

Walkway over the Hudson and Franny Reese State Park from Highland (West Shore)

Overview

This hike loops through Franny Reese State Park and crosses the Hudson River on the Walkway over the Hudson bridges and Mid-Hudson Bridges.

Driving Directions

Take the New York State Thruway to Exit 18 (New Paltz). After paying the toll, turn right onto N.Y. Route 299. Follow Route 299 for 5.8 miles to its end at Route 9W. Turn right onto Route 9W and continue for 3.3 miles to Macks Lane. Turn left onto Macks Lane and proceed for 0.3 mile to the entrance to Franny Reese State Park, on the left.

Description

This hike combines a walk over the recently rehabilitated Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge - now known as Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park - and the Mid-Hudson Bridge with a pleasant hike through the woods in nearby Franny Reese State Park. From the kiosk at the park entrance, proceed ahead on the Yellow Trail. In about half a mile, just beyond a power line, the Yellow Trail turns sharply left and descends, but you should continue ahead on the White Trail, which begins here and forms a 1.75-mile loop.

The White Trail follows a woods road uphill, parallel to a stone wall. Stone walls are evidence of prior agricultural use of the area, and you will observe many such walls along the White Trail as you proceed through the park. The trail soon levels off and continues to wind its way through a dense second-growth forest. In about half a mile, you'll reach a junction where a side trail (also blazed white) goes off to the left. This is a short-cut of the loop that you are following, but you should continue ahead on the main trail, which soon narrows to a footpath and curves left.

After passing through an open area, the trail bears right and begins to descend, rather steeply in places. It climbs a little, levels off, and crosses a stream on a log bridge. Just beyond, it bears right and joins a woods road that runs between two stone walls. The trail continues along a delightful woods road that runs along the side of a hill, with a stone wall on the left.

Just past the end of the stone wall, there are limited views through the trees over the Hudson River (despite the indication on the park map that there are three "scenic overlooks" on this trail, the only views are the limited ones in this location). A short distance beyond, you'll pass ruins of stone buildings on both sides of the trail. These buildings were built in 1868 as part of Cedar Glen, the estate of Dr. Charles H. Roberts.

The White Trail ends just beyond the ruin of the largest building (which was Dr. Roberts' home), at a T-intersection with the Yellow Trail. Turn right and follow this trail downhill, passing an intersection with the Blue Trail, which begins to the left. Continue to descend on a switchback. At the base of the descent, cross under the Mid-Hudson Bridge (leaving Franny Reese State Park), then immediately turn left and climb a stairway.

Turn right at the top of the stairway and enter Johnson-Iorio Memorial Park, which offers great views of both the Mid-Hudson Bridge and the Walkway Over the Hudson. Signs installed as an Eagle Scout project in 2008 provide interesting information on the history of the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge.

Continue ahead, uphill, on Haviland Road - a wide paved road that is used only by local traffic, as it dead-ends at the park. In about half a mile, you'll reach the entrance to the Walkway Over the Hudson, on the right. Turn right and walk across the bridge, which was the longest cantilevered truss bridge in the world when completed in 1888.

The bridge was a vital link for freight moving between Pennsylvania and New England until 1974, when a fire ended its service for railroad use. For years, it stood abandoned; it was described about 2000 as "obsolete and not likely to be recycled," and forming a part of "the decaying infrastructure which now constitutes part of the industrial archeology of the Hudson River." Its rehabilitation as a pedestrian walkway at a cost of over \$30 million - in time to commemorate the quadricentennial of the discovery of the Hudson River by Henry Hudson in 1609 - has been described by the New York Times as "one of the least likely environmental and architectural achievements in recent times" and "a marvel of adaptive-use architecture that has been embraced to a degree even its backers hadn't expected."

It is one and one-quarter miles to the Poughkeepsie end of the bridge, but it will probably take you about an hour to make your way across the bridge, as you'll want to make frequent stops to read the informative signs posted along the bridge and observe the spectacular scenery up and down the river.

When you reach the east end of the bridge, continue ahead on the macadam path to the entrance to the Walkway (on the right). Turn right onto Parker Avenue, and follow it to the next intersection, Washington Street. Turn left on Washington Street and proceed for one block to a traffic light. Turn right at the light, then bear right again onto Verazzano Boulevard (the sidewalk on the left side parallels an attractive brook).

At the next intersection, turn left onto Mt. Carmel Road and cross a bridge over a brook. Immediately, turn right onto a walkway through a park, then proceed downhill on Dongan Place. Turn left at the next intersection, then turn right and go through an underpass to reach the Poughkeepsie railroad station. Continue south, past the station, to Main Street. Turn right, crossing a bridge over the railroad, then immediately cross Rinaldi Boulevard and turn left (use the sidewalk on the west side of the street). Just before reaching an overpass, turn right onto Gerald Drive (use the sidewalk on the south side of the street). At a sign for "Bridge Music," bear left and climb a pedestrian walkway to the Mid-Hudson Bridge.

Turn right at the top of the walkway and cross the Mid-Hudson Bridge, opened in 1930 and named for Franklin D. Roosevelt, who lived nearby in Hyde Park and served as President of the United States from 1933 to 1945. The Mid-Hudson Bridge affords great views of the Walkway Over the Hudson bridge to the north.

At the west end of the bridge, turn right and descend the stairway which leads to Franny Reese State Park. At the bottom of the stairway, turn right, go under the bridge, and continue ahead on the Yellow Trail (retracing your steps). Near the top of the climb, at a sign for "Overlook," turn right onto the Blue Trail, which climbs to a panoramic overlook over the Mid-Hudson Bridge and the City of Poughkeepsie.

Continue ahead on the Blue Trail, which loops around and heads back to the Yellow Trail. Turn right onto the Yellow Trail and follow it back to the parking area where the hike began.