

Loony Loop hikes in US

1. Higley Flow State Park (South Colton) ~3 miles RT. Elevation gain ~200 ft.

Map: www.higleyfriends.org/higleyflowtrailmap.pdf

Description: Higley Flow State Park offers excellent options for outings in every season. It features a dense network of varied and interesting trails for hiking. State Park day use fees may apply.

Directions: From South Colton, going south on 56, turn right onto Cold Brook Road (just past the bridge over the Raquette River). The entrance to Higley Flow State Park is 2 miles on the right. The parking lot for the Higley Ski Lodge is the second right just past the entrance booth.

There are many loop options at Higley. We recommend the Beaver Pond Loop (yellow trail) which has interpretive signs that describe the habitats along the trail. Start the loop at the trail register at the Higley Ski Lodge. Take the Pine Trail (green) north to the first intersection. Take the connector trail (white) to the Beaver Pond Loop (yellow trail). The loop can be completed in either direction. At the pond, a nice spur option is to cross the beaver dam, and take a break at the lean-to.

2. Red Sandstone Sugar Island (Hannawa Falls) ~3.5 miles RT, no significant elevation gain.

Map: adklaurentian.org/pages/pdf/maps/red_sandstone_trail.pdf

Description: The Red Sandstone trail runs from Hannawa Falls to Sugar Island in Potsdam. The loop trail, on the northern section, is level and easy, offers lovely views of the Raquette River, and includes a picnic area. A longer option would be to start in Hannawa Falls at the southern parking lot, and do the hike as a lollipop loop (7 miles RT).

Directions: The north entrance is located off the "Back Hannawa Road" (CR59) between Potsdam and Hannawa Falls. From Potsdam, at the intersection of RT 11 and Clarkson Ave (County Route 59), drive south for 2.5 miles. The dirt access road to the northern parking lot is on the left just past Sweeney Road. A blue trail sign marks the entrance and the parking lot has signs for the Sugar Island Day Use area.

From the parking lot, the trail goes up the metal stairs over the aqueduct, and becomes a dirt footpath (blue diamond markers) that heads north between the Raquette river (on the right) and the aqueduct (on the left) for roughly .5 miles to the powerhouse. (Alternatively, especially in icy conditions, take the dirt access road north from the parking lot keeping the aqueduct on the right). Just past the powerhouse and wooden water tower is the junction for the loop trail. Take the left fork which hugs the diversion channel before turning inland. Eventually the trail comes to an intersection. Turn left to follow the path along the remnants of an old railroad bed that terminates on the northern tip of the island. A bridge leads to the picnic area. Continue the loop by following the blue diamond markers along the east side of the island, ~1 mile back to the powerhouse and return to the parking lot.

3. Southville State Forest (West Stockholm) 2.75 miles RT, no significant elevation gain

Map: www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/mapsouthville.pdf

Description: Southville State Forest is a 551-acre wildlife management area near the town of West Stockholm, with a 2.57 mile seldom-used multi-use trail that includes lovely views of the West Branch of the St. Regis River. Hiking, biking, and skiing are allowed, and the route is perfect for a short snowshoe in the winter. The loop trail is marked with yellow markers, and it is mostly easy to find your way, however there are a few sections where the trail is obscured by blow down and boggy areas where the foot path seems to disappear.

Directions: From Potsdam take Route 11B about 5 miles, cross the west branch of the St. Regis River,

and take the first left onto the Southville-West Stockholm Road. Continue about a mile or so and watch for the DEC sign on the right. Parking is available in the pull-off on the right. The trail head, which lacks a sign, begins at the old logging road directly across the street from the parking area. Follow the road and yellow markers for about .5 miles to a split in the logging road. Take the left fork and follow the clearly defined foot path to the West Branch of the St. Regis River. A short spur to the bank of the river provides the best river views of the day. At this point, the trail becomes a less traveled foot path. It parallels the river for about .5 miles where there is another short spur to another view of river. From here, the trail swings away from the river, and the way becomes confusing, as the trail seems to disappear. Look for the yellow markers ahead, staying parallel to the river, and soon the trail becomes easier to follow and curves away from the river. In about .25 miles the trail comes to a T-intersection of an old logging road. Turn right up the logging road and follow the yellow markers for about .25 mile to another intersection. (The optional red spur trail on the left is a faster .31 mile return to the Southville-West Stockholm Road.) To continue the loop trail, turn right at the intersection and follow the yellow markers back to the fork in the logging road which we encountered at the beginning of the hike. Bear left at the fork for a .5 mile walk back to the parking pull-off.

4. Bear Mountain (Cranberry Lake) 3.8 mile RT, 667 ft elevation gain

Map: cranberrylake50.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CL50-Brochure-Map.pdf

Map: www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/mapcranlakeeast.pdf

Map: s3.amazonaws.com/pdf.quad.download/44074b7.pdf - National Geographic (Quad 2)

Description: Bear Mountain, adjacent to Cranberry Lake State Campground, is a rewarding 3.8 mile loop with 700 feet of elevation gain that can be hiked in either direction. The summit is wooded, with no view, but there is an overlook with excellent views of Cranberry Lake and the Five Ponds Wilderness. State Park day use fees may apply.

Directions: Going west on SH3, Cranberry Lake State Campground is clearly signposted on the left as you enter the hamlet of Cranberry Lake.

Parking is possible outside the campground entrance or at the main trailhead in the campground. Parking at the trailhead reduces the trip to 3.4 miles. If you're hiking in the campground's off-season and you find the gate open, it's a good idea to check before driving through that the gate will still be open and unlocked at the end of your hike.

From the entrance gate, follow the campground road a few hundred yards. About 100 yards past the beach, the main trailhead register is on the left. There is one marked junction several hundred yards up the trail; bear right. It is an easy to moderate climb to the summit, passing a lean-to en route. There is a summit marker off to the left of the trail where there is a large open rocky area but no views. About 1/2 mile farther there is a spectacular overlook with views of Cranberry Lake. The trail then descends steeply to near lake level and returns to the campground, entering on the last loop near campsite 133. Walk the campground road to pass the first trailhead and reach the entrance gate.

In winter, we recommend hiking or snowshoeing the trail counterclockwise which makes the steep part of the climb a bit more manageable. To hike the trail counterclockwise, from the trailhead parking lot, continue walking on the campground road to the end of the last loop to find the trailhead near campsite 133.

5. Peavine Swamp Trails (Cranberry Lake) Loop 1, 3.3 miles RT. Loop 2, 5.5 miles RT. Loop 3, ~8.5 miles RT. Some small rolling hills.

Map: adklaurentian.org/pages/pdf/maps/peavine_swamp_trails.pdf

Map: www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/mapcranlakewest.pdf

Description: This trail system between Cranberry Lake and Wanakena consists of a main trail and

three loops through stands of old-growth timber, some with over 42 inch diameters. It is probably best known as a winter trail but is also a fine hiking trail. The ESF Ranger School campus in Wanakena is closed for the foreseeable future, so the only trailhead access is from the Rt. 3 parking lot.

Directions: The northern trailhead is approximately 1.2 miles past the bridge over the Oswegatchie River, west of Cranberry Lake on Rt. 3. Just past a DOT parking area on the right (north side of the road) there will be a dirt road on the left which leads to the trailhead parking area. The entrance is marked with a DEC sign for Peavine Swamp.

Pick a loop or combination of loops that fit your ability and time allotment. Short descriptions of each loop can be found on the Clifton-Fine "Wilderness Meets Water" site: www.cliftonfineadk.com/peavine-swamp-trails.

6. Tooley Pond Mountain (Clare, NY) 2.1 mile RT, 229 ft. elevation gain

Map: www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/mapgrassriver.pdf

Map: s3.amazonaws.com/pdf.quad.download/44074c8.pdf - National Geographic (Quad 5)

Description: Tooley Pond Mountain is an easy climb with limited views. It is a pleasant hike through a varied forest. There once was a fire tower on the summit, but it was removed and rebuilt on the grounds of the Ranger School at Wanakena (the location is known as Cathedral Rock). This hike can be combined with a visit to Tooley Pond, or the many waterfalls along Tooley Pond Road.

Directions: From Canton, take County Route 27 south. Tooley Pond Road will be on the left ~20 miles just before the village of DeGrasse. The parking area and trail up Tooley Pond Mountain are 10.2 miles in on the Tooley Pond Road. There are signs for both the parking lot and the trailhead. The trailhead register is a short distance down Tooley Pond Road from the parking lot, on the left. The "east trail" (red markers) climbs an old jeep trail up a moderate incline .85 miles to the summit. There are remnants of the old firetower, and partial views of the Grass River Wild Forest area. To continue the loop follow the red markers down the "west trail" .65 miles back to the Tooley Pond Road. Turn right and walk .6 miles back to the parking area.

7. Robert Moses State Park (Massena) Several loop options. 1-4 miles RT. No elevation gain.

Map: parks.ny.gov/documents/parks/RobertMosesTITrailMap.pdf

Description: The park's nature, hiking and cross-country skiing trails wind through fields, forests and wetlands, with overlooks showcasing views of the St. Lawrence River. Trailheads start at the Nicandri Nature Center.

Directions: From NYS Route 37: Turn north onto Route 131 at the St. Lawrence Centre Mall. Go straight on Route 131 for approximately 1.5 miles. Continue straight on Barnhart Rd. for approximately 1 mile, through the tunnel. Take a right at Robinson Bay Rd. and go approximately 1/4 mile. Nicandri Nature Center will be on your left. Note that the Nicandri Nature Center is closed for the foreseeable future, but the trails are open.

There are many loop options at the Nicandri Nature Center. The Pink Trail (PK 1.4 miles) offers views of the river, and the bridge to Barnhart Island. It connects to the Blue Trail (BL 1 mile) and loops back to the Nature Center. Pick a loop or combination of loops that fit your ability and time allotment.

8. Wellesley Island State Park (Fineview, NY) 3.5 miles RT, 180 ft. elevation gain.

Map: parks.ny.gov/documents/parks/WellesleyIslandTrailMap.pdf

Description: Wellesley Island State Park is located in the Thousand Islands region. The Minna Anthony Common Nature Center offers educational displays and miles of trails for hiking, crosscountry

skiing and snowshoeing. The loop trail described below traverses a variety of habitats and offers spectacular views of “The Narrows” and Eel Bay along the St. Lawrence River. The climb to the overlook is fairly steep and rocky, so caution is advised, especially in icy conditions. State Park day use fees may apply.

Directions: From I-81 on the Thousand Islands International Bridge (toll bridge) take exit 51. Turn right on RT 191. At the T stop (.5 miles), turn right onto RT 100 (Thousand Island Park Road). Go .5 miles and turn right onto Cross Island Road. In 2 miles, turn left onto Nature Center Road. The Minna Anthony Nature Center parking lot is 1.2 miles.

To do the loop clockwise, from the Nature Center, start on the North Field Loop trail (yellow). Stay on the North Field Loop trail straight across the Middle Trail (red) junction, and straight past the Cottage Trail (orange) junction. At the East Trail (purple) junction, take the East Trail bearing left past the Ridge Trail (blue) junction. Stay on the East trail which winds through the wetlands and ends at the T junction of the green River Trail (South Bay). Turn right on the River Trail which climbs to an overlook with outstanding views of The Narrows and Eel Bay. From the Overlook, stay on the River Trail as it descends to the “glacial potholes” and hugs the shore of the St. Lawrence River. This side of the trail is River Trail (Eel Bay) and soon returns to the Nature Center.

Alternate trail: The East Trail climb to the overlook can be treacherous in the winter (micro-spikes are advised). To bypass the overlook, take the Middle Trail (red) back to the Nature Center.

9. Indian Creek Nature Center (Canton) ~3.4 miles. No elevation gain.

Map: indiancreeknaturecenter.us/sites/default/files/trailmap.jpg

Description: Indian Creek Nature Center has 8 miles of trails that include a 750 foot boardwalk and great views of the Upper and Lower Lakes WildLife Management Area. A diversity of habitat is home to a great variety of birds, reptiles and mammals including beaver.

Directions: From Canton, take Hwy 68 approx. 6 miles, turning left on CR 14 towards Rensselaer Falls. From Ogdensburg, take Hwy 68 approx. 12 miles. The turn to County Route 14 will be on your right. From Hwy 68, proceed 3.4 miles down CR14 to the main entrance on the left. At the end of this entrance road (0.3 miles) is a parking area.

Start the loop by taking the accessible Boardwalk (.5 miles). At the end of the boardwalk turn right onto the Woodland Succession Trail to the Marsh Overlook (~.5 mile). The overlook deck is currently closed, but there are nice views of the marsh. Turn back and take the Woodland Succession trail (yellow) ~.5 miles, until the intersection with the Lowland Trail (blue). Turn right and follow the Lowland Trail which skirts the edge of the marsh, loops back to the boardwalk (1.4 miles). Turn right to follow the boardwalk back to the parking area.

10. Catamount Mountain (South Colton) ~3 miles RT, 527 ft elevation gain.

Map: catamountlodge.com/abouttheforest.html (scroll, and click on the trail map thumbnail for a larger, printable version)

Description: This is a seldom used trail that ascends gradually to the top of Catamount Mountain and offers partial views of the Carry Falls Reservoir. The trail is mostly on private property, so visitors are asked to respect the rules posted on the [Catamount Lodge](http://Catamount Lodge website) website. The trailhead parking lot is a pull out just south of the Catamount Lodge entrance off State Highway 56. The trails are not well marked, but there are occasional signs and arrows. In summer, the underbrush can obscure the trail in some sections. In winter, the lower trails are usually groomed for cross country skiing, but the upper trails are not marked, so finding the way may be tricky after a new snowfall. There are several side trails to the lodge which may be confusing, so a map is advised.

From the gate entrance on RT56, the trail is an overgrown logging road (red trail) which is not clearly

marked. It soon intersects with the blue trail on the right. Keep straight along the red trail which climbs steadily. At the second junction for the blue trail, there is an arrow sign pointing towards the summit. Continue straight along the red trail which soon tapers to a footpath. The trail steepens and passes an old radio relay building. The summit is another 15 minutes of steady climbing. There are remnants of the fire tower and observer cabin foundations on the summit. To complete the loop, return down the mountain via the red trail. Turn left at the junction of the blue trail. Immediately, there is a short side spur to the reservoir that is worth checking out. The blue trail has some blowdown and some overgrown sections which makes it tricky to find. There are very few markers, so just follow the path for less than one mile until it re-connects with the red trail (straight ahead is a path to the lodge). Turn left on the red trail to return to the parking lot.

For more details and history of the fire tower, check the [Hiking the Trail to Yesterday blog](#).

11. Lost Pond Loop (Cranberry Lake) 2 miles RT, no significant elevation gain.

Map: cranberrylake50.org/cranberry-lake-trail/

Map: www.cliftonfineadk.com/lost-pond

Description: Lost Pond Loop is a newly developed lollipop loop trail that travels through an open pine forest to a boreal pond. Bring binoculars, for this is excellent birding habitat. Directions: From the intersection of Route 3 and Columbian Road follow Columbian Road for 0.5 miles to the State Boat Launch Trailer Parking on the right hand side. The trailhead for the Cranberry 50 and Lost Pond are located there.

The Lost Pond Loop trail starts at the trailhead for the Cranberry 50 trail. Follow the Cranberry 50 trail for ~.75 miles. Stay right at the intersection with the Lost Pond Loop trail. When you reach the pond, the 1-mile loop can be done in either direction.