

# **PUMC Guide to the Great (NJ) Outdoors**

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We take no responsibility for the content herein, but hope to inspire those interested in exploring more of the NJ outdoors!

## **KAYAKING / CANOEING**

### **Rent on Canal (or move to lake)**

Kayak rentals during the spring / summer, a great activity for a few hours on a pleasant day. Very easy to get to (walk from campus <10 min) - walk down Alexander until you reach the canal. They help you get the boat in the water for use on the canal, or you can carry it to the lake (less people, slightly more diverse). Opening hours are seasonal and weather dependent.

### **Pine Barrens**

An amazing adventure on a warm summer day and easily done as a day trip or overnight with camping from Princeton! The Pine Barrens are beautiful, and the rivers are windy, diverse, and really fun to swim in too :) Suitable for anyone even in reasonably minimal physical shape, although swimming is a definite plus (life jackets are available for those who don't know how to swim).

There are several companies that offer kayak rentals. It is really easy: you drive to their location, they put you in a bus with kayaks, you kayak, and then they have a bus at a pick up point along the river from which they take you (and the kayaks) back to the parking lot. They often recommend reserving if you have a big group, but I've never had issues just showing up in the morning. The companies serve different rivers within the Pine Barrens, so there are many possible adventures here!

Mick's: [www.mickscanoerental.com](http://www.mickscanoerental.com)

Pinelands Adventures: [www.pinelandsadventures.org/](http://www.pinelandsadventures.org/)

More options: <http://www.pinelandsalliance.org/exploration/todo/canoeing/>

### **Delaware River**

- Overnight through the water gap
- Fun whitewater-y parts north of the gap

## **HIKING**

### **Pine barrens**

A large ecosystem unique to New Jersey, encompassing several different parks and wildlife preservation areas (e.g. Wharton State Forest, Brendan T. Byrne State Forest, Bass River State Forest). Most of these offer swimming, camping, and many miles of hiking trails. Expect at least an hour's drive to reach the barrens. Hiking is generally easy on the flat, sandy trails. Good place for winter hiking. Beware of ticks as they seem to be particularly bad in some areas of the park. Dogs allowed on leash.

### **Sourlands**

Only a 15 minute drive from campus. Tons of parking; no entrance fees. Several well-marked hiking trails, ranging in length from 1 to 6 miles. Trails are pretty gentle and elevation gain is minimal. Boulderering and mountain biking are also options. In fact, boulderering competitions are held here pretty frequently. The hiking is fine year-round. Dogs allowed on leash.

### **Delaware water gap**

Many beautiful hikes and a serviced campground for multiday trips (+ backpacker campsites along the AT). A beautiful stretch of the AT goes through here and there are many parking lots so that it is possible to shuttle cars. The fall colors are great!.

### **Mountain Lakes**

Princeton's local nature park! ~5 minute drive from campus (it's possible to bike here too). Parking's free and readily available. Lots of mostly short and easy hiking trails through forests, across fields, and next to streams and ponds. I've heard that there are some boulderering opportunities in the northernmost section -- not sure how good. Great spot for picnicking, trail running, and general relaxation. Dogs allowed on leash.

The lakes were built in the 19th century to produce ice, and there are some interesting information panels about their history.

### **Round Valley Recreation Area**

This is about a 50 minute drive from campus. Parking isn't a problem but there are entrance fees (check website for details). The park's main draw is its unusually clean lake. There are campsites by the lake which you have to hike into. The hiking isn't particularly challenging, so this would be suitable for beginners. Great swimming and nice trails with berry bushes aplenty when in season.

### **Palisades**

About a 1 hour and 20 minute drive from campus. Free entrance/parking with a sandwich/snack place right next to the parking lot. A variety of hikes, some moderately challenging due to having to scramble over boulder fields. Cool cliffside views of neighboring New York. Some trails have impressive and accessible waterfalls. Would not attempt to hike in the winter due to narrow, steep trails, but I believe people can cross-country ski here...

### **Harriman/Bear Mtn State Park**

My (Jeffrey's) favorite place to hike near Princeton, these state parks are about a 1.5 hour drive. Harriman state park has numerous trails of varying difficulty and even overnight trips are possible. This is one of the few places nearby where you can find a view without any signs of civilization. Bear Mountain offers great views over the Hudson River and contains some interesting historical sights such as the ghost town of Doodletown and the old Dunderberg Spiral Railway.

### **Norvin Green State Forest (Wyanokies)**

This state forest is about a 1 hour and 15 minute drive from campus. Probably the closest moderate-difficult hiking. It's free to park and hike, and there are numerous trails to explore. Great views of Wanaque reservoir and the NYC skyline can be had from Wyanokie high point and Carris hill. Elevation ranges from ~300 ft at the reservoir to over 1,000 ft at the highest points so there is the opportunity to get in some good elevation change.

### **Ramapo Mountains**

These mountains are in northern New Jersey, just east of the Wyanokies. They are a 1 hour 15 minute to 1.5 hour drive from campus. There are a number of trailheads, including one at Sylands Manor, the location of the NJ State Botanical Garden (free entry but fee to park during summer). The trails here are less steep than in the Wyanokies, but the Ramapo Mountains cover a larger area, so it is possible to make much longer loops. Again, there are great views of the NYC skyline and the surrounding forest.

### **Trexler Nature Preserve**

The hiking here is different from most of the other places around New Jersey. Trexler Nature Preserve is located in the rolling hills of the Lehigh Valley (1.5 hrs from Princeton) and surrounds the Lehigh Valley Zoo. Some of the animal enclosures extend into the nature preserve, so you find yourself hiking alongside elk and buffalo. Since much of the forest here has been cut down, there are good views over the surrounding farms and homes. Parking and entry into the nature reserve is free.

### **High Point State Park**

Located in Sussex, NJ, just under a 2 hour drive from Princeton, with free parking. High Point State Park offers over 50 miles of trails varying in length from 0.5 - 18 miles. Several of the trails give great views of farmland, forest, and lakes. High Point Monument, can also be climbed during certain hours of the day (check website for details), providing a panoramic view of three states 1803 feet above sea level. Small entrance fees may be applicable depending on the time of year.

### **Baldpate Mountain**

Located in Titusville, NJ, less than a 30 minute drive from Princeton. This 8.1 mile easy/moderate trail has five access points (allowing the hike to be shortened) and free entrance/parking. Added perks include a view of the Delaware River and numerous old farm buildings along the trail.

### **Musconetcong Gorge Preserve**

A 1 hour drive from Princeton, in Bloomsbury, NJ are over 6 miles of trails descending into and out of the Musconetcong Gorge. The Ridge/Highlands trail starts at the right side of the parking lot and provides a satisfying climb (decent elevation gain) accompanied by beautiful views of the Gorge and the sound of trickling water. Free parking and no entrance fees.

### **Along the AT**

Abram S. Hewitt State Forest only has a few trails, but they offer spectacular views over Greenwood lake. Also, from here you can walk from New Jersey into New York along the AT.

### **Plainsboro Preserve**

About 8 miles from campus. You can easily go there by bike, but bikes are not allowed on the paths of the preserve.

Originally, the lake was used as a sand mine, but the area was turned into a nature preserve. Take Maggie's trail to get into the middle of the lake, where you have a 350° panorama of the lake.

## **CLIMBING (OUTDOORS)**

Trad: Gunks

Sport/top-rope: birdsboro, Ralph Stover (a bit of trad there too), Peterskill (next to gunks), Safe Harbor (PA) for sport climbing

Bouldering: Witherspoon Woods, Sourlands, Haycock, Mt. Grenta (aka Governor Dick Park), gunks, Governor Stable

Further away:

Adirondacks (5h), New river gorge (7h), Rumney (7h), RRG (10 hrs)

## **CLIMBING (INDOORS)**

### **OA Wall**

Located at the Princeton University football stadium, this gym is free to Princeton affiliates and obviously super close. It's a small space, but they use the space pretty efficiently. Limited bouldering, but mostly top-roping.

<https://outdooraction.princeton.edu/activities/climbing/climbing-wall>

### **Rockville**

Bouldering, autobelay, top roping, lead climbing. This gym is a decent size, fairly close to Princeton, and usually not super busy. Route setting could be more imaginative, however -- most of the harder routes are pretty crimpy and don't make you think very hard -- so this is a good gym to mix in with others in the area. <http://www.rockvilleclimbing.com>

### **Elite**

Great for bouldering. They also have top roping but there are probably better gyms if your goal is to climb on rope. <http://www.eliteclimbing.com>

### **Go Vertical**

<http://www.govertical.com>.

### **Gravity Vault**

Big gyms. A couple of locations in NJ. <http://www.gravityvault.com/locations/search?state=NJ>

## **BIKING**

### **Tow path!**

### **Hopewell**

Hopewell is a nice village, about 1h cycling from campus. Take the “Pretty Brook Road” to get there.



# **SKIING**

## **Catskills alpine skiing**

Hunter & Windham

## **Mountain creek alpine skiing**

## **Blue mountain alpine skiing**

<https://www.skibluemt.com> (also snow tubing = super fun half day activity, that can be combined with other activities like cross country skiing!)

## **XC Skiing**

- Mohonk
- Fahnestock
- High Point
- That place near the gunks that Munan & Kedron really like
- Really close to campus: the institute woods are a beautiful place go to and so easy for everyone to get to!

## **OTHER!**

### **Fossil Hunting!**

There are two places very close to campus, Big Brook and Shark River (<http://www.njfossils.net> and <http://www.fossilguy.com/sites/bbrook/>). This activity is wet, so it is especially great when it is too hot to go on a hike! It is good to try to bring some colanders (for draining pasta) or such to sift for fossils, as well as small garden trowels. Family friendly and fun! Bring towels for the car!

### **The beaches!**

So much to do by the beaches - kayaking, walking, swimming, biking...

### **Visit a cool Mine!**

Great for a rainy day, they have amazing fluorescent minerals underground!!! (Sterling Hill) [sterlinghillminingmuseum.org/](http://sterlinghillminingmuseum.org/)

### **Tubing or Whitewater Rafting**

(to be added)

### **Scuba diving**

A little known fact about NJ: there is actually a lot of shipwreck diving off the coast! However, there are also scuba diving schools where beginners can start from scratch.

A nearby scuba school:

A group for people who already know how to dive, and want to hang out with other divers or go shipwreck diving (they're mostly our parents age, and really welcoming to students!):

### **Rowing! (inc. learn to row)**

Every fall, there is a learn to row program on Lake Carnegie: <http://www.clra.com/How-To-Join/Learn-To-Row.aspx>.

For people who already know how to row, contact the Lakers ([www.clra.com](http://www.clra.com)) to get involved - they are very friendly and love new members!!

## **BIG TRIPS!**

This is a space for really awesome trips that require a long weekend and are somewhat far away - like the big climbing trip, the Vermont hiking / Ben and Jerry's trip, and the winter skiing / hiking trip to New Hampshire last winter.

### **Vermont Trip 2016**

Last fall, I organized a big trip to Vermont. The intent was to combine camping/hiking with a tour of the nearby Ben & Jerry's ice cream factory. Sadly, the weekend I picked turned out to be a really inconvenient one, and nobody could make the trip. So I went up there by myself and had a blast! I camped at the lovely Elmore State Park, wandered around the local trails and tiny towns, and ate an ice cream cone the size of my head. I'm planning another trip up there (might camp somewhere different) but it will have to be in June to avoid the dreaded Vermont "mud season" (also known as Spring). Logistics stuff: it's 6 hours away by car; state park so you do have to pay to get in (huge, extremely clean campsites, though); summer-fall are the good times of year to visit. --Alexis

### **Shenandoah**

Shenandoah backpacking is also a relatively easy trip to do as an extended weekend out of Princeton