



*Step-by-Step*

**TRAILS GUIDE**

*to*

**HIGH POINT**

**STATE PARK**



State of New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection  
Division of Parks and Forestry • State Park Service  
[njparksandforests.org](http://njparksandforests.org)



# HIGH POINT STATE PARK

## TRAILS OF HIGH POINT STATE PARK

There are thirteen named and marked trails in **High Point State Park**, and a stretch of the Appalachian Trail also runs the length of the park. These trails are maintained for the enjoyment of all visitors. Some trails are designated for hiking, snowshoeing, and/or cross-country skiing only, but a number of other trails are multi-use and permit bikes and horses. In distance, the trails range from less than half a mile to over four miles, take from half an hour to over two hours to walk at a moderate pace, and range from easy walking for visitors of any age to difficult rocky terrain for experienced hikers.

### TRAIL SENSE AND SAFETY

**Trail Markings** Official trails are marked with colored blazes on posts, trees, and rocks. One blaze means to continue straight. Two blazes indicate that the trail makes a turn in the direction of the top blaze.

**Be prepared** Bring water with you, and you may want to have snacks, insect repellent, and sunscreen. Check the weather before you go and dress appropriately. The weather at High Point is often cooler and windier than elsewhere in the area so it is best to plan for extra layers.

**Tick protection** Insect repellent, long pants and light colored clothing can help prevent tick bites. It is a good idea to check yourself periodically during your hike, when you're done, and more thoroughly when you get home.

**Report** trail issues to the park at (973) 875-4800.

**Report** emergencies by calling **1-877-WARN-DEP** (1-877-927-6337), or **911**

### High Point Trail Lengths at a Glance

 Ayers Trail (1 mi)	 Monument Trail (3.5 mi)	 Appalachian Trail
 Blue Dot Trail (.5 mi)	 Old Trail (.5 mi)	 AT Connector Trail
 Cedar Swamp Trail (2 mi)	 Parker Trail (6.5 mi)	 Iris Trail (4.5 mi)
 Fuller Trail (.85 mi)	 Shawangunk Ridge Trail (3 mi)	 Mashipacong Trail (2.8 mi)
 Life Trail (.8 mi)	 Steenykill Trail (.7 mi)	

## **Appalachian Trail (AT)**

**White • 9 miles within High Point • Hiking • Moderate to Difficult • Rocky uneven ground**

The 2,190-mile **Appalachian Trail (AT)** extends from Springer Mountain, Georgia to Mount Katahdin, Maine. Nine miles of the AT are in High Point, offering challenging hikes along the Kittatinny Ridge with many worthwhile views.

**Trailhead** AT Parking lot on Route 23, 0.5 miles south of the Park Office. The Appalachian, Iris, and Mashipacong Trails are all accessible from here. From the lot, follow the connector trail (blue) to the Iris Trail (red). Turn right on the Iris Trail to reach the Appalachian and the Mashipacong Trails or the Park Office. Turn left on the Iris Trail to go south towards Deckertown Turnpike.

**To hike northbound on the AT** (towards the Monument), follow directions above, turning right when the Iris Trail intersects with the AT. In 0.25 miles, you'll emerge near the Park Office and the Route 23 crossing. From the AT lot, you can also walk up Route 23. To reach High Point Monument, follow the trail for 1.5 miles along the ridge until you reach a wooden observation platform. A short distance past the platform, the AT intersects with the Monument Trail (red and green) and the Shawangunk Ridge Trail (medium blue). The AT bears right and descends the ridge. To continue to the Monument, stay straight and follow the Monument/Ridge Trails.

**To hike Southbound on the AT** (towards the Deckertown Turnpike and Stokes State Forest), follow directions above, but turn left when the Iris Trail intersects with the AT. Between Route 23 and the Deckertown Turnpike, the AT intersects with the Iris Trail twice making shorter and longer loop hikes possible.

**Other Trailheads** The AT can also be accessed via a small parking lot on the Deckertown Turnpike/CR 650 and a pull-off on Route 519 near the New York State border.

## **Iris Trail**

**Red • 4.5 miles • Multi-use • Easy to Moderate • Rocky uneven ground**

**Trailheads** Appalachian Trail parking lot or pull-off parking along Deckertown Turnpike.

**Iris Trail** (red blaze) winds along moderate terrain with gentle slopes. Much of this trail was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, intended as a bridle path, while the stretch of trail closest to the Deckertown Turnpike was part of a network of wagon roads that connected small ridgetop farms in the 1800 and early 1900s. Almost every type of vegetation that grows in the forests in this area can be seen along the Iris. Several species of oak, hickory, and birch shade the path, and sassafras, witch-hazel, and various pines grow. Some small American chestnuts, once common in Eastern forests, can also be found. These trees were infected by a fungus, known as the Chestnut Blight, in the early 1900s. Today, the few that remain rarely grow taller than twenty feet. The undergrowth includes various ferns, numerous wildflowers, and in some places is dominated by blueberries and huckleberries, ripening in mid to late summer. The Iris Trail provides many opportunities to observe birds and other wildlife, and also passes scenic Lake Rutherford (a private lake - no swimming permitted). The Iris Trail crosses the Appalachian Trail twice, making shorter and longer loop hikes possible.

## **Mashipacong Trail**

**Yellow • 2.8 miles • Multi-use • Easy to Moderate • Variable trail surface**

**Trailheads** Appalachian Trail parking lot and three pull-off parking areas near the trail on Sawmill and Park Ridge Roads.

**Mashipacong Trail's** (yellow blaze) southwestern section was part of one of the first routes over the ridge, known as the "Old Walling Road." Many remnants of the small farms that once dotted the ridgetop can be seen along it. Former fields are now thickets of huckleberries and blueberries. Two stone foundations, the remains of the Cole farm, can be found on either side of the trail by the old fields and fence rows. Oak and maple are the primary trees, with birch, beech, and American chestnut occurring often as well. The trail crosses several small streams, and follows an old access road to the Sawmill campsites (now closed to vehicles) for a time. The remaining part of the trail climbs over a rocky ridge before ending behind the park office. You may choose to hike only a part of the trail for a pleasant walk. A loop hike can be made by combining the southern portion of this trail with the Ayers Trail, and walking short distances along Sawmill and Park Ridge Roads.

## **Ayers Trail**

**Black • 1 mile • Multiuse • Easy • Fairly level, rutted wagon road**

**Trailhead** Park off Park Ridge Road near the trailhead or at the Sawmill Lake boat launch and walk a quarter mile along Sawmill Road to the trailhead.

**Ayers Trail** (black blaze) offers a glimpse into the Kittatinny Ridge's agricultural past. By the mid-1800s most of this Ridge's forests had been cut down for timber, firewood, and charcoal and eventually more than a dozen small farms cropped up on the cleared ridgetop on what is parkland today. This trail was once the road that led to and from the Ayers farm—established around 1870. As you walk, note the impressive stone walls that once outlined pastures. They illustrate one of the greatest difficulties farmers faced—the rocky soil.

You will travel through forests oak, hickory, maple, and ash—typical ridgetop forest trees that have regrown since timber and agricultural activities ceased. At about the mid-point, the trail opens up and you can see pastures, what much of the ridgetop used to look like. This area has been prevented from growing from field to forest by annual prescribed burns conducted by the NJ Forest Fire Service. Maintaining this area of grassland provides valuable habitat for wildlife who need open spaces or who thrive in "edge" habitats where fields and forests meet, and for plants that only grow in the sun and cannot often be found on much of the now-forested Ridge. Here you can also see the stone foundations of the Ayers' barns and many of the trees and plants typical of old farmsteads: lilacs, rosebushes, and nut and fruit trees.

A loop hike can be made by combining this trail with a portion of the Mashipacong Trail, and walking short distances along Sawmill and Park Ridge Roads.

## **Blue Dot Trail**

**Dark Blue • 0.5 miles • Hiking • Difficult • Wet areas, very rugged steep terrain**

**Trailhead** Across from campsite 15 at the Sawmill Campground. When the road around the campground is closed seasonally, you can also access the trail by parking at the Sawmill Lake boat launch and following the lakeside trail or camp road on foot to the trailhead. This will add about a half mile (each way) to your hike.

**Blue Dot Trail** (dark blue blaze) is short, but ideal for anyone who enjoys the challenge of rugged terrain. It begins across from campsite fifteen at the Sawmill campground and climbs roughly 350 feet to meet with the Appalachian Trail at the top of the ridge. At first, the trail passes through a shady, moist forest of maple, oak, and hemlock. The wet, mossy ground is a remnant of the cedar bog that once existed where the lake is today. As you begin to ascend the trail, the vegetation becomes sparser and shifts to scrub oak, birch, and pitch pine. On the way to the top you'll climb over a number of large rocks and cross several outwashes. The summit provides a beautiful overlook of Sawmill Lake and the surrounding mountains. The trail ends at the Appalachian Trail, a short distance over the ridge.

## **Cedar Swamp Trail**

**Purple • 2 mile loop • Hiking, cross-country skiing • Easy • Mostly flat, paved, gravel, and boardwalk**

**Trailhead** Go to the end of the road in the Cedar Swamp Picnic Area and park. The trail begins at the yellow gate.

**Cedar Swamp Trail** (purple blaze) follows an access road (no longer open to vehicles) into the Atlantic white cedar bog in the Kuser Natural Area, then forks and circles around the perimeter of the bog. Along the way you'll travel through dense forests and across an open cut in the bog on a boardwalk. Most of the trail is gravel-covered, but portions can be muddy after heavy rains. A trail guide that corresponds to numbered stops along the trail can be obtained at the Park Office or the Interpretive Center, or can be downloaded [here](#).

## **Fuller Trail**

**Red & blue • 0.85 miles • Multiuse • Easy to Moderate • Rocky, sometimes muddy**

**Trailhead** Park in the Winter Trails parking lot. Limited parking on Sawmill where the trail starts/ends.

**Fuller Trail** (red & blue blaze) was once a road used by the Fuller family to travel from their farm (now the Group Cabin site) to the cedar shake mill they operated in the area where Sawmill Lake is today. The trail wanders through a fairly open forest of hardwoods with an undergrowth of ferns and grasses. Part of the trail overlaps the Life Trail and then branches off to meet Sawmill Road at the intersection with the Mashipacong Trail. It may be hard for you to imagine that most of the forest this trail passes through was at one time cleared and used for agriculture. Due to its thin soil, this land was, at best, only marginally suited for agriculture, and as farms became mechanized, these farmers could not compete. Only the stone walls remain today to mark the spirit of the early pioneers.

## **Life Trail**

**Brown • 0.8 miles • Multi-use • Easy to Moderate • Mostly level, but rocky trail surface**

**Trailhead** Park in the Winter Trails parking lot.

**Life Trail** (brown blaze) was once part of the Fuller family farm which was located here in the 1800s and early 1900s. In the mid-1920s, the farm became a Girl Scout Camp, and in 1937 that camp became a camp for blind children—the first of its kind in the state - where boys and girls could enjoy the outdoors and develop a sense of camaraderie and independence. This trail is a nice location for group hiking and cross-country skiing. It is short, but is filled with wintergreen, mountain laurel, and various hardwood trees.

## **Old Trail**

**Brown & yellow • 0.5 miles • Multi-use • Easy • Gently sloping carriage road**

**Trailhead** At far side of the picnic/parking area across from the beach parking lot.

**Old Trail** (brown & yellow blaze) was an entrance to the High Point Inn in the 1890s. It was used by the horse-drawn stagecoaches that transported guests to the Inn from the train station in Port Jervis, NY. Perfect for an easy, relaxing stroll, this trail follows the base of several outcrops of rock. Sweetfern and huckleberries line the sides of the path, and wildflowers and grasses thrive along the intermittent stream that runs parallel to it. The stream and the rocky outcrops that rise on the north side of the trail attract wildlife, including mink, porcupine, and deer.

## Monument Trail

**Red & green • 3.5-mile loop • Hiking & snowshoeing • Moderate to Difficult • Rocky trail, steep climbs**

**Trailhead** This trail can be accessed by parking at/near the Interpretive Center, the north end of Lake Marcia, or the Monument parking area.

**Monument Trail** (red & green blaze) circles the mountain ridges and entails a fair amount of uphill walking. The ascents are worth making, as they provide views of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania that can't be seen from the Monument. The forest along the trail is primarily oak, including the dense scrub oak, with a variety of other hardwoods and pitch pine. The undergrowth consists of ferns, grasses, huckleberries and sweetfern. This trail was constructed in the late 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Sets of curving stone stairs are testament to their workmanship and attention to detail. A short portion of the trail crosses through the Cedar Swamp Natural Area, dedicated to former New Jersey Senator, Dryden Kuser. A guide for the Natural Area, detailing the unique ecology of the swamp, can be obtained at the park office or the Interpretive Center. Park at either the Interpretive Center or the Monument to hike this circular trail.

## Parker Trail

**Light Green • 2.5 miles in High Point • Multiuse • Moderate • Rocky trail with muddy portions.**

**Trailhead** Pull-off parking on Park Ridge Road and the Deckertown Turnpike, and off Crigger Road in Stokes State Forest where the trail overlaps part of the Howell Trail.

**Parker Trail** (light green blaze) is a fairly level path that winds through a hardwood forest to the Deckertown Turnpike and continues into Stokes State Forest. The terrain alternates from rocky areas to fields of ferns and grasses. The larger trees are mostly red oak, white oak, and red maple, with sweet birch and American beech comprising the lower canopy. Various wildflowers are abundant in the undergrowth at different times of the year. Cinquefoil and wild geranium are two that bloom during May and June. Red efts, or newts, can easily be spotted in moist spots.

## Shawangunk Ridge Trail

**Medium blue • 3 miles in High Point • Hiking • Moderate to Difficult • Narrow, rocky trail**

**Trailhead** Where the Appalachian Trail intersects with the Monument Trail.

The 71-mile **Shawangunk Ridge Trail** (medium-blue blaze) begins here, following the Monument Trail until it branches to follow a portion of the Cedar Swamp Trail. After crossing the boardwalk, the trail again intersects briefly with the Monument Trail, and then heads towards New York, continuing along the ridge and ending in the Mohonk Preserve. Detailed information about this segment of the trail can be found [here](#) (New York New Jersey Trail Conference.)

## Steenykill Trail

**Light Blue • 0.7 miles • Hiking • Easy to Difficult • Grassy trail ending in a rocky climb**

**Trailhead** Park at the Steenykill Boat Launch. The top of the trail can also be reached via the Monument Trail.

**Steenykill Trail** (light blue blaze), built in the late 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), begins at Route 23, runs along the Lake Steenykill dam (also built by the CCC), makes a left turn at the spillway, crosses a stream, and then climbs steeply up hill to join the Monument Trail. On the edge of the lake, along the dam, you can see birches, blueberries, and many wildflower species. After passing through a small pine grove, the trail leaves the lake area and passes through a towering hardwood forest growing with several species of ferns, including the tall cinnamon fern., and many young striped maple trees—uncommon as far south as New Jersey.