

SHORT, SWEET, AND SPECTACULAR

THE BEST ONE MILE HIKES IN THE TRAP HILLS

Some of the most memorable viewpoints in the Trap Hills, rock balconies offering vistas that, on a good day, can reach 50 miles, are a mere one mile walk. Descriptions, and directions, for three of the most impressive scenes are below. For a peek at pictures of the Trap Hills' fine vistas, go to the first website listed below.

Better yet, the Trap Hills feature vast swaths of mature forest, notable rare plants, and historic sites such as Old Victoria, a restored mining village. This quiet escarpment, nearly 20 miles long, is 6 miles southeast of Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park, in the western corner of the U.P. Nestled between two Ontonagon County towns, the ridgeline rises 3 miles north of Bergland, and runs east to a point 4 miles southwest of Rockland.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- The website of the Peter Wolfe Chapter of the North Country Trail Association, www.northcountrytrail.org/pwf, has extensive hike planning information including maps, pictures, and detailed descriptions. Or, use this link to Backpacker Magazine's Trap Hills feature: www.backpacker.com/article/1,2646,4749,00.html
- For information on ongoing efforts to protect and preserve the Trap Hills, and how you can help, scan these two websites :
www.northwoodswild.org, the website of Northwoods Wilderness Recovery
www.upenvironment.org , the website of the Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition.

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HIKE #1 THE HACK SITE

HIGHLIGHTS: Broad views stretching past Lake Gogebic; quiet forest in the wild core of the Trap Hills; solitude.

HIKE DISTANCE: 2 miles, roundtrip.

ELEVATION GAIN: a little less than 200 feet

FINDING THE TRAILHEAD: From Bergland, drive north 2.0 miles on M-64, then turn right (east) on Old M-64 (gravel). Drive east and north 3.9 miles, then turn east on Forest Road 326 (gravel). Drive 1.7 miles east and south on F.R. 326 to its southern end.

THE HIKE: Thirty paces north from the end of F.R. 326, a narrow, but well-defined footpath leads southwest into the woods. This trail, marked by white diamonds and blazes and known as "The Hack Site Trail", quickly turns south. Hike one mile south, along this path, to an intersection with the North Country Trail (blue diamond markings), and turn right (west). Then, walk 165 paces west on the NCT. There, the path opens into a broad opening on the top of a south-facing cliff, and memorable views. "Hack Site" refers to the release of peregrine falcon chicks on a nearby ledge.

OPTIONS: Another notable viewpoint is a half-mile west on the North Country Trail. Alternatively, you can hike 4.1 miles west and north on the NCT to F.R. 326, then walk east and south one mile on F.R. 326 to return to your starting point. That loop totals 6.1 miles.

HIKE #2 NORWICH BLUFF

HIGHLIGHTS: Outstanding views from a beautiful escarpment, solitude

HIKE DISTANCE: 2 miles, roundtrip

ELEVATION GAIN: about 450 feet

FINDING THE TRAILHEAD: From Bergland, drive about 9 miles east on M-28 to the hamlet of Matchwood, and turn left (north) on the Norwich Road. Drive about 8 miles north on the Norwich Road to the bridge over the West Branch of the Ontonagon River. A quarter mile north of that bridge, turn right (northeast) onto a dirt lane. Follow that dirt lane about a hundred yards, to the base of the cliffs, and park. If approaching from Ontonagon and M-64, drive about 14 miles south on Norwich Road to this same spot.

THE HIKE: A gated ATV trail leads east, along the base of the cliffs, from the parking area. Hike east, along that ATV trail, about one-third of a mile. There, a rocky jeep track leads north. Turn left (north), passing a forest service sign designating the jeep track as a hiking trail, and hike steeply uphill a little over a quarter mile. The ascent mellows, and the jeep track trail intersects the blue blazed North Country Trail. Turn right (east) on the NCT, immediately crossing a small brook.

Continue hiking eastward, following the NCT as it ascends steeply, then swings through a wooded hollow, then climbs again. At the top of this second climb, a little less than a half mile east of the trail intersection, the NCT crosses a slope dotted with red pines. A hundred feet south of the trail, down that piney slope, a broad opening on the cliff top offers sweeping views. These broad vistas, to the south, east and west, are among the Trap Hills', and the U.P.'s finest.

OPTIONS: One attractive choice is to walk further east on the NCT. A mile east of the viewpoint mentioned above, the trail dips to cross Whisky Hollow Creek, then rises to a series of ledges, featuring picturesque views, a half mile east of the creek. Alternatively, consider walking west on the NCT from the intersection where the jeep track trail mentioned above meets it. From that junction, it is about a mile and a quarter west to two viewpoints on the southwest corner of Norwich Bluff. These lookouts, broad rock slabs just west of the trail, offer long views west to "The Hack Site" cliff, and northwest to the Porcupine Mountains and Lake Superior.

HIKE #3 LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

HIGHLIGHTS: Views of Victoria Reservoir, Victoria Dam, and surrounding forest

HIKE DISTANCE: 1 mile, roundtrip

ELEVATION GAIN: about 200 feet

FINDING THE TRAILHEAD: From Rockland drive 4.5 miles southwest on the Victoria Dam Road to where the North Country Trail (blue markings) crosses that road. The NCT crosses the road twice here, several hundred feet apart. The southernmost crossing is the trailhead for the hike to Lookout Mountain.

THE HIKE: Follow the NCT up a steep embankment on the west side of the road, into the woods. Continue hiking west and south on the NCT to the ledge known as Lookout Mountain, a little less than a half mile from the Victoria Dam Road.

OPTIONS: Two nearby sites are well worth a post hike visit. First, The Old Victoria Restoration Site is 1.1 miles north of the trailhead, on the way back to Rockland. Also, a visit to Victoria Dam is rewarding. Drive south (downhill) a quarter mile from the trailhead, and take the right fork at the bottom to a view of the reservoir, and a historic site. There, a sign notes the spot where Native Americans showed Europeans the legendary Ontonagon Boulder. That five ton mass of pure copper, now residing in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., spurred the U.P.'s 19th century copper mining boom.