

RUST ASSURED: HIKES IN RECLAIMED LANDSCAPES

BY || EMILY MONAC

From forestry to mining to farming, much of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic has seen industrial use. But in many places, nature is once again taking hold, with forests colonizing formerly cultivated fields and overgrowing the remnants of mines. When hiking in these reclaimed settings, keep an eye out for stone walls, cellar holes, and abandoned machinery—relics revealing the land's increasingly distant past.

1. KATAHDIN IRON WORKS

Brownville, Maine

A well-preserved stone blast furnace and charcoal kiln are all that remain of the once-sprawling Katahdin Iron Works (KIW) operation, which processed minerals from nearby Ore Mountain. Located just west of AMC's Maine Woods property, KIW—Maine's only 19th-century iron works—can be reached by car from the town of Brownville. After exploring the grounds, designated both a state park and a state historic site, visitors can enter the Ki-Jo Mary Multiple Use Forest through the gatehouse (fee required) and drive 6.7 miles to the Gulf Hags trailhead. The so-called Grand Canyon of Maine is one of the state's iconic hikes, featuring a 4-mile gorge with plummeting waterfalls. Complete a loop via the Appalachian Trail and Gulf Hags Cut-Off.

DISTANCE: 8 MILES
INFO: MAINE MOUNTAIN GUIDE, 10TH ED. (AMC BOOKS); MAINE.GOV

2. REDSTONE GRANITE QUARRIES

Redstone, N.H.

Beginning in the late 1800s, this site turned out red- and green-colored granite blocks for half a century. Projects built with the stone include Boston's Memorial Hatch Shell and the National Archives in Washington, D.C. After production ceased in 1948, the mining village was redeveloped for recreation. Trails of varying difficulty are dotted with the scraps of coal-fired boilers, dual-steam-engine air compressors, and granite blocks. From the quarry's rim, you can see the summits of Moat and Three Sisters mountains. Reach the site from the Corridor 19 snowmobile trail, accessible at the North Conway Walmart.

DISTANCE: 0.5 MILE TO THE QUARRY; ON-SITE TRAIL DISTANCES VARY
INFO: WHITEMOUNTAINHISTORY.ORG

3. NOANET WOODLANDS

Dover, Mass.

A nature walk through this corner of Boston's south suburbs uncovers agricultural roots. Once used by American Indians as a hunting ground, this site later became a farming hotspot, and the pastoral scene still takes hikers back in time to another century. The popular 0.5-mile Caryl Trail offers an easy route from Caryl Park to Dover Iron Works, a 19th-century stone mill. For a low-effort view of the Boston skyline, follow the Noanet Peak Trail from the mill for about 0.5 mile.

DISTANCE: 1 MILE OR 2 MILES ROUND TRIP
INFO: OUTDOORS WITH KIDS BOSTON (AMC BOOKS); TRUSTEES.ORG

LEARN MORE

Read about a turnpike turned bike path on page 34 and find hundreds of additional trip ideas throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic at outdoors.org/getout.

4. WEETAMOO WOODS

Tiverton, R.I.

Named for a 17th-century sachem (or chief of the Pocasset tribe) who died in King Philip's War, Weetamoo translates as "sweetheart." Evidence of this forest's industrial and agricultural history comes via a cobblestone cart path and a slab bridge, as well as a stone wall recently discovered by archaeologists. Later remains include a 19th-century sawmill, millrace, and arched bridge, all visible from the 3-mile Red Trail. Follow the Red Trail to its terminus then take the Yellow Trail to the Cemetery Trail, ending at Pardon Gray Cemetery, an 18th-century family burial ground.

DISTANCE: 6 OR 12 MILES ROUND TRIP
INFO: EXPLORERI.ORG

5. MINE HILL PRESERVE

Roxbury, Conn.

You don't have to go far to spot history at this 19th-century iron mine and granite quarry in western Connecticut. Restored blast ovens and a furnace sit a quarter-mile from the parking area. For more signs of the past, follow the blue-blazed Main Loop along the Donkey Trail, passing mine tunnels and a series of grated air shafts. These, like the property itself, have been repurposed: They now serve as entryways to bat dwellings. The trail reaches an old quarry site before looping back toward the parking area along the Shepaug River.

DISTANCE: 3.5-MILE LOOP
INFO: ROXBURYLANDTRUST.ORG



▲ Rusty remains of a once-busy site litter the Redstone Granite Quarries.

6. POPOLOPEN GORGE

Fort Montgomery, N.Y.

This former mine produced iron ore for arms and ordnance during the Revolutionary War. Start your adventure at Fort Montgomery on the blue-blazed Timp-Torne Trail that passes under Route 9 and along the north side of Popolopen Creek. Once you've crossed the creek, bear left onto the Popolopen Gorge Trail, which heads east along the water. Watch for the vestiges of a gristmill that operated in this dramatic gorge in the 18th century, as well as two aqueducts that brought water to Bear Mountain and West Point.

DISTANCE: 4.5-MILE LOOP

INFO: *BEST DAY HIKES IN THE CATSKILLS AND HUDSON VALLEY*, 2ND ED. (AMC BOOKS)

7. SOUTH MOUNTAIN PRESERVE

Emmaus, Pa.

A 20-minute drive from Lehigh University, South Mountain tells so many stories, it could be the subject of an entire course taught at the school. Melting and refreezing glaciers 150,000 years ago littered the slopes with glacial erratics that nixed the area's farming potential but left it primed for mining iron ore, magnetite, and sandstone. Students might be interested to discover that the stones for many buildings at Lehigh and nearby Moravian College were extracted here. Access the trailhead from Alpine Street and follow the Alpine Street Trail, which connects to the Uplands Trail Loop. Set aside at least an hour to explore this circuit bordered by 19th-century quarries and mature hardwood forests.

DISTANCE: 3.3 MILES ROUND TRIP

INFO: *AMC'S BEST DAY HIKES NEAR PHILADELPHIA* (AMC BOOKS)

8. BULL RUN MOUNTAINS

Broad Run, Va.

Located 45 minutes outside of Washington, D.C., and close to the famous battlefields of Manassas, Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve provides a different sort of connection to the Civil War. A now-abandoned mill on this site produced grain for soldiers in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, as well as both world wars. Confederate troops burned the mill in 1861, but it was rebuilt following the end of the Civil War. From the trailhead, follow the Green Loop Trail west, past the ruins of an old ice house and the mill itself. The trail soon heads north and eventually intersects with the Red Trail. Take the first right onto the Red Trail and head south. As you return to the trailhead, you'll pass an old family cemetery.

DISTANCE: 2.5-MILE LOOP

INFO: *AMC'S BEST DAY HIKES IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY* (AMC BOOKS); BRMCONSERVANCY.ORG; VIRGINIAOUTDOORSFOUNDATION.ORG

CONTRIBUTORS

Jennifer Adach, Susan Charkes, Peter W. Kick, Carey Kish, Kim Foley MacKinnon, Michael R. Martin, Christie Matheson, Ryan Smith