

8. Woodbury to Salisbury Mills

Feature:Schunemunk Mountain State Park and the Highlands Trail

Distance:7.00 miles

USGS Map Quads:Popolopen Lake, Cornwall, and Maybrook

Trail Conference Maps:Map 8, West Hudson Trails

General Description

The trail continues for a short distance along a Metro-North railroad right-of-way before turning into the woods to go up the often-steep ascent of Schunemunk Mountain. Schunemunk (pronounced “skun-uh-munk”) is a northeast-southwest trending ridge, with sharp sides and a nearly level top. The mountaintop, formerly owned by Open Space Institute, became New York’s 163rd State Park in 2001, securing its lasting protection and ensuring public access for future generations of New Yorkers. The north half of the mountain is divided by a cleft into two ridges. The Long Path follows much of the length of the western ridge, often with splendid scenery, before it descends to the valley to the west, emerging onto Clove Road at the Hil-Mar Lodge.

While most of Schunemunk Mountain is closed to hunters, the western areas of the mountain are open for hunting. Hikers should be aware of the dates of the various hunting seasons and plan accordingly. Deer and turkey are often seen on Schunemunk.

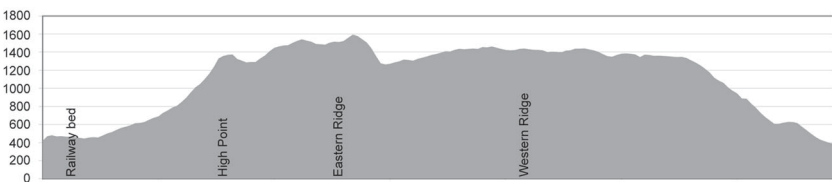
Access

Take the New York State Thruway north to Exit 16, Harriman. Continue north on NY Route 32. Approximately 1.8 miles north of the Woodbury Police sign in the town of Highland Mills, you will pass under a high railroad trestle painted black. The Long Path leaves the west side of the road about 50 feet north of the trestle.

Parking

0.00At the intersection of Evans Drive and NY Route 32, about 0.2 miles south of the railroad trestle. (18T 574643E 4579193N)

7.00At the Hil-Mar Lodge off Clove Road. Hikers should park in a grassy area just south of the main entrance; do not park in the paved parking lot. Camping is available at Hil-Mar Lodge, call first 845-486-4869. (18T 573446E 4585058N)



Trail Description

0.00 The Long Path leaves the west side of NY Route 32 at the end of the guardrail about 50 feet north of where the high railroad trestle goes over the road. It almost immediately climbs a wooded embankment, crosses under the trestle on a gravel road, climbs a steep embankment (watch for poison ivy), and turns right to follow the left side of the trestle. After it reaches the grade of the tracks, the trail turns and follows them north. **Stay away from the center of the trackbed.** The Metro-North passenger trains travel very quickly and very quietly. They can easily overtake a hiker without warning, leaving little time to move to safety.

0.30 Pass the access road to sand pits.

0.35 Turn sharply left onto old road. This road ends at a steep gully and the trail continues to the right into the woods from there, meeting up with another woods road. Follow this second road to the right as it begins a meandering ascent of Schunemunk Mountain, crossing several stone walls along the way.

0.85 The trail turns left onto a narrow track and heads uphill. It now ascends steadily, sometimes steeply, up the slope and then more gently across it. Along the way are several good views, including one at Little Knob.

1.40 Reach the crest of High Knob. This open ridgetop has fine views up and down the valley and of the Hudson River to the north. The trail continues on the top of this flat ridge and then goes left on rocks forming the west side of the ridge. It descends to approach the head of the valley between High Knob and the main ridge to the west. As the gap between the ridges closes, the trail drops into the woods to cross two valleys before ascending a boulder-strewn slope to the opposite ridge.

1.80 The trail reaches the top of the ridge where it stays for about 0.4 miles before dropping into a small valley. An unmarked trail goes right, and shortly after a trail goes left to Woodbury Park.

2.40 The trail crosses Dark Hollow Brook, usually dry, and climbs to the main ridge of Schunemunk Mountain.

2.60 The Jessup Trail (yellow) crosses near the top of the ridge. This trail is also the Highlands Trail (teal diamond). It stretches northeast to Storm King Mountain and southwest through Sterling Forest State Park to reach the Delaware River at the Delaware Water Gap. In another 300 yards, the Long Path reaches an open area of exposed rock, turns left and enters the woods. The descent for the next quarter-mile is on a talus slope, often very steep. An opening in the canopy on the way down affords views of the lowlands below Schunemunk. Once reaching the base of the talus slope, the descent moderates. Striped maple, a small tree with beautiful variegated bark, is abundant here and well worth looking for.

2.95 Cross a woods road on level ground. The trail crosses a sometimes-swampy intermittent stream, turns left on the next woods road, and takes a right fork up a small hill. Turning right on the second woods road leads to the Barton Swamp Trail (red dot on white). Less than 50 yards beyond the fork, a narrow



The wooded slope of Schunemunk Mountain

track leads diagonally off the woods road to the right (pay careful attention to blazes here). The trail now goes gently uphill through sparse woods with lots of chestnut oak to gain the westernmost ridge of Schunemunk Mountain. It continues to ascend gently with occasional views both east and west. The many crevices in the rock cause the trail to zigzag quite a bit for the next 3 miles.

4.10The Barton Swamp Trail (red dot on white), which follows a valley between the eastern and western ridges of Schunemunk Mountain, leaves to the right. The Long Path continues straight ahead. For the next 1.5 miles, the Long Path takes advantage of the many fine viewpoints and interesting rock formations along the way, leading to frequent shifts in direction. Both blazes and cairns mark the trail. Scattered over the windswept top of Schunemunk are pitch pine, birch, oak, elm and many other stunted trees. Blueberry bushes abound, and mountain laurel is found along the lower portions of the trail. The geology of this area is unique since Schunemunk is younger than its neighbors. Also, the pink conglomerate rock forming the top of Schunemunk is very different from the rocks found in the other surrounding mountain ranges.

4.40The Western Ridge Trail (blue dot on white) leaves to the right.

4.90Reach an open area on top of the ridge with fine views to the west toward Woodcock Hill and beyond to Washingtonville and, on clear days, all the way to the ridge of the Shawangunks. To the east are the steep cliffs of the eastern ridge of Schunemunk. These cliffs are favorites of hawks that glide in the warm updrafts.

5.10The Sweet Clover Trail (white) leaves to the right to cross to the eastern

ridge and continue down to Mountainville.

5.60The Long Path turns left as the Barton Swamp Trail (red dot on white) leaves to the right, and the Trestle Trail (white) continues straight ahead along the ridge. Just a short detour along the Trestle Trail brings you to a glorious viewpoint northward to the Catskill Mountains. After traversing some more rock outcroppings, the Long Path begins a gradual descent down the western slope of the mountain.

6.00The trail widens and becomes an abandoned woods road cut into the slope of the mountain and built up with rocks on the downhill side. The road descends gradually on switchbacks.

6.50The road curves sharply to the right, just before reaching a stone wall. The Long Path continues straight ahead through a break in the wall and heads into the woods to descend gradually.

6.65The trail goes through an opening in another stone wall and left onto a broad woods road.

6.70The trail crosses over a stream and turns to the right, still following the woods road.

6.90Pass a private dwelling. The trail continues straight, passing the southern edge of the Hil-Mar Lodge property.

7.00The owner of Hil-Mar Lodge allows hikers to park on a meadow off Clove Road, just south of the main entrance to the Lodge. Look for the parking sign. Do not park in the paved parking lot without speaking to the owner first. To continue on the Long Path, turn right on Clove Road.

