

# North Woods Self-Guided Tour

## The Ravine



- Rustic trails
- Paved pathways
- Stairs
- Bridges

**Discover Responsibly.** With about one million visits each year, the North Woods is a popular destination in Central Park. To minimize your impact, keep dogs leashed at all times, stay on designated pathways, and carry out what you carry in. Feel free to observe and photograph wildlife, but please don't feed any animals you encounter.

Beginning and ending at the Pool, this self-guided tour should take about 30 minutes. While there are some stairs on this route, the entire path is paved and fairly even.

At 40 acres, the North Woods is the largest of the three woodlands in Central Park. The Ravine is a lowland landscape in the North Woods that features a small stream, dramatic cascades, and a variety of plants native to the northeastern United States. Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, the Ravine and the North Woods were intended to give visitors a taste of the Adirondacks without leaving New York City.

- The Pool:** The grassy banks of the Pool are lined with water-loving trees like bald cypress, red maple, weeping willow, and sweet gum. Overflow from the Central Park Reservoir supplies the Pool with water.
- Glenspan cascade:** Water pours over a man-made earth and boulder dam to create this 14-foot cascade. The rocky cliff on the opposite side of the stream features native plants like ferns, summersweet, winterberry, and white fringe tree.
- Glenspan Arch:** Olmsted and Vaux frequently used arches to mark transitions in the Park's landscape. This large stone arch is the southern gateway to the North Woods.
- The Loch:** This small stream winds through the Ravine before emptying into the Harlem Meer. In Scottish, "loch" means lake, and the Loch was originally designed as a long lake. Wildlife flock to the Loch's muddy banks, shallow pools, and tumbling cascades.
- Head of the Loch cascade:** Next to the rustic bridge is the second of three cascades along the course of the Loch. After falling into a state of disrepair, the cascades were restored by the Central Park Conservancy using historic photographs to carefully rebuild these striking features.

6. **Ironwood trees:** The trees with smooth rippling bark that looks like a muscle are actually sometimes called “musclewood,” both because their wood is very strong, and because their bark gives them a muscular appearance. Like most of the trees growing along the Loch, ironwoods thrive in moist soil.
7. **Manhattan’s Adirondacks:** Pause here to appreciate the peaceful sounds of the woodlands. Tucked in a natural valley between the North Woods and North Meadow, the Ravine is a place where the commotion of New York City is replaced by birdsongs and rushing water.
8. **Huddlestone Arch:** Step into the cool shadows of Huddlestone Arch and look up. Eschewing the conventions of mortar and cement, this impressive structure is held together by gravity alone. Huddlestone Arch has supported the East Drive without requiring major repairs since its construction in 1866.
9. **Ring in the rock:** Before the construction of Central Park, there was a small stream here called Montayne’s Rivulet. Travelers could stop at the stream and use a cup attached to an iron ring to get a drink of water. The ring can still be seen embedded in a boulder to the left of the cascade, and one of the drinking cups is on display at the Dana Discovery Center.
10. **Huddlestone cascade:** The sights and sounds of the North Woods were carefully designed to mimic a natural woodland. The sound of rushing water, combined with dramatic boulders and curving paths make the Huddlestone cascade a dramatic scene.
11. **Rustic Trails:** The rustic trails branching off from the paved pathway lead to points of interest in the North Woods like the banks of the Loch and the wildflower meadow. The Central Park Conservancy maintains these trails to allow visitors to explore the woodlands without causing soil compaction and erosion problems.
12. **Rustic Structures:** When trees in Central Park have to be pruned or removed, they are not wasted. Conservancy craftspeople use rot-resistant trees like black locust to make rustic structures like this bridge. These structures are characteristic of the woodlands, and each bridge, fence, gazebo, and bench is unique.
13. **Glenspan Arch:** As you return through Glenspan Arch, note the picturesque view created by this huge stone structure. Vaux and Olmsted used arches to inspire curiosity in visitors. The winding path and dramatic view of Glenspan cascade pull you through the arch, back into the serene landscape of the Pool.

## Get Involved

The mission of the Central Park Conservancy is to restore, manage, and enhance Central Park in partnership with the public. What’s the best way for you to support CPC?

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