

Highlighted Hike: Lowell to Fallasburg Park

Excerpt from:

The North Country Trail: The best walks, hikes and backpacking trips on America's longest National Scenic Trail

Distance: 7.92 Miles

The Trail enters the City of Lowell from the south, after crossing the Grand River on the Alden Nash/South Husdon St Bridge, and following the Flat River north into Lowell.. The Kent County Fairgrounds offer NCT backpackers their first public camping opportunity since the Middleville State Game Area. Call 616-897-6050 to make a reservation. Farther north at the Boy Scout cabin, camping may be possible. Camping is also available in the Lowell State Game Area except May 15--Sept 10.

The Lowell featured hike begins at the Flat River Dam on Main Street, just upstream from the Flat's confluence with the Grand River. Look for Lowell's fishing troll statue, unique on the North Country Trail! Follow the Riverwalk one block upstream to the faux sternwheeler Robert E. Lee, a.k.a. the Lowell Showboat, source of summer entertainment for Lowell's residents since 1932.

Follow the Riverwalk past the library. Turn right at the boat launch. Go one block, and turn left to walk north on North Monroe Street to the Oakwood Cemetery. Turn right on Fremont Street and follow it east along the cemetery's south boundary.

Turn left on North Washington Street. Follow it north to the NCT trailhead (L-004) on the right just before the Boy Scout Cabin. Parking is also available at the cabin for those preferring to start their hike at the Scout Cabin trailhead.

Follow the NCT east into the woods as it begins to gradually swing north through a mature red pine woods around the Boy Scout property. Cross the utility corridor, a cleared east-west swath known locally as "the sliding hill." Follow the Trail into the woods. Soon it parallels the lazy, broad Flat River heading upstream.

At Devil's Peak at the top of the riverside ridge, there is a blue-blazed arrow post directing hikers to make a sharp right away from the river, and private property, and into the Lowell State Game Area. Aside from seasonal hunters, the primary users of this trail are joggers.

Follow the NCT south and briefly west through the pretty maple forest. On a cool, foggy morning, eastern box turtles will probably cheer your progress. Watch for the blue blazes to avoid straying onto unmarked hunters' trails. After 0.58 miles from Devil's Peak, the Trail veers left at a directional post at the uphill edge of an oak savanna. The Trail then emerges onto Grindle Drive. The distance from Washington Street to Grindle Drive is 1.2 miles.

Go west 0.25 miles on Grindle. At a beige house where the road makes a 90 degree turn north, go straight and re-enter the woods on the Trail.

There is a parking spot where the Trail crosses Grindle Drive for the second time. The NCT continues northerly through the woods, passing a pile of stones, a reminder of early settlers' attempts to clear the land for farming. Look for other signs of man's early uses of the landscape. Traverse a pine plantation, walk a small creek valley's puncheon bridge, and go over a stream crossing. Follow the NCT across a wooded hill and descend to an

unmarked junction on the edge of an opening. Turn left and cross the opening, reaching the paved Flat River Drive.

The Trail crosses Flat River Drive and turns right and parallels the road for about 100 yards. At a parking area the Trail angles to the left up a pine hill, to then descend a broad ridge to a rivulet. It switchbacks up again to a scenic overlook over the Flat River, with views reminiscent of those found in the U.P. The Trail follows a two-track hunting trail but turns left (watch for it!) before it reaches an ossuary of deer bones at a parking area on Montcalm Rd.

A few hundred yards further the trail emerges onto the gravel Montcalm Avenue, where the road walk to the left (north) makes a steep downhill through dense woods before leveling out along the river bottom. Follow Montcalm for almost a mile beside the scenic Flat River to Covered Bridge Road NE, where it makes a leftward diagonal crossing to get back onto the Trail heading north.

This crossing is near the Fallasburg School Museum, which can be seen to the right (east). The 42-acre Fallasburg Historical Village's nineteenth century buildings are a project of the Fallasburg Historical Society (www.fallasburg.org), and include an historic and picturesque covered bridge 0.3 mile west.

The Trail crosses the road and passes behind the restored Tower Farm barn, then entering Fallasburg Park and skirting a disc golf course. Follow the banks of the Flat River through a picnic area to the large, concrete McPherson Street Bridge. The total distance from Covered Bridge Road to McPherson Bridge is 0.8 miles. The lower section of the bridge is pedestrian only.

Cross the Flat River on the pedestrian bridge and look for the North Country Trail's blue blazes to the right (north) immediately after crossing. Follow the Trail 0.9 miles along the thickly forested hillsides and west bank of the Flat River on some beautifully constructed hiking trail. The trail ends climbing to Fallasburg Park Rd. The distance from Main Street's Flat River Dam to the end point at Fallasburg Park Drive totals 7.8 miles.