

Pumphouse Trail/Laurel Pond Trail Loop

Overview

This loop hike follows woods roads through dense rhododendron thickets and circles Wawayanda Lake.

Details Time: 3.5 hours Difficulty: Easy to Moderate Length: 6.7 miles

Driving Directions

Take I-287 to Exit 57 (Skyline Drive) and continue on Skyline Drive to its western terminus at Greenwood Lake Turnpike (County Route 511). Turn right and proceed north on Greenwood Lake Turnpike. When you reach a fork at 7.0 miles, bear right to continue on Greenwood Lake Turnpike. Then, at 8.5 miles, again take the right fork to continue on Warwick Turnpike (still County Route 511). Proceed for another 4.5 miles to the entrance to Wawayanda State Park, on the left. Follow the entrance road for about 2.5 miles to the beach parking area on Wawayanda Lake (there is an entrance fee from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day).

Description

At the northwest corner of the parking area, a signpost designates the start of the Pumphouse Trail, marked with orange-on-white blazes. Continue across a grassy area, then bear right, cross a bridge (with a picnic area to the left), and continue uphill on a woods road.

Just before reaching Wawayanda Road, the Pumphouse Trail turns left onto a narrower woods road, which climbs over a rise. Immediately past the crest of the rise, the trail turns left and descends on a footpath to cross a footbridge over a stream. The trail continues through a wet, rocky area and skirts a wetland to the right.

About a mile from the start, the trail bears left, leaving the wetland, and climbs to the ridge, with a number of interesting glacial erratics to the left. After a while, the trail widens into a woods road and continues through a forest of hemlock, mountain laurel, rhododendron and deciduous trees. In places, the route narrows to a footpath as it proceeds through dense thickets of rhododendron.

In another mile, you'll cross a stream on rocks. About half a mile beyond, the trail crosses a large rusted pipeline, which once carried water from Lake Wawayanda (the pumphouse for which the trail is named was located on the shore of the lake, to the left). A short distance beyond, the Pumphouse Trail ends at a gravel parking area. This is about the halfway point of the hike.

Continue through the parking area and turn left onto Cherry Ridge Road, a wide dirt road that is open to vehicular traffic (it is occasionally marked with black-on-white blazes as the Cherry Ridge Trail). In 500 feet, bear left at a fork, as the Cabin Trail begins to the right. Continue ahead on Cherry Ridge Road, which gradually climbs to a junction (in three-quarters of a mile) with the white-blazed Lookout Trail, which begins to the right.

A short distance beyond, the road is blocked by a gate. About 500 feet beyond the gate, bear left at a fork, now following the yellow-blazed Laurel Pond Trail. This trail follows an old woods road (first laid out as a public road in the beginning of the nineteenth century), passing interesting rock outcrops as it ascends gently. In three-quarters of a mile, you'll reach the crest of the rise, with a limited view to the east over the Wawayanda Plateau. Here, the blue-blazed Wingdam Trail begins to the left.

Turn left onto the Wingdam Trail, which climbs a little and then begins a steady descent. At the base of the descent, the orange-blazed Sitting Bear Trail begins on the left, but you should continue ahead. Soon, the trail emerges onto a grassy area and crosses a wooden bridge over the outlet of Wawayanda Lake. This is the location of the wingdam (built by the Thomas Iron Works in the mid-1800s).

In another half mile, the Wingdam Trail ends at the main dam of Wawayanda Lake. Turn left and follow a gravel road along the northern end of the lake to the boat launch parking area. Proceed through this parking area and continue uphill on another gravel road that leads to the beach parking area, where the hike began.