

## 33. East Berne to John Boyd Thacher State Park

**Features:**Helderberg Escarpment and John Boyd Thacher State Park

**Distance:**9.05 miles

**USGS Map Quads:**Westerlo, Altamont

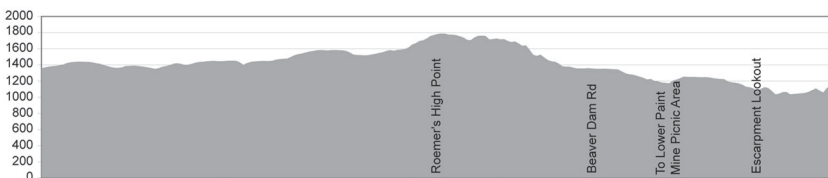
**Trail Conference Maps:**none

### General Description

This section of the Long Path starts pleasantly as it passes through farm country and then builds into a crescendo as it ends with spectacular views and dramatic cliffs. The section begins where the Long Path leaves NY Route 443 and follows Stage Road past a local farm, and then follows several open areas before climbing over a small, steep ridge. On the far side of the ridge, the trail descends to Elm Drive and continues across another field, then goes down to a stream that empties into Helderberg Lake. The Long Path then heads north along the stream and ascends to a ridgetop that has a dramatic 270-degree view of the Catskills to the south and the Adirondacks to the north. It then descends along a ravine into John Boyd Thacher State Park, where it continues to descend along a ski slope to Beaver Dam Road. After crossing Beaver Dam Road, the Long Path follows a series of trails through the park, emerging on the cliffs of the Helderberg Escarpment at the overlook on the north side of NY Route 157. Here, there are spectacular views northeast into Vermont. This ridge is made up of a core of limestone in which were found many fossils during the early days of geology in the 1800s. These fossils are known worldwide for their sequence from the Silurian to the Devonian eras. Early studies in this area helped lay the foundations for modern paleontology and geology. The Long Path then turns north and descends on the historic Indian Ladder Trail under the base of the cliffs. The section ends at the north end of the Indian Ladder Trail.

### 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 6 miles to South Bethlehem, where Route 396 ends and the road becomes Albany County Route 301. Follow Route 301 west another 6 miles to its end at NY Route 443 in Clarksville. Turn left on Route 443 and follow it west about 5 miles to the second intersection with Stage Road, 1.5 miles from the intersection of NY 443/85.





*Panorama from Thacher Park lookout*

## Parking

**0.00** Stage Road and Route 443. (18T 578250E 4717069N)

**6.35** John Boyd Thacher State Park Ski Area on Beaver Dam Road. (18T 580743E 4721116N)

**7.25** Lower Paint Mine Picnic Area (about 0.2 miles off the trail). (18T 580631E 4722541N)

**8.05** Helderberg Escarpment Overlook parking area. (18T 580980E 4722697N)

**9.05** North end of Indian Ladder Trail. (18T 580499E 4722951N)

## Trail Description

**0.00** The Long Path crosses Route 443 and heads uphill parallel to Stage Road on its west side to a farmhouse. Here Stage Road turns right; the trail continues to the north side.

**0.35** The trail turns left away from the road and descends gradually north along the west side of a hedgerow. Along this leg there is an expansive view west, across open fields, toward Cole Hill and the Schoharie Valley.

**0.75** Bearing right through a gap in the hedgerow, the trail enters a young hardwood forest and turns gradually east (right). At a logging trail, it turns north (left).



**0.95** The trail reaches Sawmill Road and turns north (left) near the intersection with Stempel Road.

**1.30** At the intersection with Long Road, the trail turns right and follows Long Road east.

**2.35** At Elm Drive, the trail turns right again and follows Elm Drive south.

**3.25** The trail reaches the south boundary of the Roemer Property. It enters the property on the left and continues east along the north side of a hedgerow. After crossing a pipeline, the trail re-enters the woods and descends to a stream.

**3.95** Reach a larger stream, turn left, and follow alongside the stream through the woods. The trail crosses several seasonal streams and a small spruce plantation before emerging in a larger spruce plantation.

**4.35** Turn left at the spruce plantation, leaving the stream, and begin to ascend. The trail crosses a woods road and ascends more steeply.

**4.65** The trail reaches Roemer's High Point, one of the most spectacular places on the entire Long Path. To the east, you can see over the edge of the Helderberg Escarpment to the Berkshires and Taconics. To the south you can see the Great Wall of Manitou in the Catskills with the Blackhead Range looming ahead. To the west you look over Cole Hill and Partridge Run. This row of mountains is known as the Hamilton Escarpment or the Endless Mountains, as they head south as far as Binghamton. To the north are the peaks of the southern Adirondacks. The trail turns right and follows the ridgetop. Shortly,

the trail re-enters the woods and begins a gradual descent to again cross the woods road.

**5.15** Shortly after crossing the woods road, the trail ascends a small hill from where there is a view of a beaver pond when the leaves are down. After crossing the top of this hill, the trail takes a right switchback to descend to a ravine.

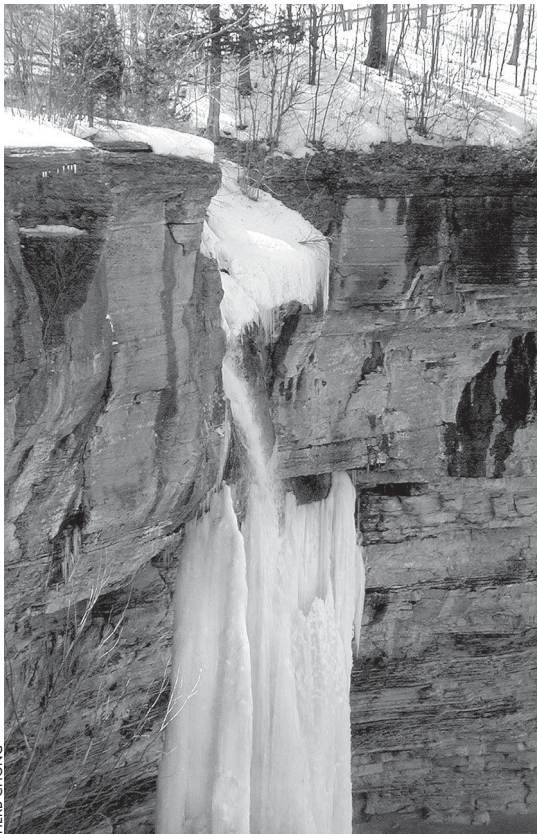
**5.30** The trail intersects an unmarked trail that leads right to the head of the ravine. The Long Path turns left and follows this trail north along the ravine. It crosses a woods road and continues along the ravine.

**5.70** The trail reaches the edge of John Boyd Thacher State Park and descends right through a series of switchbacks to the bottom of the ravine.

**5.85** As the trail enters the main park, it emerges on a ski slope that it follows downhill. To the left is a lean-to that serves as a warming hut for the Helderberg Ski Club. Upon reaching an intersection, the Long Path stays to the left and follows the ski slope downhill and crosses a small stream. Beyond the stream crossing, the ski slope levels out as it emerges on Beaver Dam Road.

**6.35** The trail crosses Beaver Dam Road, and then turns left on a trail that parallels Beaver Dam Road.

*Mine Lot Falls in the winter*



HERE CHONG



MICHAEL WARREN

*Base of the Indian Ladder Trail*

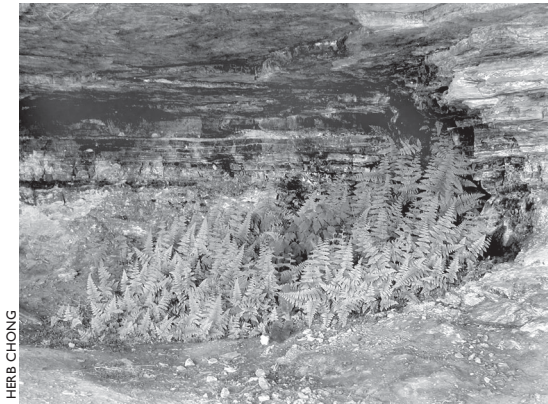
**6.50** The trail turns right and follows a gravel park road.

**6.95** A nature trail comes in from the right at the head of a ravine. The Long Path continues ahead, gradually descending on the left side of the ravine.

**7.25** Straight ahead, the Lower Paint Mine Picnic Area and pavilion are 0.2 miles ahead. The Long Path turns right, crosses the ravine on a bridge and follows the lower part of the nature trail. In 0.1 miles the nature trail forks to the right; the Long Path forks to the left and passes through a dense hemlock forest.

**7.70** The Long Path turns left and follows a woods road that leads into the Upper Knowles Flat Picnic Area. The trail follows the north edge of the picnic area, and then descends right on a gravel path to the paved access road. The trail then turns right on the access road to intersect Route 157.

**8.05** The Long Path crosses NY Route 157 and reaches the overlook parking area. The trail turns left and follows the overlook along the edge of the Escarpment. There is a spectacular view across the upper Hudson Valley to the Green Mountains of Vermont and the Adirondacks of New York. At the end of the



*Ferns growing in the back of Mine Lot Falls*

parking area, the trail continues to follow the escarpment fence through the woods.

**8.50** The trail reaches a viewpoint over Mine Lot Falls, which plunges over the escarpment. Just past this viewpoint, the Indian Ladder Trail descends to the bottom of the cliff. It follows the escarpment north under the cliffs and passes under Mine Lot Falls. The Indian Ladder Trail is only open from mid-May to late fall, as it is dangerous when there is ice and rock fall. The Long Path follows the Indian Ladder Trail when it is open. If you follow the trail on top of the escarpment, the trail will pass another overlook and then pass over the head of the falls.

**9.05** The Long Path reaches the northern end of the Indian Ladder Trail.