



Five-Star Trails: Finger Lakes and Central New York: Your Guide to the Area's Most Beautiful Hikes

By Tim Starmer

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The Finger Lakes and Central New York are not known for rugged mountains and their panoramic vistas which are so commonly sought in the Adirondacks to the north. The area was scoured clean by glaciers a millennia ago. The region is full of natural wonders of its own. Instead of mountains and ridges, the region is known for rolling drumlins, an abundance of scenic gorges, quiet woodlands, beautiful waterfalls and picturesque lakes. Trails included in *Five-Star Trails: Finger Lakes and Central New York* by Tim Starmer feature a broad mixture of these landscapes and were carefully selected to give the most varied but also rewarding experience when picking a trail.

Each trail has been thoroughly researched, recently hiked and includes a detailed description, trail profiles and map. At a glance ratings in important categories such as Scenery, Trail Condition, Difficulty, Solitude and appropriateness for children let you quickly select a trail that fits your tastes and ability. Other useful information such as fees, restrictions for dogs on the trail as well as advice on when to visit offers you the best information so you can plan your trip with ease.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Tim Starmer has always been an outdoor enthusiast and spent most of his childhood seeking out remote and wild areas whenever possible. During a brief hiatus from Brown University during 1997, he drove across the United States for six weeks, camping the entire way. Along the way he explored many of the West's national and state parks, including Canyonlands, Yellowstone, Arches, Bryce Canyon. At the trip's conclusion, he headed down to Australia, where he backpacked for a few months exploring the eastern Outback, the Great Barrier Reef, and the caves of Tasmania, as well as traversing the Tasmanian World Heritage Area along the Overland Track. Tim currently works in upstate New York as a timber framer and can still be found exploring the wilds whenever possible.

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Chimney Bluffs

Scenery: 5 stars

Trail Condition: 4 stars

Children: 4 stars

Difficulty: 3 stars

Solitude: 4 stars

Key Information

GPS Trailhead Coordinates:

(Main Parking Area) N43° 16.862' W76° 55.347'

(East Bay Road Parking Area) N43° 17.399' W76° 54.394'

Distance & Configuration: 2.5 miles; shoreline loop, out-and-back similar

Hiking Time: 1.5 hours

Highlights: Panoramic Views, Beach side stroll, Geological Features

Elevation: 250 feet at the trailhead, 383 feet at the highest point along the Bluff.

Access: Open year-round from dusk to dawn; no fees or permits required.

Maps: NY State Park map; USGS 7.5' Sodus Point

Facilities: Restrooms, picnic benches

Wheelchair Access: Yes in the picnic area but not along the trail

Comments: Be careful around the trail edges along the bluffs. The area is actively eroding and the ground near these edges may not be stable. Hikers have been injured in the past so take caution along the rim. Dogs on a leash are allowed in the park but not recommended along the Bluff Trail due to unstable trail conditions along the rim.

Contacts: New York State Parks, 7700 Garner Road Wolcott, NY 14590,(315) 947-5205,

Overview

Central New York is not known for its beaches or its coastal trails. How could it? The region is hundreds of miles inland, and yet hiking the Chimney Bluffs trail feels as if you are along one of the Coasts. While the open views along Lake Ontario are certainly beautiful the main attraction here are the Bluffs. Formed from

eroding drumlins they create a picturesque panorama that is a must see.

Route Details

Unlike many state park trails featured in this book, there is no entrance fee associated with this trail. Acquired by the state in 1963, there were plans to develop this park similar to other parks across the state, but these plans were put aside and the park was left undeveloped until 1999. At that time restrooms, trails, picnic areas with grills, and parking lots were built.

To find the trailhead from the parking area head north, along the paved walkway, towards Lake Ontario. Continue past the picnic area, and you will see the Bluff Trail on your right as you approach the shoreline (approximately one quarter mile from the parking area). You will begin heading east along a fairly broad trail, but as you delve deeper into the surrounding hardwoods it dwindles down to a narrow footpath. Blue diamonds mark the trail but the way is pretty straight forward. The trail is mostly flat for the first half mile but soon begins to climb at approximately .7 mile. The trail climbs 100 feet over the next 0.2 mile. Along the approach to the bluffs, occasional previews of the eroded drumlin ahead can be seen through the surrounding trees, but the truly breathtaking views don't begin until reach the bluffs rim a little shy of one mile into the hike. As the trail winds along the bluffs' rim, be careful not to get too close to the edge, as steady erosion make areas of the trail unstable. The chimneys/spires are spectacular and leave you wondering how they were formed and how long they will last.

Drumlins are a common geological feature of Central New York, and were formed during the last glacial period some 12,000 years ago. As the glaciers made their long retreat north, they scoured the landscape and left streamlined hills of glacial deposits in their wake. These hills, known as drumlins, indicate the direction of the receding glaciers and are the common feature that define the gentle hills and rolling valleys surrounding Syracuse and Rochester. The drumlins along Lake Ontario have been eroded by wind and water for millennia. On the shores of Chimney Bluffs State Park, heavy deposits of clay have provided a sticky mortar between cobbles and stones that have resisted the slow process of erosion and leave an ever-changing landscape that is a spectacle to behold. The current rate of erosion is estimated between 1 to 5 feet per year and the whole area is in a constant state of change. There are many vantage points to take in this geological wonder, so take your time and soak in the view but beware of the unstable edges along the rim.

Approximately 1 mile in, you intersect the Drumlin Trail on your right. You can use this trail, along with the East-West Trail, to provide a loop back to the parking area but you will miss the pleasure of strolling along the shoreline at the bluffs' base. The trail continues east and turns briefly northward, where a path off to the left offers a vantage point for looking back west at the bluffs. This side path weaves among some fairly unstable areas so watch your step and stay away from the rim.

Past this point, the trail begins to descend toward the East Bay Road parking area and temporarily away from the bluffs. The descent becomes fairly steep; especially as the parking area comes into view. The trail switches back northward as you descend upon the parking area. I hardly need to tell you to head toward the beach at this point because the lapping waters of the lakeshore beckon you ahead. Indeed many visitors proceed directly to this parking area since it provides a more direct route to bluffs' base and Lake Ontario's shoreline.

Turn left and head west along the rocky shoreline. It doesn't take long before the chimneys and spires of the eroding drumlin tower above you. Lake Ontario spreads out across the northern horizon and the unique setting of Chimney Bluffs really sets in. There are few places in central New York that offer a similar experience and why I recommend this loop over the other proscribed trails. Stick to the shoreline and do not attempt to climb the unstable bluffs. The base of the bluffs is approximately a half mile long and soon after

you will be walking within feet of the trail you began on, approximately 2 miles total. The shoreline is constantly changing and you will have to keep an eye out for a convenient way to climb back onto the trail. Once back to the picnic area head back to the parking area for total trip length of 2.5 miles.

Nearby Attractions

There are several other short trails within the park's boundaries but I choose to focus on the most dramatic loop available. For reference the East West Trail and Drumlin Trail can be combined with the Bluff Trail to create a loop of similar length, though these additional sections do not offer views or the additional attraction of walking along the shoreline.

Directions

From NY 104 turn North onto CR 254/Lake Bluff Road; approximately 9 miles east of Sodus and 5.25 miles west of the intersection of NY 89 and NY 104 near Wolcott. CR254/Lake Bluff Road becomes Garner Road. Continue North along Garner Road and stay right at the sharp turn east (right); 5.5 miles. Shortly after this turn the Main parking area will be on your left. To reach the East Bay Road parking area continue 0.9 miles along Garner Road. Turn Left onto East bay Road. The parking area is another 0.9 mile on the left.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Adrienne McGinnis:

Spent a free time to be fun activity to do! A lot of people spent their sparetime with their family, or their own friends. Usually they carrying out activity like watching television, about to beach, or picnic in the park. They actually doing same task every week. Do you feel it? Will you something different to fill your own free time/ holiday? Might be reading a book is usually option to fill your totally free time/ holiday. The first thing that you'll ask may be what kinds of publication that you should read. If you want to consider look for book, may be the book untitled Five-Star Trails: Finger Lakes and Central New York: Your Guide to the Area's Most Beautiful Hikes can be good book to read. May be it is usually best activity to you.

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Carmen Annunziata:

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Caitlin Cruz:

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