

32. Switz Kill to East Berne

Feature: Cole Hill State Forest

Distance: 9.00 miles

USGS Map Quads: Westerlo

Trail Conference Maps: none

General Description

This section of the Long Path is a pleasant blend of ski trails in the state forest, road walking and woodland trails. The Long Path leaves the valley of the Switz Kill and goes along Willsie Road to the top of Cole Hill, where it follows a series of recently constructed ski trails through a mature forest. There are views from Cole Hill, and the trail passes several beaver ponds that have the feeling of the Adirondacks. Past Cole Hill, the Long Path goes along public roads, with a view of the Catskills in the distance. Upon reaching the Doppler weather tower for the Albany region, the trail reenters the woods and begins a gradual descent through land that was once farmed. The Long Path passes through a field, crosses Joslyn Schoolhouse Road, and descends through a pine forest. It then crosses Fox Creek and finally emerges on NY Route 443.

Access

Take the New York State Thruway to Exit 22 (Selkirk). Turn right on NY Route 144, and continue south to NY Route 396. Turn right on Route 396 and follow it for 6 miles to South Bethlehem, where Route 396 ends and the road becomes Albany County Route 301. Continue on Route 301 west another 6 miles to its end at NY Route 443 in Clarksville. Turn left on Route 443 and follow it 11 miles to the village of Berne. About a mile west of Berne, turn left on Albany County Route 1 and follow it south about 4 miles to Gifford Hollow Road.

Parking

0.00 Switz Kill Road (County Route 1) and Gifford Hollow Road. (18T 572286E 4714217N)

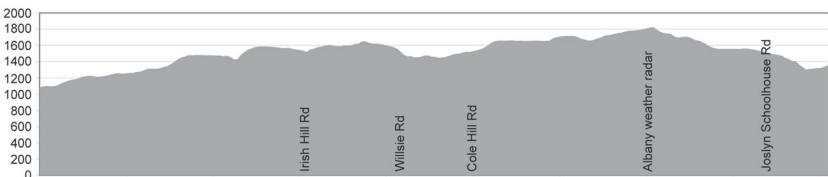
3.10 Turnoff on right side of Irish Hill Road. (18T 572927E 4716469N)

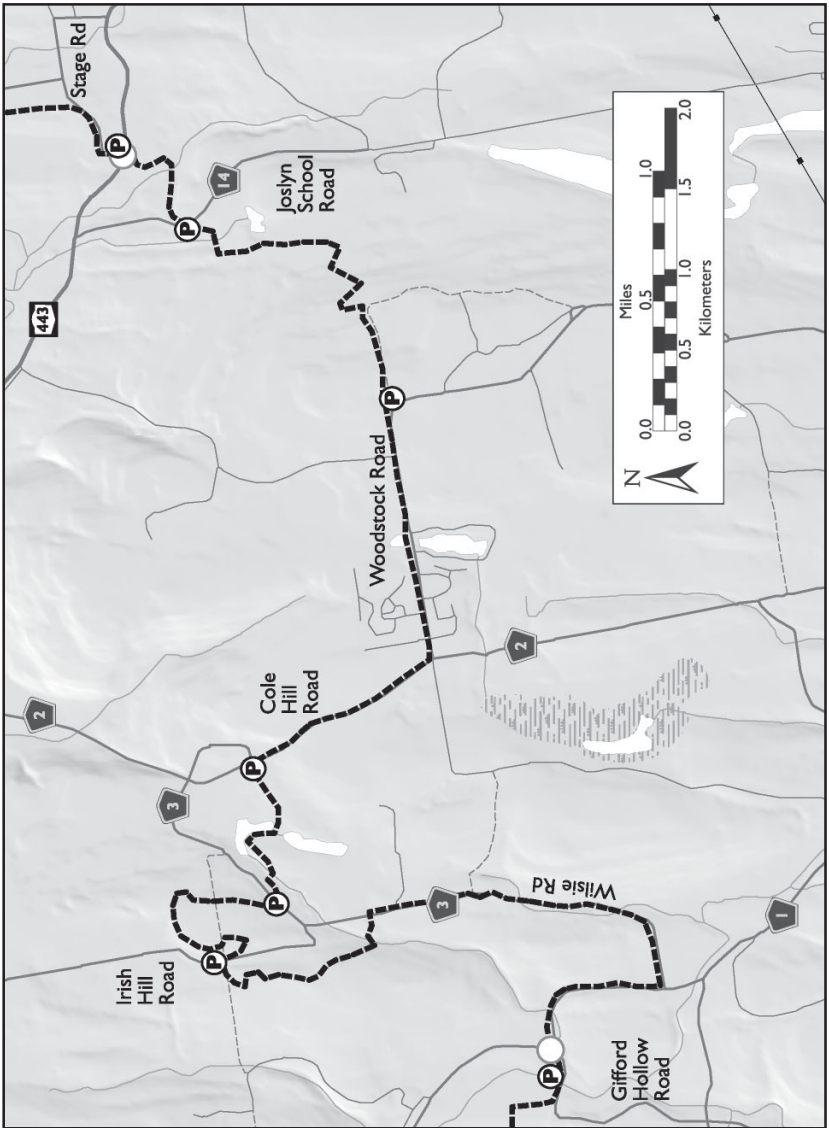
4.15 Willsie Road. (18T 573346E 4716061N)

5.10 Cole Hill Road. (18T 574226E 4716190N)

7.00 Woodstock Road at weather station. (18T 576839E 4715372N)

8.50 Joslyn Schoolhouse Road (Albany County Route 14). (18T 577782E





4716630N)

9.05 Intersection of NY Route 443 and Stage Road. (18T 578250E
4717069N)

Camping

2.75 Camping is allowed in Cole Hill State Forest 150 feet away from the trail and from water.

Trail Description

0.00 The Long Path leaves the Switz Kill Valley at the intersection of Switz Kill Road and Gifford Hollow Road and begins to climb following Switz Kill Road.

0.65 Reach Willsie Road, turn left and head uphill, following paved Willsie Road. Near the top of the hill, there is a view back to Partridge Run and the Catskills.

2.10 The trail reaches the southern boundary of Cole Hill State Forest and enters the woods on the left across from a small parking area. It proceeds westward, descending to a small stream and crosses it on a bridge. Beyond the stream, the trail ascends, gradually swinging towards the northwest and then turning to the north at the top of the slope. It then enters a reforested area and passes through alternate fields of pine and spruce, each separated by mixed hardwoods and stone walls. After the fourth stone wall, the trail turns right (east) on a fire access road to join a cross country ski trail.

3.10 The trail crosses Irish Hill Road. There is a parking area at the north side of this crossing. The trail is mostly marked in the standard aqua paint blazes,

Bridge in Cole Hill State Forest



ED WALSH



ED WALSH

Avenue of the Pines

but there are also DEC ski trail markers and red trail markers.

3.25 The Long Path reaches an open area and turns left on an intersecting trail. After a short distance, it turns right, crosses a stone wall, and follows the top of an escarpment.

3.45 Reach an overlook over the escarpment, with views west over the Switz Kill Valley to Partridge Run. Just past the overlook, cross another stone wall and turn left on an old woods road.

3.75 Reach the boundary of the state forest, where the trail turns right. Remain within the forest, as a woods road to the left leads into private property.

4.05 Begin to descend. Turn left on yet another ski trail, then turn right and continue to descend to Willsie Road.

4.15 Cross Willsie Road and re-enter the woods. In another 500 feet, the trail turns left, and then turns right to begin a series of corduroy and stepping stone bridges. Beyond the bridges, the trail begins a gradual ascent and turns left.

4.50 The Long Path passes through a deep forest known locally as the “Avenue of the Pines.” At the far end of this forest, there is an opening in the woods, with a view to an abandoned beaver pond. This old pond is now a wetland filled with marsh grass.

4.70 Reach another beaver pond in a beautiful pine forest, a wonderful lunch spot. Here, the Long Path turns left and crosses a substantial bridge. The scene here is quite reminiscent of the Adirondacks. Beyond the beaver pond, the trail climbs steeply to a hemlock grove, briefly turns left on an old woods road, and then descends to Cole Hill Road.

5.05 Turn right and continue uphill on paved Cole Hill Road. There is a parking area here. In the future, it is anticipated that the Long Path will be rerouted through the woods in this area, but for the present, it follows public roads for about 2 miles.

5.45 Reach the crest of Cole Hill Road, with views south toward the Blackhead Range and Windham High Peak in the Catskills. As you continue on Cole Hill Road, the view opens up to include Mt. Hayden, Mt. Pisgah, Richmond Mountain, Ashland Pinnacle and Huntersfield Mountain, the route of the Long Path as it heads northwest from the Catskills to Schoharie County.

5.90 Turn left on Woodstock Road, with Woodstock Park, part of Camp Woodstock, a large private campground and RV park, to the right.

6.35 Pass the entrance to Camp Woodstock and Woodstock Lake on the right.

6.85 Filkins Hill Road goes off to the left. Continue straight ahead on Woodstock Road.

7.00 As Woodstock Road turns right, the Long Path continues straight ahead on a gravel road that leads to a weather station.

7.05 The trail passes the National Weather Service's Albany Region Doppler radar tower on the right. This tower tracks and warns of severe storms. Vehicles may not be driven beyond this point. The Long Path descends from Stafford Hill on a narrow woods road, with a rock ledge on the left at the bottom of the hill.

7.35 Continue straight ahead on an older woods road, as the road that the Long Path has been following turns left. In 500 feet, bear right at a fork, and begin a gradual descent through dense foliage.

7.60 Reach an intersection, with a gravel road to the right, and a level ATV track to the extreme left. The Long Path crosses both roads and descends slightly to the left. If you are going in the opposite direction, continue straight ahead across the gravel roads. You will know that you are following the correct route if you pass between the "Posted" signs of two different landowners. After a slight descent, the trail bears right, following an old woods road.

7.75 The Long Path crosses a seasonal wet area on stepping-stones, and then turns left across level terrain. In 0.2 miles, the trail begins a gradual descent, and then intersects a stone wall that it follows downhill, descending more steeply.

8.30 Turn right on a gravel road that leads to the edge of a field. Cross the field and turn right, by an abandoned farmhouse, to reach Joslyn Schoolhouse Road.

8.50 Cross Joslyn Schoolhouse Road (Albany County Route 14) and re-enter the woods just below an open field. The Long Path sidehills through an old red pine forest, then turns left and descends sharply on an ATV trail. At the bottom of the hill, the trail bears left off the ATV trail and descends through a brushy forest to Fox Creek.

8.85 Cross Fox Creek and begin a gradual ascent. In another 500 feet, turn left on a woods road.

9.00 Reach NY Route 443. To continue, cross Route 443 and follow Stage Road.