

# 34. John Boyd Thacher State Park to NY Route 146

**Features:** Helderberg Escarpment and Thacher Park

**Distance:** 7.50 miles

**USGS Map Quads:** Altamont

**Trail Conference Maps:** none

## General Description

This section begins at the parking area at the north end of the Indian Ladder Trail and follows the western boundary of John Boyd Thacher State Park northward. It then continues north through the park along a newly constructed ski trail, with the Helderberg Escarpment to the right. After leaving the park, the Long Path climbs to the top of the escarpment and heads in a generally north-west direction through the woods on lands recently acquired by the Open Space Institute and currently being managed as a nature preserve. West of the preserve, the Long Path follows old gravel roads and then paved roads to its current end on NY Route 146, a short distance west of the village of Altamont. Plans are underway to extend the Long Path north to the Mohawk River and beyond.

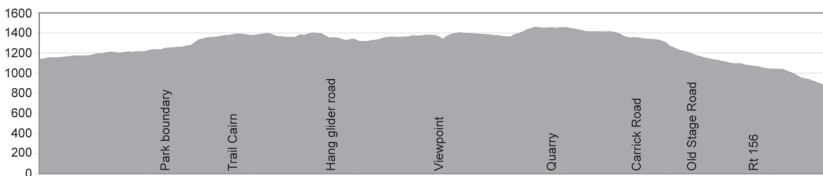
## Access

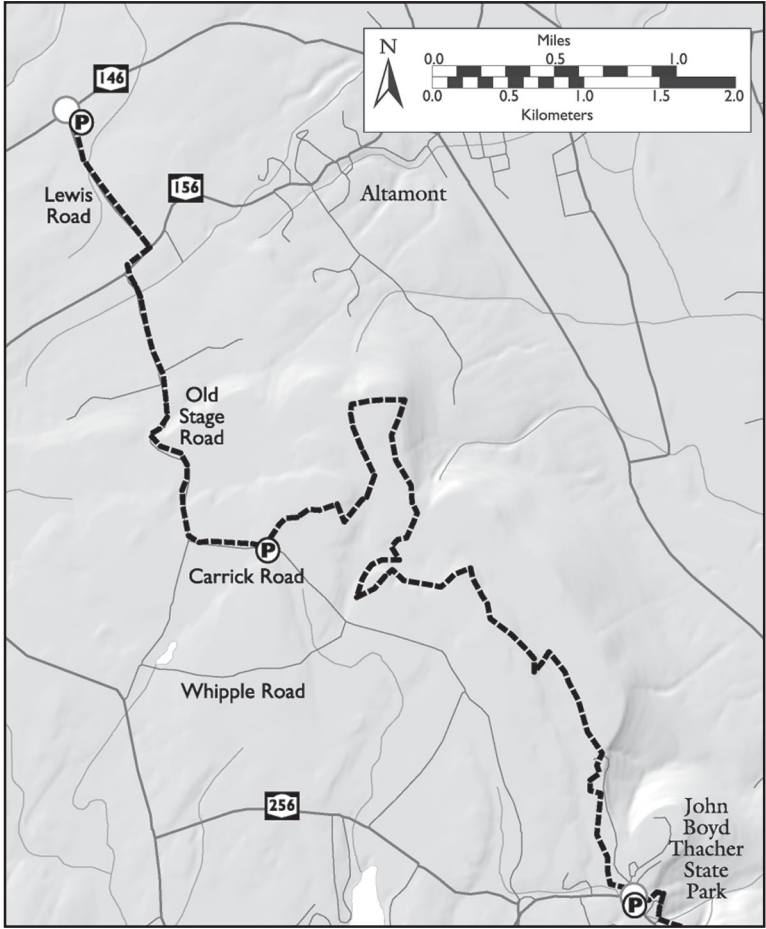
Take the New York State Thruway to Exit 22 (Selkirk). Turn right on NY Route 144 and continue south to NY Route 396. Turn right on Route 396 and follow it six miles to South Bethlehem, where Route 396 ends and the road becomes Albany County Route 301. Follow Route 301 west another six miles to its end at NY Route 443 in Clarksville. Turn left on NY Route 443 and follow it west 1.9 miles to its intersection with NY Route 85. Turn right on Route 85 and follow it east for 2.1 miles. Turn left and follow NY Route 157 for 3.9 miles to the main entrance to John Boyd Thacher State Park. Parking is available at the northern entrance to the Indian Ladder Trail and other nearby parking lots.

## Parking

**0.00** North end of Indian Ladder Trail (fee in season). (18T 580499E 4722951N)

**5.45** Intersection of Carrick Road and Old Stage Road (limited). (18T 577456E 4725362N)





## Trail Description

**0.00** This section starts at the “Indian Ladder” sign in the parking area, near the restrooms, and goes along the edge of the parking area to the park entrance gate, where it crosses the guardrail and goes through a field behind the administration building.

**0.15** The trail enters the woods and follows a newly constructed ski trail, which parallels the park road heading north. The Helderberg Escarpment is visible to the east of the park road.

**0.70** The trail crosses a ball field, with several picnic tables along the edge, and a pavilion near the edge of the escarpment. The trail re-enters the woods near a group of red pines, and turns right onto a gravel road to the Hailes Cave Picnic Area overlooking the escarpment. At two stone pillars, it turns left onto a grassy road, with the escarpment to the right, then again turns left and follows a ski trail along the edge of two fields.

**1.00** Halfway northwards along the edge of the second field, the trail turns right into the woods. Many narrow fissures, some very deep, crisscrossing the woods and mark this section of trail. The trail parallels and then crosses a stone wall to reach an old woods road, the end of park property.

*Wildflowers growing near the ranger station*



LOREN DOBERT



*Quarry rocks piled high*

**1.25** The trail turns right on the old road and enters the OSI Thacher Park Nature Preserve.

**1.45** Turn left off the woods road to climb along a switchback to the top of the ridge and a junction with another woods road.

**1.55** The yellow-blazed woods road leads left in 0.3 miles to Ryan Road and a small parking area. The trail turns right and follows the crest of the ridge through a mixed forest of pine, hardwoods and low-growing juniper.

**1.95** After reaching a cairn that marks the highest point on this trail section, about 1,410 feet, the Long Path descends gradually from the escarpment, staying near its edge.

**2.75** The Long Path reaches a gravel road used by hang-glider enthusiasts to access a takeoff pad at the edge of the escarpment. Turn right on the road and head toward the takeoff pad.

**2.90** Bear right where the road divides into two.

**3.00** The trail turns left off the road and circles a depression in the escarpment. To reach the hang-glider launch site, continue straight on the road and take a left after going through a well-defined stone wall. The point with wonderful far-reaching views is about 0.5 miles further to the east.

**3.20** Cross the other branch of the woods road. This road also leads to the hang glider takeoff pad. In another 0.1 miles, the trail crosses an old stone wall.

**3.40** Reach the middle of an old juniper stand and turn right. The turn is obscured and not yet well marked. The forest along the trail is laced with

fascinating fissures caused by acidity eating away the escarpment's limestone. Cross the head of one of the escarpment ravines and turn left up a small bluff to the Preserve's boundary corner.

**3.85** The trail reaches the end of OSI property. Just ahead of you, on private property, is an open viewpoint. To the right Mt. Everett in southern Massachusetts is seen peeking over the shoulder of the hang-glider opening. Panning north you will see Albany, Mt. Greylock, the Town of Altamont, and Vermont's Green Mountains with Killington and Pico Peak prominent. Turn left along the Preserve's boundary as it parallels the woods road.

**4.10** Meet the woods road as it turns south to enter the Preserve. Turn left to follow the woods road back south.

**4.45** Cross a woods road and begin a moderate climb up a rise. At the top of the rise, the trail turns right and winds through some brushy fields before entering the grounds of an old quarry. The path goes through the quarry with its bizarre formations.

**4.95** Reach the center of the quarry. You may want to spend some time looking for the abundant fossils of ancient sea life in the limestone before coming out to Carrick Road. As this is being written, there are plans for an interpretive kiosk and a large parking lot that will take advantage of the smooth layer of limestone. Continue across the quarry to Carrick Road.

**5.10** Meet Carrick Road and turn right. (Turning left on Carrick Road to follow its yellow blazes will complete the Ryan Road loop.)

**5.30** Reach the end of the maintained portion of Carrick Road. Parking is available alongside the road without obstructing traffic. In the wintertime, this parking location marks the limit of snow plowing on Carrick Road.

**5.45** Turn right onto paved Old Stage Road. Descend gradually, with views across the valley of Altamont towards the hills just south of the Mohawk River.

**6.70** Immediately after passing an old cemetery, turn right onto NY Route 156.

**6.85** Turn left onto Lewis Road.

**7.50** Reach NY Route 146, the current official terminus of the Long Path. It is possible to follow Route 146 a short distance into the village of Altamont and to continue on local roads through Schoharie County to the Mohawk River. The Schenectady Trail Committee of the Long Path North Hiking Club has marked a temporary route that can be followed to the river until a more permanent off-road route is developed.