

Hike Through History

Start & finish at the old stone furnace stack in Pine Grove Furnace State Park.

Total distance: approx. 4 miles (including a few small side trails, and walking in the cemetery).



See reverse for brief explanation of numbered stops

Portions of the route follow flat park paths, but the hike also ascends/descends the Appalachian Trail with a 300 foot elevation change each way. It also climbs almost 200 feet along an unmarked logging road in the Michaux State Forest.

Trails include obstacles such as fallen logs, tree roots, and loose stones. Appropriate footwear is important.

1. Start hike in front of the **old stone furnace stack** where iron ore, charcoal, and limestone were layered inside the furnace and smelted into pig iron. Pine Grove Furnace, a classic “charcoal iron blast furnace,” was in operation from around the time of the American Revolution to April 1895.
2. **Tail Race.** Smelting requires large amounts of air (“blast”) forced into bottom of the furnace. For this reason, a huge water wheel and “blowing tubs” were located next to the furnace stack. This ditch carried water from the wheel to return it to Mountain Creek – look for the turn into the creek.
3. **Fuller Lake.** One of several iron ore “pits” supplying this iron works. Today’s beach is where a tall skip-hoist hauled carts loaded with ore out of the 90-foot-deep quarry and across railroad tracks running parallel to the creek. Several small nearby hills are tailings from over a century of mining.
4. **Mining Adit.** An “adit” is a horizontal path in a mine or quarry. In 1877 this little waterway helped empty the ore pit which had been allowed to flood when the iron works was shut down for 4 years for economic reasons. To finish emptying the pit, a huge raft floating in the flooded pit carried a steam-driven pump. It took almost three months to empty completely so that mining of iron ore could resume.
5. **South Mountain RR.** Built 1868-69, in use 1870-1936 (trains continued to Laurel Lake into the 1950s). Hike is so flat here because it’s a railroad bed!
6. **Girl Scout Swimming Pool.** Just off biker-hiker path, view concrete remnants of a pool built 1934 for a former Girl Scout camp located on other side of Mountain Creek. Also, this area was once a public amusement park built by the iron company, 1878-1900. **40° 01.7601N, 77° 17.5282W**
7. **Turn right** off the flat biker-hiker path at yellow gate onto uphill Appalachian Trail (white blazes). 1 mile from start. Notice how wide the trail is: this was the old “Whitestown Road” a former name for Idaville in Adams County, also called “Petersburg Road” a former name for York Springs.
8. **Soapstone Quarry.** This small field was a quarry for talcose schist (locally called “soapstone”), a soft rock used to line the inside of the early furnace, and later to make bricks. Look for small pieces of soapstone. Filled in the 1950s with silt dredged from Laurel Lake. **40° 01.8790N, 77° 17.2820W**
9. **Charcoal Hearth.** A circular flat area, 30 feet across, for charring wood into charcoal fuel for iron smelting. Other hearths are visible in this section of the A.T. Note historic charcoal eroding from trail edge. Distance from biker-hiker path/yellow gate = 0.65 miles. **40° 01.6405N, 77° 16.7999W**
10. **Descending, turn left** off A.T. to go south and west on an unmarked trail leading to an old logging road. This “haul road” allowed teamster wagons to carry fresh charcoal to the iron furnace. Look for more charcoal hearths in this area. 2.2 miles from start. **40° 01.8332N, 77° 17.2429W**
11. **Turn left** onto Murphy Road (past yellow gate and a cabin on left). 3 miles from start. **40° 01.7017N, 77° 17.8077W**
12. **Cemetery** was used by the iron-making community from 1790s to mid-19th century. Remnants of only a few gravestones are visible, snapped off at ground level. Locations of burials are visible as shallow depressions. A few intact gravestones are now safely kept in the State Park collection.
13. **Limestone quarry.** Beyond the burial area is a quarry for limestone “flux” used in the iron smelting process. Partly filled in with silt dredged from Laurel Lake during lake improvements in 2006-7. **BE CAREFUL** – do not approach the edge!
14. **Overlook into “Old Pit.”** A short side-trip up Cemetery Road lets us look into a huge iron quarry in use prior to the opening of “Pine Grove #1” (which eventually became today’s Fuller Lake). **BE CAREFUL** – do not approach the edge!
15. **Carolina Cottage.** A cabin here was an informal place of worship for Catholic summer vacationers beginning in the 1920s. Eventually it was too crowded, so in 1950 the St. Eleanor Regina Chapel was built on land leased from the Commonwealth along Rte. 233 just north of the State Park.
16. **Head race.** To left, view end of a large ditch that carried water 0.9 miles from Mtn Creek past today’s campgrounds, for a mine pump (next stop).
17. **Wheel pit.** Stone foundation for a 30-foot-diameter wooden water wheel, which drove a plunger pump to empty the bottom of the iron ore pit. When the furnace shut down in 1895, pumping stopped allowing water to create Fuller Lake. Remnants of the wheel were visible into the 1930s.
18. **Entrance to “Old Pit.”** Very early source of iron ore. This quarried area is flat and not flooded like Fuller Lake. Unsteady footing: **BE CAREFUL.**
19. **Brickyard Day Use Area.** Site of a commercial brick operation 1892-1907, the last gasp of the iron company attempting to use mineral resources for profit. The antiquated charcoal iron industry could not compete with modern steelmaking elsewhere.
20. **Salamander.** On the left side of the road before turning to the bridge, notice a large round plug of iron + slag taken from the bottom of the iron furnace: this was an industrial accident. A similar salamander with an explanatory sign sits just to the right side of the stone furnace stack.