

Kelly's Run/Pinnacle Overlook Trail Notes

Description: I used to think this was a 7-mile hike. That was before the days of map software and GPS. The main loop is actually 3.5 miles. The additional up and back to the Pinnacle is about 1.5 miles making this a 5-mile jaunt. Perhaps it feels like 7 miles because of the steep climb, some of it in the sun, up to the Pinnacle.

Regardless of the distance, this is one beautiful hike. There are some boring parts, especially at the beginning, like a cornfield and an old maintenance road, but these become mere memories as you climb the Conestoga Trail to obtain sweeping views and then descend into the dark coolness of Kelly's Run.

As usual you'll see that I describe this hike in the reverse direction preferred by others. The reasons are obvious. 1) I think its best to get the boring part of this hike out of the way early. 2) The hike UP the maintenance road and through the cornfield can be grueling in the high sun of summer. 3) I think you've seen this before on this site but I prefer to hike UP pretty streams, not down. Finally, the hike up Kelly's Run will be the last thing in your mind, not walking through a cornfield at high noon in July!

Direction from I-95 in Northern MD:

1. Take MD Rt 543 (exit 80) North to MD Rt165.
2. Turn right onto MD Rt165. MD Rt165 becomes PA Rt74.
3. Turn right onto PA Rt372 and cross the Susquehanna River on the Norman Woods Bridge.
4. Pass Old Pinnacle Rd.
5. Turn left onto Crystal Drive. The park is at the end of the road on the other side of Holtwood Road.

Trail notes: From the parking area, walk west beyond the yellow forest gate and alongside the baseball field. Pass the red-blazed Loop Trail on your right (0.6 miles from the start). Continue straight.

The trail empties into a large cornfield. Follow the footpath straight across to the woods. A few posts with blue blazes will guide you. At the woods turn left following the edge of the cornfield until you come to double, angled blue blazes marking a trail on your right. Turn here and follow the trail down to the intersection with a PPL maintenance Road. There are some crude benches here under some evergreens for a nice break (0.8 miles from last trail junction).

Turn right onto the maintenance road and follow it downhill.

At 0.46 miles come to an old bridge crossing Kelly's Run. Due to the deteriorating condition of the decking it has been removed. It is not known if PPL plans on replacing it. For now ford Kelly's Run on either side of the bridge or use the railroad culvert to cross the run. Turn right onto blue-blazed Kelly's Run Trail. Very shortly turn left onto the orange-blazed Conestoga Trail.

Follow the Conestoga Trail steeply up the hill. Turn right on an old forest road (to be used in your descent). In a few yards turn left onto a footpath for some more steep climbing. Turn right and climb up a gas cable swath a short distance before turning left again onto a footpath. There are several views of Lake Aldred as you climb. At times the blazes are painted on the rocks you are walking on.

The Conestoga trail footpath will merge onto a forest road (Yellow blazed Fire Line Tr). Continue uphill following the dual blazes to Pinnacle Overlook (0.74 miles from Kelly's Run). This is a nice picnic area pit toilets (in season). I've been told that the water has been turned off. Gates are open to this area for vehicular traffic. The best spot for lunch is not here but about 0.16 miles further down the Conestoga Trail at a nice rock outcrop.

After lunch return to the Pinnacle picnic area. Pass through the same forest gate you encountered on the way up but immediately bear left onto an old woods road with alternating yellow and white blazes (Fire Line and Pinnacle Trails, respectively).

The blazes are faded and sporadic. Keep an eye out as the white-blazed Pinnacle Trail will turn left onto a footpath marked by double, angled white blazes in 0.25 miles. Turn left, following the white blazes and descend to another forest road. This section can be thorny in the summer.

The white blazes will continue across the road and eventually lead to Kelly's Run. To see the best part of Kelly's Run proceed down the Pinnacle Trail a few more yards and come to yet another woods road. Turn right onto the forest road, leaving the Pinnacle Tr, and descend for about 0.15 miles to the Conestoga Trail (orange blazes). Turn left on the Conestoga and then left again at Kelly's Run Trail. The two trails share the same tread here so blazes will alternate orange and blue.

Continue upstream, soon crossing Kelly's Run on a diagonal. Pass several large rock outcrops on your right before descending onto a gravel bar in the stream with a huge rock face capped in ferns on the opposite bank. This is a great break spot.

The bank on the opposite side is steep and muddy. The PPL has recently shored up the trail and cut steps into a large boulder to allow for a safer climb after the crossing. Continue upstream passing white-blazed Pinnacle trail on your left at about 0.34 miles from joining Kelly's Run Tr. Cross a tributary and then re-cross Kelly's Run at another rock outcrop.

Continue up the blue and orange-blazed trail. The red-blazed Loop Trail comes in from the right at 0.74 miles from the last trail junction. Stay straight on Kelly's Run/Conestoga Trail.

The rocky trail will climb up and cut across two power line swaths and two junctions with the yellow blazed Oliver Patton Tr before turning right through some evergreens and ending above the Holtwood Park rest rooms (0.77 miles from the red Loop Trail junction). Walk across the lawn to your cars.