

Trail Notes for the Big Mountain-Pine Tree Vista Hike

Description: Thanks to Ed Stobenaue for showing us this hike first hand.

Big Mountain is a summit on Tuscarora Mountain, a long ridge that divides Allens Valley to the west from Path Valley to the east. Although you can drive to this vista it is much more rewarding, and not all that difficult, to hike to it. Add to it a challenging 400-500 foot climb over 0.4 miles to a grand view of Allens Valley, seeing north as far as Cowans Gap, and a relaxing hike on the Lockard trail encased in Mountain Laurel and Hemlocks and you have yourself a pretty respectable day hike.

We give this hike a strenuous rating mostly because of the steep climb to the Pine Tree Vista. If this is excluded from the trek, reduce the mileage by 0.8 miles and reclassify it as moderate.

The hike starts at the parking area at the intersection of Augwhick and Tower Roads.

Trail Notes: Most (but not all) trail junctions are signed. Trails are still obvious. Only the Tuscarora Trail (TT) is blazed (blue).

From the parking lot walk around the yellow steel gate and follow an old logging road (Lincoln Trail) for 0.2 miles. As it curves to the left the TT comes in from the right and the road begins to carry its blue blazes. The walking here is pretty flat and open. In 0.7 miles another road, the Plank Trail, comes in from the left the road curves to the left in 0.7 more miles becoming the Fore Trail. Leave the road to the right here on a rocky footpath as you continue to follow the blue blazes. There is a gradual climb here but the rocks are more of an issue than the elevation change. Arrive at the end of Tower Road and the Big Mountain vista in 0.8 more miles.

After taking in the views continue NOBO on the TT as you pass the footers for the old tower. The footpath will end at a jeep road. Turn right and switchback down to another jeep road. To visit the Big Mountain Shelter turn left and walk for 0.2 miles to a turn off.

After another short break return to the previous junction and either continue on the jeep road or re-join the TT which parallels it before rejoining it at the next trail junction. In 0.3 miles turn left onto the Richmond Trail and descend steeply for 0.7 miles to Augwhick Road.

Turn left onto it for 0.1 miles then turn right onto the King Trail. Cross the creek on a bridge and turn right onto a logging road. In 0.5 miles the King Trail leaves the road on the right. Follow it. At this point you can see the single pine tree on the ridge that you are heading for. Soon pass a fork in the trail. You will use the left fork on your descent. Begin a steep climb. In 0.4 miles, just before the Pine tree bear to the left in front of some tangled fallen trees to get to the edge. Here you will get a rewarding view of Allens Valley, Cowans Gap and the park lake.

Retrace your steps, bearing right at the fork and return to the logging road. Turn right, passing a piped spring in 0.1 miles on the right. The logging road continues for 0.5 miles. Here it becomes wet and overgrown. If it is impassable there is a by-pass trail to the right that parallels it. If you take this route be careful to maintain visual contact with the logging road so you can return to it near its end. The road will reduce to a foot path and soon join the Lockard Trail which comes in from the left. Here you will be climbing on a very gradual grade. In 0.3 miles the grade splits. Stay straight (left) to stay on trail. In another 0.2 miles the Fore Trail also comes in from the right. The Lockard Trail ends in 0.8 miles at the Lincoln Trail. Turn left onto it and in 0.3 miles cross Augwhick and then Tower Road to return to your vehicle.