

HIKING IN MINNEWASKA STATE PARK

To enjoy the marvels of Minnewaska on foot, you need only basic equipment such as a map, comfortable footwear, water, lunch or snacks. A wealth of spectacular scenery becomes available to those making the effort to explore Minnewaska State Park. The following three hikes are a sampling of what is available.

Beacon Hill (orange blazes)

Easy loop. Approximately 2 miles, 1 hour.

This short walk is an introduction to the hiking available in the park and will whet your appetite for more exploration.

Park at the Wildmere parking lot, retrace to where the Beacon Hill Carriageway leaves the auto road on the right a short distance down the hill. Follow this shady, meandering road for about a mile until the panoramic view at Beacon Hill is reached. The outlook is spectacular and encompasses a view of the Catskills to the left, tree covered Dickie Barr and the rocky Trapps immediately in front, and the Taconic Hills of Connecticut and Massachusetts to the right. The route back is on a more conventional hiking trail leaving to the right of the viewpoint (yellow blazes). Beacon Hill trail ascends and descends sharply until it exits near the site of the old Cliff House picnic field. Turn right at the end of the trail onto a carriageway (red blazes) leading back to the parking lot.

Castle Point/Hamilton Point

Moderate loop. Approximately 7 minutes, 5 hours.

This hike can be made entirely on Minnewaska carriageways, gently ascending on the way out and similarly descending on the way back. It includes many great viewpoints.

From the Wildmere parking lot, the route passes by Lake Minnewaska on the red blazed carriageway, and continues around the west side of the lake to the beginning of the Castle Point Carriageway (blue blazes). A gazebo on the way provides views of the route to Gertrude's Nose. Look across to see the large boulder known as Patterson's Pellet on the far side.

After arriving at Castle Point, follow the blue blazes as the carriageway curves around Castle Point and passes beneath Battlement Terrace. Turn left at the bottom of the hill onto the Hamilton Point Carriageway (yellow blazes).

From Hamilton Point it is possible to see both Gertrude's Nose and to look back and up to Castle Point. Follow the Hamilton Point Carriageway back to the Lake Minnewaska Carriageway. The Hamilton Point Carriageway, at least at first, is narrower than the Castle Point Carriageway which it parallels and, because it is lower on the ridge, proceeds through more wooded terrain. Gradually, the valley of the Palmaghatt wilderness and the Hamilton Point Road merge. In winter, the rocks to the left of the trail turn into ice falls. At the intersection, a left turn or a right turn on the Lake Minnewaska Carriageway (red blazes) will return you to the parking lot.

Gertrude's Nose

Strenuous loop. Approximately 8 miles, 6 hours.

This hike includes walking on both carriageways and hiking trails with some steep ascents. It contains some ledge walking, crosses one stream, includes many panoramic vistas, and passes two remarkable natural objects. On the way out to the spur of Gertrude's Nose, the trail passes by a deep hole contained in a rock formation. Usually the temperature in that location is noticeably lower than in the surrounding area. Patterson's Pellet is passed on the Millbrook Carriageway. This enormous pointed rock, perched over the edge of the ledge, is a landmark seen from many places on the opposite side of the Palmaghatt wilderness.

From the Wildmere parking area, walk towards the park office and follow the carriageway (red blazes) on the eastern side of Lake Minnewaska to the lake's southern end where the under and over trail begins (Millbrook Mt. Trail). Marked with red rectangles, this trail follows a wooded cliffside through a gorge, emerges onto open slabs and descends to the Coxing Kill. From this stream crossing, the trail is routed on Mohonk Preserve property (a fee may be charged). Follow the red markers uphill from the Coxing Kill on a rocky, sometimes wet trail to the junction of the Coxing Trail, bearing right (remain on the red trail) to reach the high point of Millbrook Mountain, an excellent picnic lunch spot.

From the Millbrook Mountain overlook, turn right onto the Millbrook Ridge Trail (light blue). Follow this for a few hundred feet to the end of the trail. Here the Gertrude's Nose trail starts (white rectangle with red spots). Take great care when walking the somewhat slippery open ledges of this trail. From Millbrook Mountain follow the markers continuously around the promontory of Gertrude's Nose. The view opposite includes Castle Point, Hamilton Point, the Palmaghatt wilderness and other landmarks on the Shawangunk Mountain plateau. Cross a stream where the power lines are located and continue up one steep ascent to the junction with the Millbrook Carriageway (yellow blazes). Turn left and walk back along the Millbrook Carriageway. Make a right turn at the next junction. This is where the Hamilton Point Carriageway (yellow blazes) and the Millbrook Mountain Carriageways (yellow blazes) meet. A left turn at the southern end of Lake Minnewaska (red blazes) returns you to the parking lot.

Enjoy your exploration.

This information was prepared by the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference, Inc., GPO Box 2250, New York, NY 10116

The Trail Conference maintains the footpaths in Minnewaska State Park. Contact the Trail Conference for information about detailed trail maps.