

11. Shawangunk Ridge Trail to Sam's Point Preserve

Features: Wurtsboro Ridge and Bear Hill Nature Preserve

Distance: 11.90 miles

USGSMapQuads: Wurtsboro, Ellenville, and Napanoch

Trail Conference Maps: Map 9, Southern Shawangunk Trails

General Description

The Long Path follows the Shawangunk Ridge Trail north for the next twelve miles. This section is primarily ridgetop with many spectacular views in all directions. These are among the most dramatic in southern New York. The forest is primarily scrub oak, blueberry and occasional pitch pine. The low forest frequently places the hiker above the trees with unlimited visibility. There are also sections of Shawangunk slab, though not as common as found further north. The trail traverses the ridge to NY Route 52. It then ascends to the Bear Hill Nature Preserve and follows roads through Cragsmoor until it reaches the Sam's Point Preserve entrance gate.

Access

Take the New York State Thruway to Exit 16, Harriman. Take NY Route 17/ future Interstate 86 west 29 miles to Exit 114, Highview. Turn right at the end of the exit ramp onto Old Route 17 (Sullivan County 171) and go uphill for 0.4 miles. Turn left on Shawanga Lodge Road and follow it for 1.1 miles. Walk uphill along the Long Path starting from mile 16.55 in Section 10.

Parking

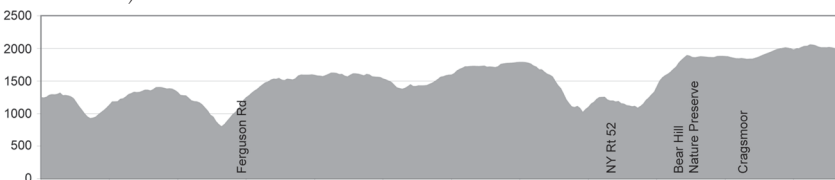
0.00 Shawanga Lodge Road, 0.5 miles from the intersection of the Long Path and the Shawangunk Ridge Trail. 2-3 cars can be parked off the road here. (18T 546074E 4603144N)

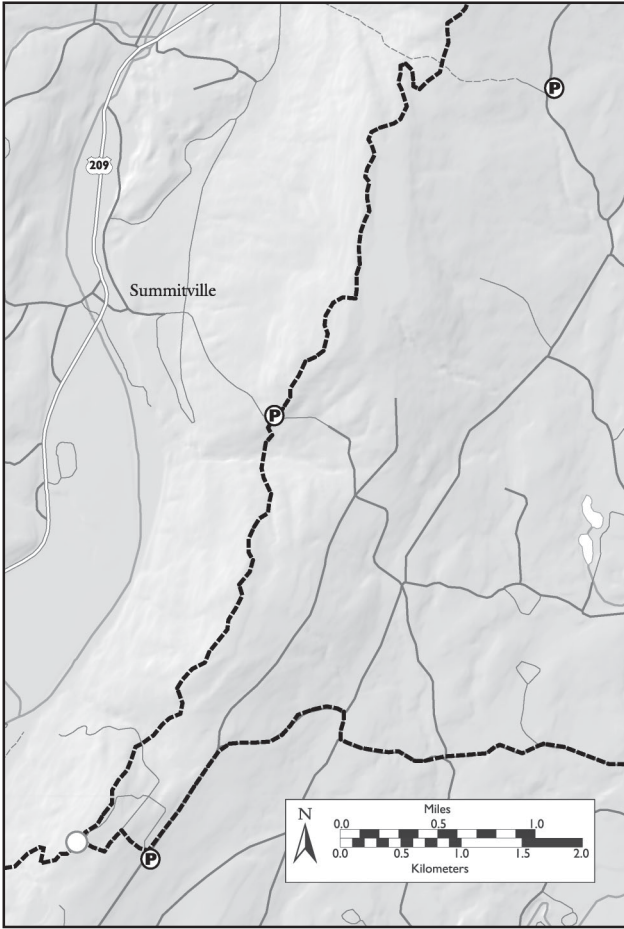
3.05 Ferguson Road (still called Roosa Gap Summitville Road on most maps), 0.7 miles west of top of ridge (Shawanga Lodge Road). (18T 547142E 4606751N)

9.05 NY Route 52 at overlook. (18T 549619E 4613761N)

10.15 Bear Hill Nature Preserve at Dellenbaugh Road. (18T 550495E 4613333N)

11.90 Sam's Point Preserve entrance gate (fee charged). (18T 553137E 4613363N)





Camping

Camping on DEC land.

Trail Description

0.00 The Long Path, blazed with blue DEC disks, turns right and follows the Shawangunk Ridge Trail north just to the left of the slab, into and through the scrub oak. For the next quarter-mile or so, the trail alternates between scrub oak forest with views and denser woods. It then begins to descend, gradually at first, followed by a steeper descent to a col.

0.70 The trail reaches a gravel road that leads down to Wurtsboro Airport. After crossing the road, the trail crosses a stream, reaches an abandoned logging road and then begins climbing back to the ridgetop on a series of switchbacks. As the trail reaches the scrub oak, views again open up to Wurtsboro Airport and to the south.

1.35 The trail crosses another gravel road that leads down to an abandoned lead mine. It then reaches a rock outcropping with a spectacular view north and south across the valley to the west. This point is just south of Wurtsboro Airport. The large structure below is Kohl's warehouse.

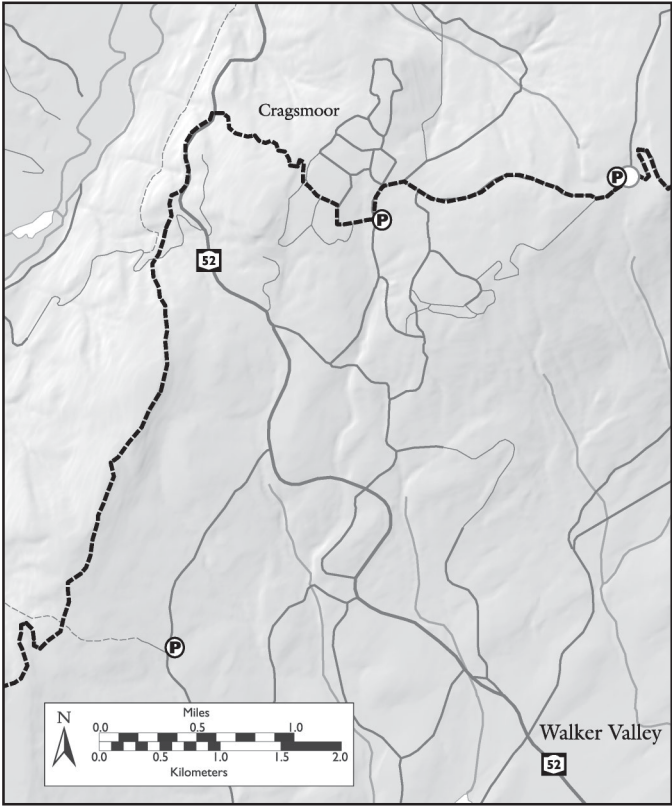
1.90 The trail reaches another dramatic viewpoint. From here it is possible to see northwest to the Catskills and northeast to Roosa Gap and Sam's Point. Beyond here the trail begins a gradual descent toward Roosa Gap with many views along the way.

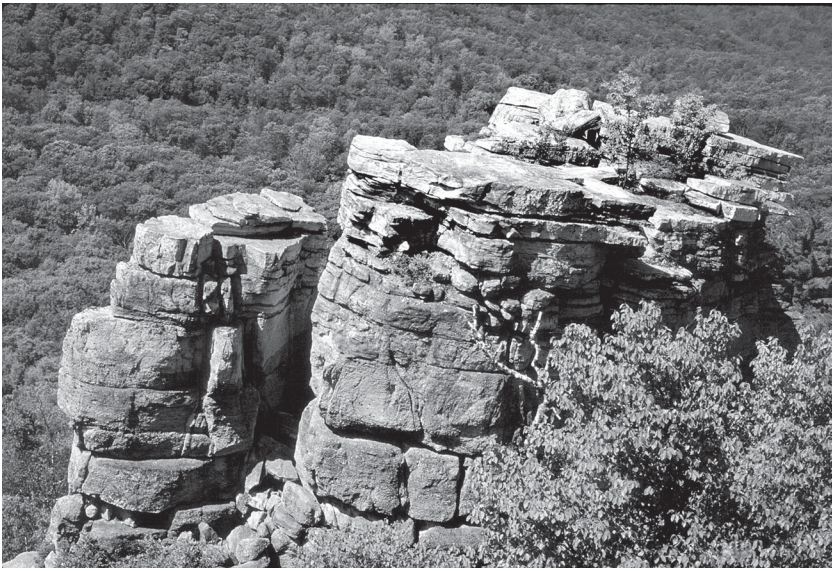
2.30 The trail reaches a large overhanging boulder. Again there are views into Roosa Gap and northwest to the Catskills. Below is the water-filled Summitville section of the old Delaware and Hudson Canal, now a state park. The tow-path of the old canal has been restored here. Beyond the boulder, the trail turns right and descends to a seasonal stream. At the seasonal stream, the trail turns left and descends more steeply along the left bank. At the bottom of the grade, the trail crosses the stream, passes through a wet area and then crosses a larger stream at the bottom of Roosa Gap.

2.90 After the stream crossing, the trail begins to ascend and comes to the end of the State-owned Wurtsboro Ridge parcels. As it crosses into private land, the blazes change into the standard Long Path aqua blaze. Beyond the land boundary the trail climbs to Ferguson Road through a series of switchbacks.

3.05 The trail reaches Ferguson Road. Just to the left of the trail, there is room to park several cars. The trail crosses the road about 0.7 miles west of the height of land. Beyond Ferguson Road, the trail ascends steeply back up to the ridgetop. As you climb, views open up to the south. The ridge north of Ferguson Road is higher and is thus more populated with scrub oak.

3.55 The trail levels out and reaches a spectacular view to the south. This vantage point is higher than any point since the New Jersey border, yielding a view all the way down the ridge to the High Point Monument in New Jersey. There are also views north to the Catskills. From here the trail continues north, remaining about 100 vertical feet below the ridgetop. On the ridgetop is an





Bear Hill Preserve

old fire-lookout tower that has been converted to a State Police radio tower. It is off limits. Once the trail is past the former fire tower, it climbs back up to the ridgetop.

4.00 The trail reaches the top of the ridge and continues north. The forest is thicker here so the views are more restricted. At this elevation, mountain laurel mixes in with blueberry and scrub oak.

4.85 The trail climbs over a knoll and reaches a 360-degree view, the best yet on this section. To the south is a view of Roosa Gap, High Point and the Basha Kill. To the northwest, the Catskills are visible, and directly north are Sam's Point and Gertrude's Nose. Northeast are the Taconics, and southeast are Breakneck Ridge and Storm King Mountain, twin sentinels at the entrance to the Hudson Canyon. The trail continues north, comes to a boulder and descends east into a col between two ridges of the mountain.

5.20 After a short climb, the trail reaches the top of the lower eastern ridge and turns back north to descend to another col. There is another view from the eastern ridge northwards. The trail continues to descend from the scrub oak and enters the forest.

5.60 The trail reaches the small DEC Roosa Gap Parcel and the blazes change to blue DEC disks. After entering state land, the trail descends through an interesting escarpment, and then turns right to parallel it uphill to a height of land. At the height of land, the trail turns left and continues to a woods road.

5.95 The trail crosses the woods road and goes through hardwood forest criss-crossed by stone walls, slowly heading uphill in a generally northern direction. During the next 0.3 miles the trail crosses six stone walls, and, after a further third of a mile, leaves State land. The markings change from blue disks to aqua

blazes.

6.55 The trail makes a sharp left turn and climbs up the ridge. Here the trail goes through scrub oak with an occasional pine tree. Some of its markings are painted on the rocks. Once on the ridge, the first good views appear with the Shawangunk Ridge and Basha Kill south and the Catskill Mountains northwest. During the next 1.15 miles the trail winds itself over the ridge, sometimes affording views to the west and northwest, other times northeast to southeast. On the east side of the ridge are steep ledges of 20-40 ft in height and beautiful loose-standing rock formations.

7.25 An old woods road becomes visible on the bottom of the ledges.

7.65 There are some fine last views of the Catskills, Ellenville, and Bear Hill.

7.75 The trail starts heading down through a nice stand of laurel. The trail is quite steep at places.

8.35 Cross an old road, the former connector between NY Route 52 in Cragmoor and US Route 209 in Spring Glen. After about 0.1 miles, the trail reaches a stream that cascades very nicely from a steep slope. The trail follows the stream down for about 200 ft, and then crosses the falls. After another 0.1 miles, the trail crosses the old road again and starts heading uphill.

8.75 Reach NY Route 52. Turn left and follow Route 52.

9.05 Pass a spectacular overlook high above the valley. The Catskills are visible in all their grandeur in the distance. This is a popular spot to hang glide in the updrafts created by the Shawangunk Ridge. There is a large parking area here. The trail continues past the overlook, reaching a turnoff to the right by a guardrail.

9.15 Turn right off NY Route 52, 0.1 miles past the parking area, at a place where the guardrail ends on the right, and head uphill paralleling Route 52. After a short distance, the trail climbs steeply through a series of switchbacks. The forest understory is primarily mountain laurel and blueberry. As the trail climbs, the forest begins to thin out.

9.70 The trail turns right and emerges on the slab as it continues to climb. From the slab, there are views across the Rondout Valley to the Catskills. After about 0.2 miles, the trail reaches the top of the hill and turns left along the slab. After a short distance, the trail turns right to descend into the woods.

10.05 The trail intersects a woods road. If you were to turn right and follow the woods road for 0.5 miles, you would reach the Bear Hill cliffs. These cliffs are a spectacular example of Shawangunk topography. The area is filled with crevices as you hop from boulder to boulder. From the cliffs, there is a spectacular view to the south. The Bear Hill Nature Preserve was set aside as a park by the community of Cragmoor. The trail turns left and follows the woods road past boulders that block motor vehicles from accessing the cliffs. Just past the boulders is a parking area where several cars may be left.

10.15 Turn right on Dellenbaugh Road.

10.35 Circle Road goes to the right. Continue to the left on Dellenbaugh Road.

10.45 Meadow Lane is to the left. Continue on Dellenbaugh Road to the right.

10.55 Intersect Cragsmoor Road. To the right is the Cragsmoor Library. Bear to the left and follow Cragsmoor Road. The post office is on the left.

10.70 Cragsmoor Road continues ahead as South Gully Road. Bear to the right and follow Sam's Point Road.

11.80 Cross Sam's Point Preserve boundary.

11.90 Reach large parking area for Sam's Point Preserve (owned by the Open Space Institute, managed by The Nature Conservancy). There is a gatehouse here and a parking fee must be paid.