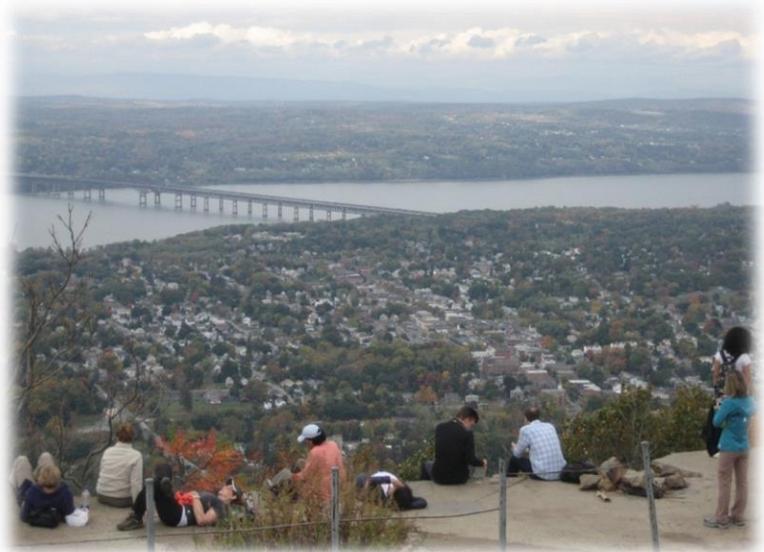


Scenic Hudson – Parks & Preserves: *Mount Beacon and Fishkill Ridge*

“In every direction the country is full of beauty, and presents a most luxuriant and cultivated appearance,” famed landscape gardener Andrew Jackson Downing wrote of Mount Beacon in 1835. Today, the most typical hike up Mount Beacon is the red-blazed Casino Trail: a 3-mile round trip with 1,000 feet of elevation gain to the foundation overlook. Here are luxuriant views of the lengthy Hudson River, the beauty of the Shawangunk Ridge as it leads to the distant Catskill Mountains, and the cultivated city of Beacon with scenic Hudson parks along its shoreline. At the overlook, be sure to inspect remains of the wheel house which powered the cog railway up Mount Beacon from 1901 to 1978. At the outlook, Newburgh is visible on the opposite shore – its waterfront bucolic from this perspective. Inland from that shoreline is Downing Park, opened in 1897 and designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in honor of their mentor.



Mount Beacon

Heartily recommended is continuing on the red trail to the fire tower which, from the parking lot, is a 5-mile round trip with 1,500 feet of elevation gain. At this towering summit of 1,600 feet and 360 degree vantage point, the vast swath of the Hudson River valley is at your feet. Above the miniaturized fray of muted daily life below, this lofty height imparts a feeling of grandeur, superiority, and tranquility.

For a more remote experience, the white-blazed Fishkill Ridge Trail from Pocket Road is a 7-mile hike with 2,400 feet of elevation gain. The deep ravine in the cleft between Mount Beacon and Fishkill Ridge is much like the grand Catskill cloves of Plattekill and Kaaterskill. Here, too, as the mountain clove broadens in the distance, the Hudson River reveals itself. Here, too, a mountain waterfall and elongated cascade jumps, glistens, and delights. Here, too, one's heart pumps as much in rapture as in the rigor of the ascent.

After an ascent of 1,300 feet, and mile and a half of relentless hiking up through the Beacon clove, the white trail tops out on Lambs Hill. Two miles in is Dozer Junction for those scavenger hunting for a bulldozer on a mountain top. From here a 3-mile circular around Fishkill Ridge provides phenomenal views walking northward, and an easy woods road returning southward. Plan an entire day of hiking if undertaking this vigorous lollipop route.

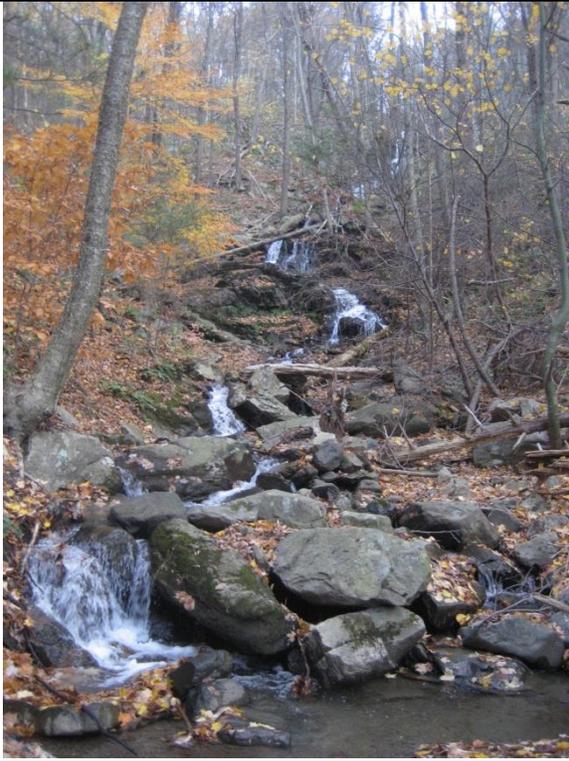
With minimal parking available at Pocket Road, the white-blazed Fishkill Ridge trail can be accessed from the Mount Beacon parking lot via the undulating yellow trail – one mile with 200 feet of elevation gain which connects from the red-blazed Casino Trail.

Another route to access the Fishkill Ridge is the trail head at Sunnyside Road. Dubbed the Overlook Trail, this 2-mile red-blazed trail provides views along the way as it rises one thousand feet to meet the white trail at Lambs Hill.

Maps of Mount Beacon and Fishkill Ridge and all the Scenic Hudson parks are available at ScenicHudson.org. For those hiking more than the 3-mile jaunt up Mount Beacon, I heartily

recommend the NY-NJ Trail Conference map #102 which is available at NYNJTC.org. These trails are jointly maintained by Scenic Hudson and the New York – New Jersey Trail Conference – both in need of volunteers to assist with trail maintenance.

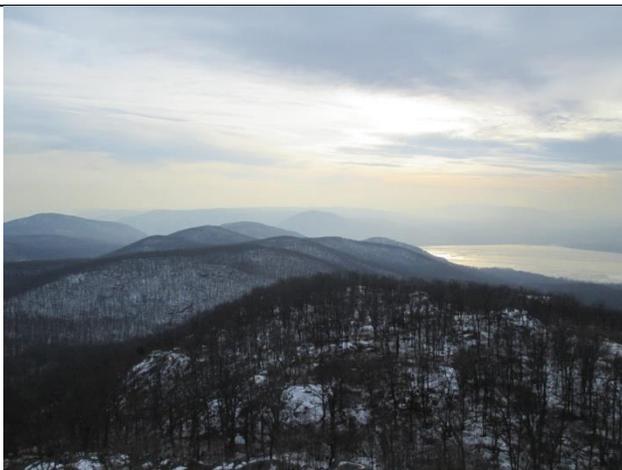
Convenient for food and drink, Bob's Deli across from the Mount Beacon parking lot on Route 9D provides a warm breakfast and lunch sandwiches. While there, peruse the vintage photographs of the Mount Beacon cog railway as this Scenic Hudson park is as ripe in history as it is in nature.



Beacon Clove



Cog Railway Wheel House - Mt. Beacon



Breakneck Ridge from Beacon Fire Tower



Cog Railway Wheel House - Mt. Beacon



Fishkill Ridge map



Mount Beacon map