

The trail continues along a relatively level footpath, then bears right at a fork and begins to climb the rocky hillside. After reaching the top of the hill, the trail descends to reach a junction with the red-blazed Conifer Pass Trail (marked by a signpost). Turn right and follow the red-blazed trail as it descends to recross Pottersville Road.

On the other side of the road, the trail enters a beautiful pine forest and descends past old stone walls to cross Cedar Brook on rocks. It ascends on switchbacks through a grove of fir trees, continues through a deciduous forest to the crest of the rise, and descends once again to the Black River, passing two mine pits on the right along the way.

The red-blazed trail now heads north through the rocky gorge of the Black River, running directly along the river for part of the way. This wild and spectacular section of the river is an interesting contrast to the relatively placid section that you followed at the start of the hike. After about a quarter of a mile, the trail begins to climb out of the gorge. At the top of the climb, it turns right at a T-intersection, bears sharply left in 100 feet, then bears left again at a Y-intersection.

The trail continues high above the river, with views of the river below through the trees. In another 0.4 mile, you'll reach a T-intersection with a wide dirt road. The red blazes turn right, but you should turn left and follow a green-blazed trail that heads downhill along the woods road. In another 750 feet, you'll reach a Y-intersection. Here, the green blazes bear left, but you should bear right and continue ahead on the woods road, now unmarked, which heads north, parallel to the river. Continue along the road for another 600 feet to its end at the blue-blazed Black River Trail. Turn left and follow the Black River Trail north along the Black River for 1.2 miles, retracing your steps to the Cooper Mill parking area where the hike began.



## Ramapo Mountain State Forest

Castle Point Short Loop

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This loop hike runs along the shore of scenic Ramapo Lake and climbs to the ruins of an old stone mansion and tower, with panoramic views.

**Difficulty:** Moderate

**Length and Time:** About 3.0 miles; about two and one-half hours.

**Map:** New York-New Jersey Trail Conference North Jersey Trails Map #115.

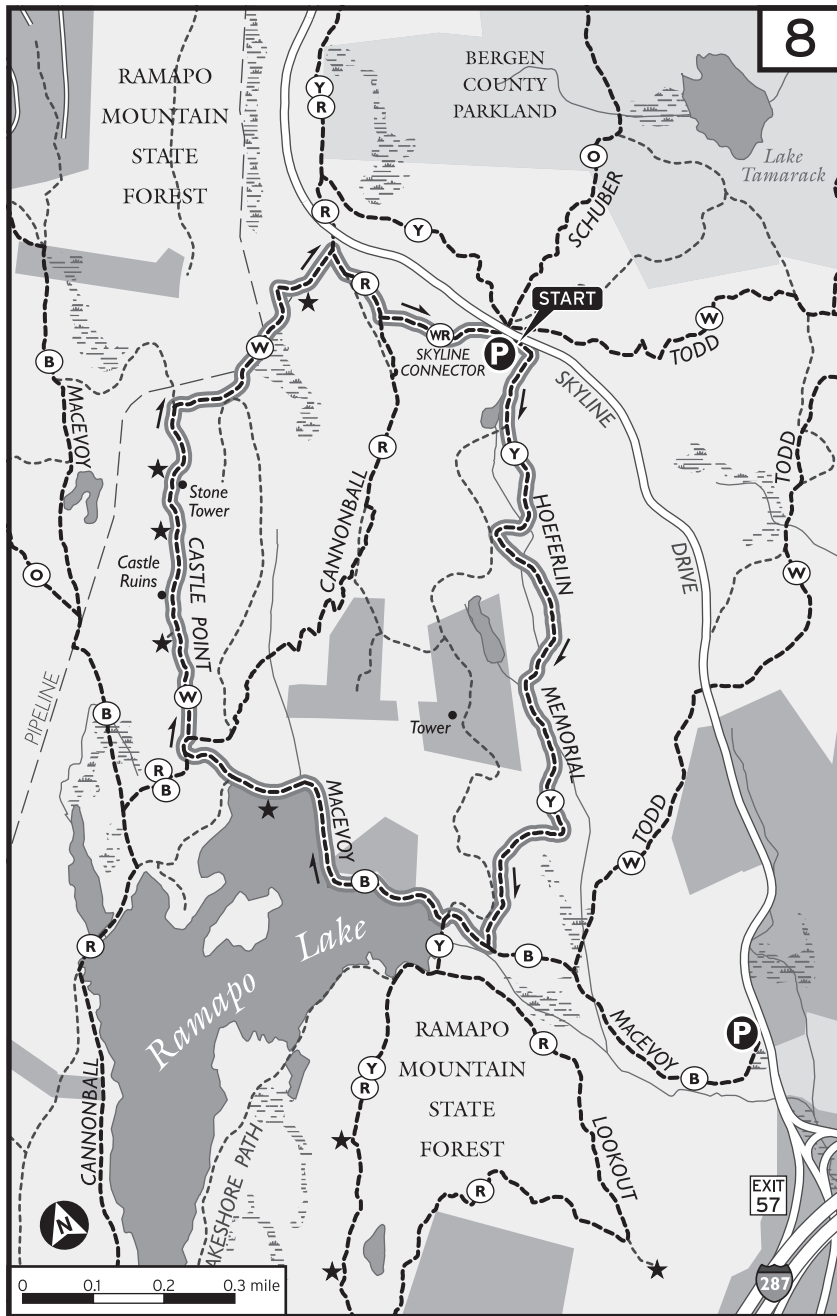
**Directions:** Take I-287 to Exit 57 (Skyline Drive) and proceed north on Skyline Drive for about one mile to the upper parking area for Ramapo Mountain State Forest on the left side of the road, just beyond milepost 1.4 (opposite the entrance to Camp Tamarack).

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At the northwest end of the parking area, opposite the entrance to Camp Tamarack, you will see a yellow blaze of the Hoeflerlin Memorial Trail, as well as a triple red/white blaze, which marks the terminus of the Skyline Connector Trail. You will be returning to the parking area on the Skyline Connector Trail, but the Hoeflerlin Trail will be your route for the first part of the hike.

Head into the woods and turn left, following the yellow blazes, then bear right onto a footpath parallel to a gravel road. After passing a small pond to the right, follow the yellow blazes as they briefly turn right onto the road (this portion of the road is paved), then turn left onto another woods road. After passing an interesting rock outcrop on the right, you'll come to a Y-intersection, where the yellow-blazed trail bears right and begins to descend.

Soon, the gravel road briefly reappears to the right, but bear left to stay on the yellow-blazed trail. Eventually, the yellow blazes turn right, leaving the road, and follow a footpath over undulating terrain. After crossing a stream and once again briefly approaching the paved road, the Hoeflerlin



## Foxcroft

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Jacob Rogers, the son of the founder of the Rogers Locomotive Works in Paterson, N.J., assembled a three-square-mile tract of land around Ramapo Lake and increased the size of the lake by building a stone dam across its outlet. When Rogers died in 1901, he bequeathed the property to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which sold it several years later. In 1909, the property was purchased by William Porter, a stockbroker, who hoped to develop it into an exclusive community like Tuxedo Park. That plan was never realized but, in 19, Porter built himself a large home, which he called “Foxcroft,” overlooking the lake. Unfortunately, in May 1911, Porter died from injuries he sustained in an automobile accident while heading back to Manhattan from Foxcroft, and the mansion was inherited by his wife, Ruth.

In 1913, Ruth married Warren C. Van Slyke, an attorney who served as Assistant Chief of Naval Intelligence in World War I, and later represented claimants in lawsuits against the German government resulting from the sinking of the *Lusitania*. They lived in New York City and used Foxcroft as a weekend and summer home. After Van Slyke’s death in 1925, his widow lived at Foxcroft until she died in 1940 at the age of 63. Foxcroft was sold by her estate in 1942. In the early 1950s, the property became entangled in a bitter divorce dispute and was abandoned. Vandals soon broke in, and they set fire to the mansion in 1959. The property was acquired by the State in 1976.

Trail descends to a woods road – the route of the blue-blazed MacEvoy Trail. Turn right, now following both yellow and blue blazes. Soon, the trail bears left and descends a short pitch to a paved road.

Turn left along the road, and head down to Ramapo Lake. At the lakeshore, the yellow-blazed Hoeflerlin Memorial Trail continues ahead, crossing the dam, but you should turn right, following the blue blazes of the MacEvoy Trail. The MacEvoy Trail follows a gravel road along the northeast shore of the lake, passing a private home to the right and then crossing a small stream on a stone-arch bridge, with an attractive cascade to the right.

A short distance beyond, you’ll come to a rock ledge on the left that overlooks the lake. This is a good place to take a break. Once known as



*View of Ramapo Lake from a rock ledge along the Castle Point Trail*

Rotten Pond, and later as Lake LeGrande, Ramapo Lake is the centerpiece of Ramapo Mountain State Forest. It was formerly surrounded by private property, but most of the land around the lake was acquired by the state in the 1970s.

Just beyond, the trail reaches the northern tip of Ramapo Lake. Bear right at the fork in the road and pass between two concrete pillars. A short distance ahead, the blue-blazed MacEvoy Trail leaves to the left, and a triple-white blaze indicates the start of the Castle Point Trail. You should continue ahead on the road, now following the white blazes of the Castle Point Trail. Just beyond, as the road curves sharply to the right, turn left, leaving the road, and follow the white-blazed trail as it climbs steadily and rather steeply.

As you approach the top of the climb, bear left onto a rock ledge that offers a spectacular view. Directly below you is Ramapo Lake, with the Wanaque Reservoir to the right (west). On a clear day, you can see the New York City skyline on the horizon to the left. You'll want to pause here to rest from the steep climb and enjoy the view.

When you're ready to continue, follow the white trail uphill. After climbing over a stone wall, you'll reach the ruins of a mansion. Known as Foxcroft, it was built around 1910 by William Porter, a stockbroker. His widow occupied it until her death in 1940, and it fell into ruin in the late 1950s. Use caution if you wish to explore the remains of this once-elegant stone structure.

The trail continues to the north, passing the remains of a concrete swimming pool. A short distance beyond, an unmarked side trail to the



*The ruins of Foxcroft*

left leads to an unobstructed west-facing viewpoint over the Wanaque Reservoir and the Wyanokie Mountains. Continue on the white trail, which soon climbs to reach a stone tower. Contrary to what one might think at first glance, this was not a lookout tower; rather, it held a cistern that supplied water to the mansion (note the rusted pipes adjacent to the tower). Just beyond, there is another view from an open rock ledge to the left of the trail over the Wanaque Reservoir to the west. The trail now begins to descend.

Watch carefully as the Castle Point Trail turns right, just before reaching the route of a gas pipeline. It briefly joins a woods road, turns left onto a footpath before reaching a wide gravel road, then again turns left onto the woods road. It turns right and follows the gas pipeline for 350 feet, then turns right again, leaving the pipeline, and crosses a stream. The trail now climbs, first gradually, then rather steeply through mountain laurel, to a rock ledge, which provides a view of the stone tower you passed about half a mile back.



A short distance beyond, the Castle Point Trail reaches a paved road, with Skyline Drive just to the left. Here, the Castle Point Trail ends, and you turn right to continue along the Cannonball Trail (white-“C”-on-red blazes). The trail follows the road for 200 feet, then turns left onto a footpath through the woods. Soon, you’ll reach a junction where the red/white-blazed Skyline Connector Trail begins to the left. Turn left and follow this red/white trail along a footpath roughly parallel to Skyline Drive until you reach the parking area where the hike began.



Stone water tower

## 9 Ringwood State Park

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This loop hike climbs to the summit of Mt. Defiance, with panoramic views, and passes several scenic ponds.

**Difficulty:** Moderate

**Length and Time:** About 7.0 miles; about four and one-half hours.

**Map:** New York-New Jersey Trail Conference North Jersey Trails Map #115.

**Directions:** Take Skyline Drive to its northwestern terminus at Greenwood Lake Turnpike (County Route 511). Turn right, continue for 1.5 miles, and turn right onto Sloatsburg Road. Continue for 2.1 miles and turn right onto Morris Road. In 1.3 miles, just before the entrance to the Skylands section of Ringwood State Park, turn left onto Shepherd Lake Road and proceed for 0.8 mile to Shepherd Lake. Past the entrance booth, bear left and park in the designated parking area (a parking fee is charged from Memorial Day to Labor Day). NOTE: Shepherd Lake is a popular destination on summer weekends, and the parking area can fill up early in the day.

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This hike follows a combination of footpaths, carriage roads (built for the estates that once dominated this area) and a mountain bike trail. Created primarily for bicyclists, the mountain bike trail – part of which is a narrow, “single-track” route – is also open to hikers. However, hikers should be alert for bicycles and, although park rules provide that bicyclists must yield to hikers, hikers may choose to step off the trail and allow bicyclists to pass.

From the parking area, follow the paved path down to the beach on Shepherd Lake. Continue through the boat launch parking area and past the boat house, with the lake to your left. You will notice the red-on-white blazes of the Ringwood-Ramapo Trail, which you will follow for the first part of the hike.