

Trail Notes for the Iron Stone BP Loop

Description: The Mid-State Trail (MST) is a 313 mile trail that when complete (325 miles) will extend from the New York state border to Maryland at Green Ridge State Forest. Described here is a 21.2 mile moderate loop utilizing about six miles of the MST, the 3 mile Jackson Trail (formerly part of the MST), the Iron Stone Trail in the Stone Valley Recreation Area and assorted connector trails. Overall 2400 feet of elevation will be lost and gained. The steep sections are "VERY STEEP" and extremely rocky but thankfully short in their duration. The Jackson Trail/MST ridge walk is also very rocky but the numerous panoramic views (the camera icons on the map are an under-estimation.) in all directions make it more than worth all of the effort and pain you will endure.

The hike starts at the parking lot by the boat mooring area of currently dry Lake Perez. Make sure you inform [the Stone Valley Recreation Area](#) of your intentions in advance. You can also park in two places on PA Rt26 but the RA parking area is the most secure.

Trail Notes: All trails are blazed as shown on the map and generally well signed with one exception to be described later. The S.V.R.A. maintains over 20 miles of trails. We only show those used on this hike. A free map can be downloaded from the above site (recommended).

From the parking area travel north-east a short distance. Cross a small bridge and pick up the orange blazed Lake Trail. Follow the yellow arrows to the Shaver Creek Nature Center. Turn left and cross the headwaters of the lake on a boardwalk. Follow a blue blazed gravel trail for 0.38 miles as it winds its way up to the nature center's parking lot. They sell maps of the S.V.R.A. for \$0.50. Cross the parking area and pass through a walk-through kiosk. The trail continues at the end of a retaining wall to your right. Turn left onto the trail and descend to the intersection with the Lake (orange) and Iron Stone (blue) Trails. Turn right onto the Iron Stone Trail. Soon pass an old shelter on the right and the Bluebird Trail on the left. In 0.65 miles cross Red Rose Road. In 0.41 more miles the orange Woodcock Trail begins to share the treadway. Be careful. In another 0.16 miles a double dark blue blaze suggests that you turn right at a sign. This is the Homestead Trail but is not signed as such. Continue straight on the dual blazed Woodcock/Iron Stone Trail along pretty Shaver Creek encapsulated in Hemlocks. Cross Rt26 in another 1.22 miles. Pass the ruins of the Monroe Iron Furnace on the left.

Follow a railroad grade for 0.35 miles. Bear left off of the grade, around a yellow forest gate onto a gravel road. Turn right onto it but in a few steps turn left onto a cabin driveway. The trail continues on the right as a footpath. The trail climbs up to join an old logging road as you skirt a recently logged area to your left. Tussey Mountain, your objective for tomorrow, is clearly in sight. In 0.86 miles from the driveway the Iron Stone Trail ends. The orange blazed MST continues to the left and straight ahead. Continue straight. There is a great two level campsite above the Beaver Pond (actually an old mill pond) immediately to the right. We recommend stopping here for the night. If you wish to push on a little further or if that spot is taken potential campsites close to the creek are to the right as shown on the map. They are flat, large and open but they may not have fire rings.

The MST continues up the valley for 1.59 miles after the last campsite, passing the front of a hunter's cottage at one point. It then makes an abrupt left hand turn and climbs steeply up a rocky talus slope to the ridge of Tussey Mountain. Turn left onto the blue blazed Jackson Trail. Although the next 6 miles are virtually flat they are extremely rocky. The views, however, are among some of the best in PA. Some offer views both to the left and right of the trail. There are a lot more vistas than what is shown on the map. Take your time and enjoy them. Watch your footing! In 2.03 miles reach one of those double views. This one has a hidden, dry campsite nestled deep in the hemlocks. This would be a good place to watch the sun set and rise without changing your location. The trail improves into a jeep road shortly after this. In 0.61 miles from the campsite it becomes a comm. tower service road. In another 0.16 miles arrive at Rt26 and Jo Hay's Vista.

After taking in the view continue on the MST using the comm. tower service road. (A spur trail from the vista will lead you back to it.) The going is easy until you pass the last tower in another 0.37 miles but then the rocks return. In 0.40 miles cross a power line swath with a double view. The next 2.24 miles is similar to the Jackson Trail but perhaps not quite as bad. Enjoy several more views at every talus slope or rocky knob you cross. Turn left onto the yellow blazed Indian Steps Trail. You'll drop about 500 feet over 0.35 miles. Cross Harrys Valley Road, joining the Crownover Trail. In another 0.28 miles there is a large, flat campsite on the left about 30 yards from the stream. It is the last campsite on water for the rest of the trek.

Continuing on, cross Harrys Run and climb steeply up the north flank of Leading Ridge on the Crownover trail (still yellow). In 0.45 miles reach the crest of the ridge. The trail will make a 90 degree right turn and eventually turn into a nice jeep road. In 0.96 miles pass a small, dry trailside campsite. The best ridge top camping comes in another 0.41 miles. Turn left through the trees into an open meadow with a nice south-easterly view. The sunrise must be exceptionally nice from this vantage point. Somewhere along this ridge walk the road becomes the Iron Stone trail. The debarkation point is not signed and the blazes do not change to blue until you near the forest boundary with the S.V.R.A. The road eventually descends down the south flank of the ridge, bearing right at a fork in 1.72 miles from the last campsite. In another 0.19 miles exit the forest. Arrive at a gravel road in 0.28 more miles. Turn left onto it. In 0.34 miles, as you pass a stream gauge building on the left, turn right onto an old woods road in a forest of spruce, pine and larch. The pine needles will feel like a thick carpet on your feet after yesterday's hike! In 0.78 miles cross the same gravel road you walked on earlier. Climb through a clear area that has recently been planted with pine. In 0.46 miles turn right onto a gravel turn around area and cross Charter Oak Road. Continue up the south entrance drive of the S.V.R.A. for 0.23 miles. Turn right onto a road blocked by a gate (the orange blazed Lake trail). Cross the dam and spillway and bear left, following a gravel/ asphalt trail through the cabin area (restrooms and hot showers for \$1.00!!!) to your vehicles.