



Hiking Trails of Cook Forest State Park

The 8,500-acre Cook Forest State Park is in scenic northwestern Pennsylvania. Once called the “Black Forest,” the area is famous for its stands of old growth forest. Cook Forest’s “Forest Cathedral” of towering pines and hemlocks is a National Natural Landmark. The Clarion River is the southern border of the park and is popular for canoeing and rafting.

The 29 miles of hiking trails are a great attraction to the park. The trails explore the old growth timber areas, wetlands and are avenues for wildlife watching. This guide has descriptions of all of the trails in the park.

Baker Trail and North Country Scenic Trail: 9.4 miles, moderate hiking

This 140-mile Baker Trail starts at Freeport, Pennsylvania, and ends in the Allegheny National Forest. It is maintained by American Youth Hostels. The trails cross the park, following park trails through the Forest Cathedral, and by Seneca Point, the Fire Tower, the Clarion River, bracket dams, the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Center and Toms Run.

Black Bear Trail: 1.1-mile, easy hiking

This flat, loop trail starts and ends at the Sawmill Center for the Arts. Look for bear claw marks on American beech trees.

Bridle Trail: 4.1 miles, moderate hiking

Horses are permitted to travel on two bridle trails totaling 4.1 miles. One trail starts at Toms Run Road, joins with Browns Run Trail, and ends on Forest Road (PA 1015). This seldom traveled section of trail is a good place to watch for wildlife. Hikers have seen black bear and white-tailed deer. The other bridle trail starts on Forest Drive, loops onto the Old Logging Road Trail, then ends on Forest Drive. Both trails are in areas open to hunting.

Browns Run Trail: 2.8 miles, moderate hiking

This lightly traveled trail starts at Toms Run Road and ends on Forest Road. The northern end of Browns Run Trail is intersected by Deer Meadow and Bridle trails. Hikers sometimes see black bear, white-tailed deer, squirrel and wild turkey. This is a great trail for wilderness hiking, hunting and birding, and is one of the best trails to listen for thrushes at dusk.

Camp Trail: 1.8-mile, difficult hiking

This steep trail begins at Ridge Camp Campground and ends at Breezemont Drive within view of the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Center. This “calorie burning” trail is used by campers to travel from the campground to the Log Cabin Inn and main picnic area. Watch your map. Another section of Camp Trail ends farther up Breezemont Drive at the intersection of Corduroy Trail.

Cook Trail: 2 miles, moderate hiking

This trail starts across from River Cabin 12 and ends near the River Picnic Area near the mouth of Henry Run. It can also be accessed on Cemetery Road near the starting points of Joyce Kilmer and Bridle trails. This lightly used trail runs through a magnificent stand of old growth timber that was selectively harvested in the mid-1800s. Keep an eye open for tall eastern white pines, large eastern hemlocks, oaks, black gums, and relict American chestnut snags that have been standing since

the early 1920s. Be sure to notice the CCC dynamite shack made in the 1930s.

Corduroy Trail: 1.2-mile, moderate hiking

Starting at Ridge Camp Campground, this trail crosses Breezemont Drive and ends at Liggett Trail along Toms Run. This pleasant hike takes you past some large American beech and eastern hemlock. Keep your eyes and ears open for squirrel, white-tailed deer and owls.

Deer Meadow Trail: 1.5-mile, moderate hiking

This trail borders Deer Meadow Campground and connects Browns Run and Heffern Run trails. Sections of the trail pass through old growth oak/hemlock forest and prime wildlife areas.

Deer Park Trail: 1.1-mile, moderate hiking

This trail starts at PA 36, intersects Mohawk Trail and ends at Seneca Trail. Hikers pass through the heart of the 1976 tornado damaged area of the Seneca Forest Special Management Area.

Heffern Run Trail: 1.1-mile, moderate hiking

This trail connects Toms Run Road to Forest Road and intersects Deer Meadow Trail. This serene trail follows part of the bike route that runs through Heffern Run Valley. Watch for evidence of old “bracket” dams, which were used to move logs downstream during the 1800s logging era.

Hemlock Trail: 0.3-mile, moderate hiking

This trail starts at Forest Road at the end of Longfellow Trail and ends at PA 36 where it turns into Deer Park Trail. This is a great walk for observing towering eastern hemlock trees, some of which are 140 ft. high.

Liggett Trail: 1.1-mile, easy hiking

This flat trail starts at Forest Road across from the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Center, travels up Toms Run, then circles back down to Toms Run Road, ending where it started for a 2.2-mile round trip. This trail makes a great birding hike and is suitable for all ages.

Mohawk Trail: 2 miles, difficult hiking

This steep trail starts at the intersection of PA 36 and Forest Road and ends at PA 36 near Ridge Camp Campground. This hike takes you through another old growth forest dominated by ancient hemlock, eastern white pine, chestnut oak, black gum and red maple. Part of this area was hit by fire in the late 1880s, then a tornado in 1976, but still has some magnificent hemlock trees. One has been designated as the state champion at almost 16 ft. around and 125 ft. high.

Old Logging Road: 0.6-mile, easy hiking

This flat trail runs from Forest Drive to near Indian Spring on Joyce Kilmer Trail. Be sure to see the red and white pine orchards planted by the Civilian Conservation Corps from 1933-1937.

♿ Paved Trail: 0.17-mile, easy hiking

This paved, ADA accessible loop trail is at the end of the water tower access road at the entrance of the Sawmill Center for the Arts. This trail winds through a mature hardwood forest which teams with wildlife like white-tailed deer, squirrel and chipmunk.



Cook Forest State Park

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Ridge Trail: 0.7-mile, difficult hiking

This steep trail starts at the Ridge Camp Campground by Site 32 and ends at Forest Road across from the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Center, near Shelter 1. There are large oaks and black cherry trees along this path. Some of the black cherries span three ft. across and reach heights of up to 137 ft.

River Trail: 1.7-mile, difficult hiking

This steep trail starts at the Fire Tower and ends on Fire Tower Road. It may be steep, but is one of the most beautiful trails to hike in early summer when the mountain laurel and great rhododendron are in bloom. It also has a long flat section that runs parallel to the Clarion River. Keep your eyes open for soft-shelled turtles, coyote, bobcat and black bear.

Seneca Trail: 0.9-mile, difficult hiking

This steep trail starts at the Clarion River PA 36 Bridge and ends in the Fire Tower/Seneca Point Area. This trail offers an excellent overlook view of the Clarion River as you pass through old growth forest and 1976 tornado downed logs. Many towering hemlocks and white pines still remain. Some hemlocks here are over 145 ft. high. As you start up the trail from PA 36, there is a side trail that goes off to your left. This trail used to be lighted by natural gas lights that led you to a sulfur spring known as the old Mineral Spring. One hemlock here has been documented as the tallest found in the entire Northeastern United States!

Forest Cathedral Trails - the numbers correspond to the park guide map

① Joyce Kilmer Trail: 0.8-mile, moderate hiking

This trail starts on Cemetery Road and ends on Indian Trail. Virtually the entire length of this trail runs through old growth forest. Take note of the rock formations and large eastern hemlocks and American beech, some of which span 3-5 ft. across.

② Rhododendron Trail: 1.2-mile, moderate hiking

Another favorite hiking trail in the park, it starts between Indian Cabins 6 and 7, goes past the swinging bridge over Toms Run, through the heart of the Forest Cathedral, and ends on Forest Drive.

③ Longfellow Trail: 1.2-mile, moderate hiking

About 60,000 people hike this trail each year. Many of the trees have been standing for well over 300 years, and some of the hemlocks are over 400 years old. This trail starts at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Center, passes the Memorial Fountain, goes through a large wind damaged area, then emerges into some of the tallest and largest eastern white pine in the Northeastern United States, within the Forest Cathedral, and terminates at Forest Road. One white pine is the tallest in the Northeastern United States at 183 ft. Many of the pines reach 150 ft. in height. The Forest Cathedral Natural Area has been designated as a registered National Natural Landmark through the National Park Service.

④ Toms Run Trail: 0.8-mile, easy hiking

This flat trail begins at the swinging bridge and ends at the Log Cabin Inn Environmental Learning Center. The entire trail runs within the picturesque Toms Run

Valley. Keep your eyes open for remnants of old “bracket” dams, which were used to move logs downstream during the 1800s logging era.

⑤ Birch Trail: 0.9-mile, easy hiking

This trail passes through birch trees along Toms Run. It starts near the Children’s Fishing Pond and ends at Shelter 1. A swinging bridge connects Birch Trail with Rhododendron Trail.

⑥ Indian Trail: 1.1-mile, difficult hiking

This steep trail starts on the north side of the Children’s Fishing Pond and ends deep within the Forest Cathedral. As you begin the trail, notice the incredible second growth stand of eastern white pine that have grown back after logging in the 1800s. As the trail begins to level off, look for the change in forest type from second growth to old growth forest.

⑦ Red Eft Trail: 0.2-mile, moderate hiking

This short but steep trail connects Longfellow Trail to Toms Run Trail. This hike may remind you of a rain forest as you traverse an old growth, forested wetland through a series of bridges and steps. As you walk this trail, keep your eyes open for the elusive “red eft,” the bright orange, nomadic life stage of the red spotted newt.

⑧ Ancient Forest Trail: 0.3 mile, moderate hiking

This trail bisects Longfellow Trail and runs through the heart of the Forest Cathedral. As you walk, look up because you will be walking among the tallest concentration of old growth white pines in the Northeastern United States.