

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Hiking Background

Hiking Hawk Mountain

The 200-degree panorama from atop Hawk Mountain's famed North Lookout is unarguably one of the most scenic views in the East. Visitors look down upon the endless stretch of forest along the Kittatinny Ridge, and out across a patchwork of farmland and fields that flank both sides of the mountain.

A nominal trail fee supports Hawk Mountain conservation programs, and helps to protect and maintain the 2,600-acre Sanctuary.

Once on the Mountain, even the most novice hiker can walk the 100 or so steps to the South Lookout, just 300 yards from the Visitor Center. An all-terrain wheelchair is available year-round, and a golf cart during peak weekends.

The path to North Lookout is a moderate, one-mile walk to the summit. The trail winds along the ridgetop, cuts into the oak forest, and passes through a thick grove of hemlock. A volunteer-made but seemingly natural stone staircase leads visitors up the final steps to the top of the world.

From North Lookout, seasoned hikers can pick up the blue-blazed Skyline Trail. It begins with a steep drop, continues along the spine of the Kittatinny and connects to the Appalachian Trail. Or, opt for one of two connector trails that explore the slopes and drops 700 feet to the River of Rocks, an Ice-age boulder field on the valley floor.

Here, the valley habitat is one of deep forest, including stands of tulip poplars and bogs, an underground stream, and plenty of small rocks deposited by the glacial runoff that once carved this valley.

If the views, the hikes and the hawks are not enough, there also is local antiquing and nearby Amish Country. Local eateries include the Port Clinton Hotel, favored by Appalachian Trail hikers for generous portions. Outdoor enthusiasts will want to visit Cabela's Showroom, just 7 miles from Hawk Mountain, or tie a fly and cast along the Little Schuylkill River.

For more hikes, www.visitapa.com suggests a four-day adventure that begins at World's End State Park, heads to the Pinchot Trail Northern Loop, stop at the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, and finishes at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. For a shorter overnight, make Jim Thorpe base camp, and explore the Lehigh Gorge one day and head to Hawk Mountain the next.

For more B&Bs, attractions and eateries, visit www.hawkmountain.org and click Visiting Us.

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