



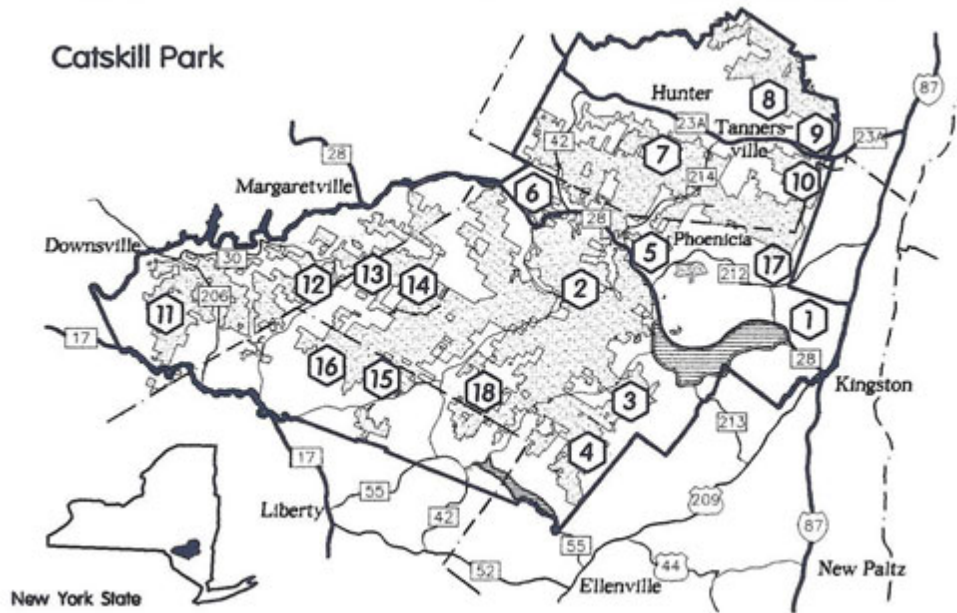
The Catskill Adventure: Day Hikes and Paddles for Families

The “Catskill Adventure,” found within the borders (blue line) of the Catskill Forest Preserve, includes short day hikes and canoe paddles suggested specifically for families with children. Through these activities, you and your family will learn about the recreational and educational opportunities available throughout the 700,000-acre Catskill Park. In addition, you will become more familiar with the terrain, flora, fauna and weather of the park and more attuned to the pleasures of the natural world.

Most hiking trails are marked with small, circular disks colored red, blue or yellow. All distances shown are round-trip.

By completing at least six of the adventures listed here, you can earn a special patch. Record the locations, dates and personal highlights for each adventure on a sheet of paper. Send this information to NYSDEC, Lands and Forests, 21 South Putt Corners Road, New Paltz, NY 12561-1620. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope to receive your patch.





Tips for Hiking and Paddling with Children

- Stop frequently to observe plants, animals or views and to listen for the sounds of nature, which will help keep children engaged.
- Let children lead, set their own pace and rest often. The main goal is to have fun!
- Carry and drink plenty of fluids. During exertion, kids lose fluids faster than adults, particularly in warm weather.
- Pack lots of snacks.
- Carry a compass and a good topographical map of the area you are hiking. Check the surrounding topography, and ask children to match it to the map. In addition, teach them how to use a compass.
- Ensure that everyone wears or carries a whistle. If somebody becomes separated from the group, it requires less effort to blow a whistle at regular intervals than to shout for a long period.
- Wear lifejackets when canoeing. Although they're optional for adults, parents can set a good example by wearing them too. Children **MUST** wear U.S.C.G.-approved lifejackets when canoeing, and a lifejacket must be available at all times for each person in the canoe. From November to May, **EVERYONE** in a canoe **MUST** wear a lifejacket.

- Avoid canoeing in the early spring or late fall when air and water temperatures can be frigid. Tipping over in summer is inconvenient. But, due to the possibility of hypothermia, tipping over in spring or fall can be life threatening.
- Carry rain gear and additional clothing at all times; weather in the Catskills can change quickly. Hypothermia can occur even when temperatures are as high as 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Experienced outdoors people know that “cotton kills,” so don’t wear traditional blue jeans or canvas sneakers. Wear silk, wool or synthetics instead.
- Encourage children to carry their own packs and to include a (non-cotton) jacket, beverages and snacks inside.
- Explain to children that they should stay on the trail to avoid getting lost and to help protect plants and reduce erosion.

More Information

From DEC:

[Catskill Forest Preserve Official Map and Guide](#)

[Fire Towers of the Catskills: A Guide for Hikers and History Buffs](#)

[Tips for Using State Land](#)

Camping in the New York State Forest Preserve:

- [Campgrounds](#)
- [Map](#)
- [Campground Rules](#)

Belleayre Mt. Ski Center, call 845-254-5600, or visit www.belleayre.com

Brochures about wilderness and wild forest locations included in the “Adventure” may be available from DEC.

Detailed hiking maps are sold by:

NY/NJ Trail Conference 201-512-9348

Adirondack Mountain Club 800-395-8080

Hunting is allowed in the Catskill Forest Preserve. Hunting seasons run from September through February and during the month of May. Big game hunting season is from mid-November to mid-December. Call DEC for details.

Water and Trails

Water bodies accessible to canoes: Onteora Lake, Alder Lake, North-South Lake, Colgate Lake, Mongaup Pond, Big Pond and Little Pond

Best trails/locations for children under 5: Alder Lake, Colgate Lake, Mary's Glen, Onteora Lake, Big Pond and Little Pond

NYSDEC

Ulster & Sullivan Counties

Bureau of Forest Preserve Management

21 South Putt Corners Road

New Paltz, NY 12561

845-256-3004

Greene & Delaware Counties

Bureau of Forest Preserve Management

65561 State Highway 10

Stamford, NY 12167-9503

607-652-7365

1 Onteora Lake, Bluestone Wild Forest Town of Kingston, Ulster County

Bluestone mined in this area was transported by wagons to Kingston, where it was shipped to cities around the world. Walk the trail (yellow markers) that loops around part of Onteora Lake for signs of former bluestone quarrying. The woods road/trail (also yellow markers) starts at the parking lot at Onteora Lake and winds through an undulating forested landscape of hemlocks, pines and oaks. Trail loops throughout the woods to the north are also excellent for short mountain biking tours.

From I-87 (NYS Thruway), exit 19 (Kingston), take State Route 28 from the Kingston traffic circle to the DEC sign on the right, just before Convenience Deli. Turn right, and take the unpaved gravel road to a parking lot near the 16.5-acre, 0.75-mile-long lake. Alternate activities: Bring your own non-motorized boat, and enjoy a passive paddle on the lake, or take a mountain bike ride on the network of trails that winds through the forest.

Distance - 1.8 miles, easy to moderate. Ascent - 200 feet

2 Giant Ledge, Slide Mt. Wilderness Town of Shandaken, Ulster County

Giant Ledge, at 3,200 feet, offers multiple views to the east and west of some of the tallest Catskill Mountains (Wittenberg, Terrace, Cornell, Spruce, Hemlock and Balsam).

Take State Route 28 from Kingston to Big Indian, then turn south (left) onto Co. Route 47 (Big Indian Hollow Road). Go 7 miles to a parking lot on the right. Follow the Phoenicia-East Branch Trail (yellow markers) 0.75 mile to the Giant Ledge Trail (blue markers), and turn north (left); then go 0.6 mile up to Giant Ledge.

Distance 2.7 miles. Ascent - 1,000 feet

3 Kanape Brook, Sundown Wild Forest Town of Olive, Ulster County

This 2.65-mile hike runs along the Kanape Brook where there are remnants of hillside farms on what was once known as Freeman Avery Road. You will pass streams rushing to the brook, stone walls, farm foundations (on the left), Norway spruce plantings, a stone spring box built by the Civilian Conservation Corps at 1.25 miles and, finally, a clearing where the trail crosses a brook with small trout. Here the trail runs through a dark, dense plantation of Norway spruce. These trees would have been used for lumber and logs and to protect the former farm from wind and snowdrifts. The trail leaves the old road at 2.65 miles, continuing up to Ashokan High Point Mountain (3,080 ft.). The last 1.25 miles are very steep.

Take Route 28 from Kingston or Boiceville to 28A, which wraps around the southern side of the Ashokan Reservoir, to Watson Hollow Road (Co. Route 42), and then go 3.75 miles to the Kanape parking lot, with an information board on the right. The trail (red markers) crosses the road downhill from the parking lot and then crosses a wooden footbridge. The trail register is just beyond the bridge.

Distance - 5.3 miles. Ascent - 500 feet

(To High Point Summit - 7.5 miles. Ascent - 1,480 feet)

4 Vernooy Kill Falls, Sundown Wild Forest Town of Rochester, Ulster County

Vernooy Kill Falls is a series of picturesque little waterfalls (with pools), which drop about 30 feet in four stages. A footbridge crosses the base of the falls, offering a nice view. Nearby is a tall, stone wall, a remnant of the Vernooy Mill, which was a major crossroads where farmers brought their grain 200 years ago. A main road once ran through this area, which now looks so wild. In the years since 2000, more than 1,000 acres have burned on nearby Cherrytown Mountain.

Take State Route 209 to Cherrytown Road to Upper Cherrytown Road. The parking lot is on the right of Upper Cherrytown Road. After parking, cross to the trail, which begins with a steep hill on the old woods road, now a snowmobile trail.

Distance - 3.6 miles. Ascent - 250 feet

5 Day-Use Area Town of Shandaken, Ulster County

Two loop trails—the Old Field Trail and the Winnie Farm History Trail—cross the meadows and woods of this proposed site for the Catskill Interpretive Center (CIC). Both trails are flat and easy to walk. This property has been partially developed for the CIC and contains a 16-panel kiosk about the Catskills.

Take State Route 28 to Mount Tremper, to the entrance off Route 28. Cross the bridge, and park at the turnaround parking lot. Follow the signs to the interpretive trails.

Each trail loop is 0.5 mile long.



6 Rochester Hollow Town of Shandaken, Ulster County

From the parking lot, the abandoned road climbs gently and steadily along the stream, passing low hemlock stands. At about the one-mile mark, the trail becomes steeper for ½-mile. It levels off again as it passes a 1921 Burroughs Forest memorial plaque, two small ponds and house ruins, before ending at private lands—a distance of about 3 miles. The trail is good for cross-country skiing and limited mountain biking. A new lean-to, around the two-mile mark, was to be completed by spring 2011.

Take State Route 28 from Kingston, about 1 mile past Big Indian. Turn right onto Matyas Road, and continue to the parking lot just before the gate. Swimming is allowed at the Pine Hill Day-Use Area, 1 mile west on Route 28, to the left. A day-use fee is charged.

Distance - up to 6 miles. Ascent - up to 800 feet

7a Diamond Notch Falls, Hunter-West Kill Mt. Wilderness Town of Lexington, Greene County

From the last parking lot near the gate at the end of Spruceton Road, follow the Diamond Notch Trail (not the Spruceton Trail) east for 1 mile to the falls. The trail, once a town road, ascends gently with the headwaters of the West Kill. The falls drop about 25 feet into an amphitheater-like setting, with a small meadow nearby.

Take State Route 23A west to Lexington; turn left on State Route 42 and left again on County Route 6 (Spruceton Road). State Route 42 can also be reached from Shandaken on State

Route 28 from Kingston and Margaretville. Spruceton Road becomes rough after crossing two small bridges before reaching the parking lot. The seven-mile road is not busy and is even quieter near the end. This trail could be considered for mountain biking, with care.

Distance - 2 miles. Ascent - 300 feet

7b Hunter Mountain Fire Tower Town of Hunter, Greene County

The easiest trail to Hunter Mountain Fire Tower (4,040 feet) starts at the Hunter Mt. Ski Center chairlift. It goes through deciduous forests to boreal balsam fir/red spruce forests that have been snapped off and stunted by high winds and icy winters. The 60-foot steel tower, built in 1917, may be climbed to just below the cab.

Take State Route 23A to Hunter Mountain Ski Center in Hunter. This hike is moderately difficult and starts at the summit of the Hunter Mt. Sky Ride (chairlift) to Colonel's Chair. The Sky Ride is open most weekends throughout the summer. Go 1.1 miles to the intersection of the trail (yellow markers) and the Spruceton Trail (blue markers), and then turn left and proceed 1 mile to the firetower.

Distance - 4.2 miles. Ascent - 900 feet

Other trails also lead to the firetower and summit: 1) via Spruceton (Greene County) Route 6, Spruceton Road, off Route 42; see also Diamond Notch Falls above. This trail is a seven-mile moderately difficult hike on an old woods road (blue markers); 2) via Diamond Notch, Stony Clove Notch or Becker Hollow. These trails are off Route 214, connecting Phoenicia Route 28 with Route 23A, between Hunter and Tannersville. **Stony Clove Notch and Becker Hollow are very steep/very difficult and not recommended for children.**

8 Colgate Lake Town of Jewett, Greene County

Canoe the 26-acre lake (no motorized boats allowed). Mountains surround the valley, with good views of the Blackhead Mountain Range (Thomas Cole - 3,940 feet; Black Dome - 3,980 feet; Blackhead - 3,940 feet). The Colgate Lake Trail (yellow markers) from the last parking lot leads to a beaver wetland (at 2.35 miles) and meadow. This is the site of a former village and sawmill, where Dutch settlers, Esopus Indians and runaway slaves lived 200 years ago. If inclined, you may hike onward across the mountains down to the Hudson Valley.

Take State Route 23A west to Tannersville, and turn right onto County Route 23C. Then, turn right again onto County Route 78. Park at any one of three parking lots along Route 78, and walk to or from Colgate Lake. Note that the two-space parking lot nearest the dam is only for people with mobility impairments.

Distance to the lake from the other two parking lots is less than 1 mile.

9a North-South Lake Hikes: Catskill Mt. House Site Town Hunter, Greene Co.

Pitch your tent, or park your camper beside North Lake at North-South Lake Public Campground (call 1-800-456-CAMP for reservations). Enjoy swimming, fishing and boating, or take a hike. Start with a short hike to see one of the most beautiful views of the Hudson Valley—the former site of the Catskill Mountain House. On a clear day, five states are visible from this vantage point. In its heyday, between the 1850s and the 1870s, this renowned hotel catered to 400 guests a night, including such notables as presidents Arthur and Grant. Walk east to the ledge of the escarpment, called the Wall of Manitou by Native Americans, who believed it was the dwelling place of Manitou, their god. Study the carvings in the red sandstone rocks, and see how many dates from the 1800s you can find.

Take 23A to Haines Falls, and then follow the signs to North-South Lake Campground. Drive through the North Lake Beach parking lot, and park in the gravel lot just beyond. (This area is open May to mid-October, when a day-use fee is charged.) Walk uphill through the lot, and look for the blue trail markers and a sign directing you to turn right. Follow the blue markers uphill for .2 mile to the open ledge of this famous spot.

Distance to Mountain House - ½ mile. Ascent - 80 feet

9b Alligator Rock and Boulder Rock

Alligator and Boulder rocks are glacial erratics—boulders left behind 10,000-12,000 years ago when the mile-deep glacial ice sheets receded. There are many erratics throughout the Catskills.

Return to the gate at the end of the parking lot, and follow the old carriage road (red snowmobile trail markers) for a hike east to Alligator Rock. Hikers can also take a circular route by heading to the South Lake picnic shelter and following the trail past Alligator Rock back to the parking area.

Distance to Alligator Rock - 1 mile

To get to Boulder Rock, take the escarpment trail (blue markers), which starts near the historical marker for the site of the Catskill Mountain House. Boulder Rock offers views toward Palenville and the Hudson Valley.

Distance - 1.5 miles. Ascent - 200 feet

9c Mary's Glen and Ashley Falls

This short hike starts at a cobbled streambed, and it's good for parents with small children who want to avoid hiking near open ledges. The hike goes through lovely, wooded Mary's Glen, then alongside a beaver meadow to the base of a heavily forested cascade known as Ashley Falls.

At North-South Lake Campground, where a day-use fee is charged from May to mid-October, trailhead parking is about one mile in on the left. Cross the stone bridge and turn right, following the red markers and a sign for North Point and Mary's Glen. At the sign for Ashley Falls, at 0.2 mile, the trail (yellow markers) leads straight ahead 0.1 mile to the rocky base of the falls.

Distance - 0.6 miles. Ascent - 20 feet

9d Artist and Sunset Rocks

This hike has narrow ledges, so watch children closely. The mostly gentle ascent has two steep segments through a pine forest with flat rocks and passes several rock ledges. Begin this hike at the bulletin board just before the North Lake Beach parking area. From May to mid- October, a day-use fee is charged. A short trail (with yellow markers) leads into a pine forest and joins the escarpment trail at .01 mile. Turn left, and follow the blue trail markers to a trail register. At 0.2 mile, there is a steep scramble across boulders up to a ledge. Follow the ledges across slabs of rock, and go through the pitch pine forest. Here there are many good views before a steep segment 0.3-mile long leads to Artist Rock, a ledge that was a favorite spot of Hudson River School painters in the mid-1800s.

Distance - 0.6 mile. Ascent - 200 feet

After an easier stretch and another short climb, take the trail at the junction to Sunset Rock (yellow markers) for magnificent views of North and South lakes and the Hudson River.

Distance - 1.6 miles. Ascent - 300 feet

10 Kaaterskill Falls Trail Town of Hunter, Greene County

Parking is uphill to the west of the junction of Route 23A and Kaaterskill Creek. At 260 feet, Kaaterskill Falls are the highest waterfalls in New York State. They comprise two tiers, with the upper falls dropping 175 feet, and the lower falls dropping 85 feet into a rocky basin. These falls also were a favorite subject of Hudson River School painters.

From the parking lot, walk downhill along the north side of the road, then across the Bastion Falls bridge, and turn left onto the trail (yellow markers). Be careful when walking along this narrow, busy roadway. The trail ascends steeply from the road and has several good spots from which to view Bastion Falls. Follow the stream through mixed hardwoods and hemlocks to the base of Kaaterskill Falls. The trail is moderate, with some steep ascents and descents. After crossing several rock slides, the trail passes large, 200+ year-old hemlock trees to the often mist-shrouded base of the falls. To be safe, stay on the trail, and do not hike beyond the end of it. Do not attempt to climb the falls, as this is dangerous.

Distance - 1.2 miles. Ascent - 340 feet

11 Trout Pond, Delaware Wild Forest Town of Colchester, Delaware County

The trail starts near a small meadow, a waterfall and the ruins of an old mill and follows the Trout Pond outlet stream to this human-made and very scenic 19-acre pond. The hike is a steady, gentle climb. Snowmobilers use this trail in winter.

Take State Route 17 to Exit 94, turn left, continue through the traffic signal for 2.6 miles, and turn left onto Morton Hill Road. Drive 3.1 miles to Russell Brook Road (seasonal road, snowmobile trail in winter), turn left, and drive 0.5 mile to the Trout Pond trailhead.

Distance - 1.8 miles. Ascent - 400 feet

12 Little Pond Campground and Big Pond Town of Andes, Delaware County

The trail begins at the day-use parking area near the dam of Little Pond State Campground. It is open mid-May to mid-October, during which time a day-use fee is charged. For reservations, call 1-800-456-CAMP. When the campground is closed, there is a one-mile walk from the gate. Part of the trail is the campground loop road. Looping around the 13-acre pond will lead past a beaver lodge and an old stone fireplace (about 0.5 mile). From the north end of the pond, follow the trail paralleling the inlet stream to the ruins of an old farm, pond and fields, which offer fine views to the east on Touchmenot Mountain (about 1 mile from the start).

At 50-acre Big Pond, non-motorized boats can be launched from the small parking lot. Several unmarked trails and meadows connect a larger parking lot a few hundred feet to the south of the lake. Big Pond is about one-half mile north of the entrance road to Little Pond Campground on Barkaboom Road.

Take Route 17 to Exit 96 at Livingston Manor, and then take the first two right-hand turns. Turn right again just past Kings Cutery House. Follow County Route 151 to County Route 152. The campground is 8 miles on the left. From Margaretville, take Route 28 west to Route 30 south for 2 miles. Turn left on NYC Road, and go approximately 8.5 miles. Turn left again on Barkaboom Road, and then go 6.5 miles to the campground entrance on the right.

Distance - 0.5 to 2 miles. Ascent 0 to 300 feet

13 Alder Lake, Balsam Lake Mountain Wild Forest Town of Hardenburgh, Ulster County

Streams, wet meadows and wetlands greet hikers on the far side of the lake. The beautiful views of nearby hillsides are particularly impressive in the fall. Balsam Lake Mountain and Little Pond State Campground are nearby. Walk past the ruins of Coykendall Lodge, built in 1899 as a retreat for guests and friends of Samuel D. Coykendall, financier and railroad owner. Walk to the lake, cross the dam, and follow the gentle, mostly level, old road/trail around the lake. Non-motorized boats are allowed on this 44-acre lake.

Take State Route 17 to Exit 96, Livingston Manor, then take County Route 151 past Beaverkill State Park Campsite to County Route 152, Lew Beach. Continue on Route 152 to Turnwood Road (County Route 54), and then turn left. Turn right, and go about 2.3 miles to Alder Lake. Park at the lot near the gate. The trail register is just beyond.

Distance around the lake : about 1 mile

14 Balsam Lake Mountain Firetower Town of Hardenburgh, Ulster County

Follow the directions for Alder Lake, but continue straight about 4 miles on Turnwood to the end of Beaver Kill Road. The last few miles are on a dirt road. Park at the DEC lot at the end of the road. From there, hike 0.9 mile on the Dry Brook Ridge Trail (blue markers) to where the Balsam Lake Mountain Trail (red markers) intersects on the left. Then take the steep section (0.5 mile), pass a trail leading to a lean-to on the left, and continue another 0.35 mile to the summit of Balsam Lake Mountain (3,723 feet) and firetower. The summit is covered in balsam firs, a fragrant evergreen found on many of the highest mountains in the Catskills.

Distance - 3.5 miles. Ascent - 1,250 feet

Or, from the north, follow the Dry Brook Ridge Trail (blue markers) located on Mill Brook Road, south of the hamlet of Arkville. From here, it is a longer, but more moderate hike.

Distance - 5.5 miles. Ascent - 1,123 feet

15 Long Pond, Willowemoc Wild Forest, Town of Neversink, Sullivan County

Follow the red trail markers from the trailhead on Flugertown Road east for 1 mile to Long Pond. The trail (used by snowmobilers in winter) starts near Willowemoc Creek and leads through gentle, forested hills to this 15-acre pond.

Take Route 17 to Exit 98 to county routes 85 (Cooley Road) and 84 (Parksville Road) to Willowemoc Road. Turn left onto Flugertown Road. The parking lot is roughly 3 miles on the right.

Distance - 2.0 miles. Ascent - 200 feet

16 Frick Pond/The Catskill Fish Hatchery, Willowemoc Wild Forest, Town of Rockland, Sullivan County

From the trailhead on Beech Mountain Road, follow the red markers for 0.5 mile to six-acre Frick Pond. Follow the yellow markers to make an approximately one-mile-long loop around the pond.

Take Route 17 to Exit 96 at Livingston Manor, and then take county roads 81 and 82 east to DeBruce. Turn left at Fish Hatchery Road, and go past the Catskill Fish Hatchery, which rears up to 115,000 pounds of brown trout annually. The hatchery is open to the public for self-guided tours five days a week, from 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM, and weekend and holiday hours from 8:30 AM until noon. For more information, call 845-439-4328. Continue on Fish Hatchery Road, and turn left on Beech Mountain Road, one mile south of Mongaup Pond State Campground. Go 0.25 mile to the Frick Pond trailhead parking lot.

Distance - 1.0 mile - 2.1 miles. Ascent - 200 feet

17 **Overlook Mountain and Fire Tower** **Town of Woodstock, Ulster County**

This woods road/trail is a steady climb on an old carriage road that once transported guests in the late 19th century to the Overlook Mountain House. There are nice views through the trees on the way up, except in summer when foliage is dense. At 1.6 miles, the massive, castle-like ruins of the never-completed 1920s Overlook Mountain House (at 2,900 feet) are being reclaimed by nature. Please observe the ruins from the outside to be safe. Nearby is a privately owned tower for which the dirt road is maintained. Continue to the firetower at the 3,150 ft. summit. The trail to the right of the cabin leads to a ledge with a magnificent view of the Hudson River, the Ashokan Reservoir, the central Catskills and up to five states. Be careful of ledges and drop-offs. This hike is long for children, but the rewards are great. Stay on the paths, as snakes have been seen here.

Take I-87 (NYS Thruway), exit 19 (Kingston) to Route 28 west approximately 6 miles to a right on Route 375. Turn left onto Route 212 to the Woodstock Village Green. In the center of town, turn right onto Rock City Road, and continue past the four-way intersection to Meads Mountain Road. The parking lot is on the right, about two miles up Meads Mt. Road.

Distance - 4.8 miles. Ascent - gradual, but with a non-stop incline of 1,370 feet

18 **Red Hill Fire Tower, Sundown Wild Forest** **Town of Denning, Ulster County**

This relatively short hike through northern hardwood forests, affected in some places by fires and strong wind, offers great rewards. On the way up, a short trail leads to a strong spring bubbling out of the mountainside. Please walk carefully, and stay away from the wet areas.

About half of the distance covers steeper slopes, but the trail has only one small ledge. The firetower, at 2,990 feet, offers a panorama of the high peaks of the Catskills, with views past the Shawangunk Mountains to the east.

Take State Route 209 to State Route 55, and turn right onto County Route 153, which borders the west side of Rondout Reservoir, just before Grahamsville. Continue on Route 153 for no more than 3 miles, and turn left onto Sugarloaf Road. Drive about 4 miles to Red Hill Road. Make a sharp left onto Red Hill Road and an immediate right onto unpaved Dinch Road. Continue for 1 mile to the trailhead parking on the left. If the downhill roadbed is in poor condition, park at the Red Hill-Dinch Road intersection. Note that Route 55 can also be taken east from State Route 17 in Liberty.

Distance - 2.2 miles. Ascent - 890 feet