diverge. Turn right and follow the yellow-blazed trail for about 200 feet. When the yellow blazes turn sharply right, continue ahead on a wide unmarked path for another 200 feet to a panoramic viewpoint to the south and east. Campgaw Mountain may be seen in the foreground to the right, and the Manhattan skyline is visible in the distance on clear days.

Retrace your steps to the junction of the blue and yellow trails, and turn right onto the blue-blazed Ridge Loop Trail. Almost immediately, the woods road bears left, but you should proceed ahead, continuing to follow the blue blazes. The Ridge Loop Trail now descends on a wide, rocky path. Nearly the base of the descent, it briefly joins a woods road, then turns right and goes down wooden steps.

A short distance beyond, the Ridge Loop Trail reaches a wide woods road, with the blue blazes going in both directions. Turn right and follow the Ridge Loop Trail uphill for about 650 feet until, just after a bridge over a stream, you reach a junction with the yellow-blazed Vista Loop Trail. Here, you should leave the woods road and turn left onto the Vista Loop Trail, which heads into the woods on a footpath. Continue along this rocky trail parallel to the stream, with its attractive cascades and pools. As the trail moves away from the stream and begins to descend more steeply, it passes a waterfall (the waterfall is not visible from the trail).

After passing a large pile of rubble (the remains of a stone cabin, once used by a youth camp, that was demolished in 2015), the Vista Loop Trail turns left and crosses the stream on a wooden footbridge. Just ahead, turn right onto the green-dot-on-orange-blazed River Trail, which crosses an intermittent stream on rocks and turns left to head north along the shore of the Ramapo River. Since the footpath is in the floodplain of the river, it may be muddy or even flooded in places when the water is high.

After bearing left, away from the river, the River Trail proceeds through an area with tangled vines on each side of the trail. It passes a grassy area and reaches the main park road. Turn right onto the road, the route of the yellow-blazed Vista Loop Trail, cross the Ramapo River on a steel truss bridge, and continue uphill to the parking area where the hike began.

To view a photo collection for this hike, click [here](#).

**Publication: Submitted by Daniel Chazin on 02/09/2007 updated/verified on 08/28/2016**