

HIKE NO 5: INDIAN CLIFFS

Distance: 3.37 mi.

Elevation Gain: 247 feet

Time Required: 2.5 - 3.0 hours

Difficulty: Fairly easy

SUMMARY

The hike to Indian Cliffs from the Camp Kunatah gate is perhaps one of the most (if not the most) popular segments of the entire TMR Trail. Rather than the usual “out and back” route, I have added an additional portion that will walk the length of Rock Lake, creating a loop.

Although the area in and around Camp Kunatah is no longer used for summer camp, the area was the first part of Ten Mile River that was developed shortly after the camp’s purchase in 1927. Tens of thousands of scouts over the years have camped at the various summer camps that were located at one time or another along the TMR Trail here. If you are completely unfamiliar with this area, you will see why this area was chosen to develop first - the view from atop Indian Cliffs and from the south end of Rock Lake are among the best at Ten Mile River.

This hike begins at the now-closed Camp Kunatah entrance gate on the side of Cochection Turnpike. From the gate and using the red marked TMR Trail, the hike uses the Camp Kunatah service road to hike directly to Picture Window. At Picture Window, the short blue marked spur to Indian Cliffs is used before heading back to an intersection with the TMR Trail and the Rim Trail. The Rim Trail is used for a short distance, crossing the dam on Rock Lake to its intersection with Cochection Turnpike. Cochection Turnpike is then followed back to the trailhead.

TRAILHEAD DIRECTIONS AND PARKING

From Headquarters, make a left turn onto Crystal Lake Road (CR-26) to its end at an intersection with the Mt. Hope/Lumberland Turnpike (CR-23). Make a right turn onto CR-23 and then a quick left onto Mahl’s Pond Road, about 500 feet after making the right turn. Follow Mahl’s Pond Road for 2.4 mi., all the way to its end, to Cochection Turnpike. The trailhead is easily identified by the dual Camp Kunatah entrance gates [Picture 1]. Cars can be



Picture 1

parked on either the right side of Mahl’s Pond Road or the right side of Cochection Turnpike. Be careful not to block either road or the Kunatah gates. Both Mahl’s Pond Road and Cochection Turnpike are maintained by the Town of Tusten and they are both plowed in their entirety in the winter months.

DESCRIPTION

FROM the trailhead, step over or underneath the yellow Camp Kunatah pipe gate, following the red marked TMR Trail into Camp Kunatah. Pass the former Camp Kunatah camp office about 1,000 feet from the trailhead on your left [*Picture 2*], before reaching the Kunatah Dining Hall at 0.25 mi. [*Picture 3*], likewise on your left.



Picture 2



Picture 3

The Camp Kunatah Dining Hall was built in the early 1950's. Although no longer used for summer camp, it was recently re-roofed by an enthusiastic group of volunteers who hope to repurpose it as a base for winter activities in the near future.

Please note that although Camp Kunatah closed fairly recently all of the buildings in this section of the property are off limits. Do not attempt to enter any of the buildings, as some of them are undoubtedly structurally unsafe.

At 0.37 mi. a baseball field is passed on your right along with a shower house on your left [*Picture 4*]. Immediately after passing the ball field the TMR Trail makes a sharp left turn, continuing to follow the camp service road.



Picture 4

Unused lean-to and summer campsites are on both sides of the trail here. Camp Kunatah was closed about ten years ago, and one can only marvel at the ability of the forest to take back the land. Notice how the foliage is quickly reclaiming the roads, buildings, and even fire rings.

At 0.55 mi., an open field is reached, what was at one time an archery range [*Picture 5*]. Note the solitary lean-to at the end of the field. This point marks the end of Camp Kunatah, and the beginning of the hike up to Indian Cliffs. Continue to follow the TMR Trail straight ahead. Note the impressive rock ledges immediately to your right and left as you pass the lean-to.



Picture 5

At 0.75 mi., the TMR Trail leaves the camp service road on a much narrower path to the right of the service road [Picture 6]. It is important to note that if this junction is missed, you will still make it to Indian Cliffs, but you will miss the junction to the 2nd part of the hike - the trip to the shoreline of Rock Lake. Remember to pay particular attention to the red TMR Trail markers after passing the solitary lean-to.



Picture 6

This section of the TMR Trail is enjoyable to walk, especially in the fall. Large stands of white oak, aspen, and birch trees abound on each side of the trail here. After walking this section for about ten minutes or so, you will come to an important intersection [Picture 7] at almost exactly 1.00 mi. from the trailhead. You will know you are getting close to this intersection when you pass a now decrepit and unused latrine on your right hand side, at 0.95 mi.



Picture 7

This intersection is the junction with the Rim Trail, which we will use later in this hike. For now, continue to follow the red marked TMR Trail to your left. Shortly after making the left turn, the TMR Trail makes a right turn back onto the camp service road [Picture 8].



Picture 8

At 1.17 mi., the first glimpses of the view from Indian Cliffs are seen on your left hand side before reaching a large open field at 1.30 mi.

This is called “Picture Window,” presumably because the view is limited to a small opening in the trees to your left when standing in the center of the field. You will notice that the TMR Trail turns right here, continuing on the service road. At this point, we are going to leave the TMR Trail and take the short blue marked spur to Indian Cliffs on the opposite end of the field. The beginning of the spur trail is located next to the two portable restrooms [Picture 9].



Picture 9

The spur trail is marked with blue TMR Trail markers, and is a little less than 0.25 mi. long. Indian Cliffs is reached at 1.43 mi. from the trailhead. I have not included a picture of the view from Indian

Cliffs here - the location is obvious, and the panoramic view speaks for itself. There are a few picnic tables in place here year round, as well as equipment used for the summer rock climbing and rappelling program. It is a great place to stop for a break, take pictures, stargaze, or have a meal.

After visiting Indian Cliffs, our hike will continue onwards to the southern shore of Rock Lake. Note: This part can be skipped if time is a factor. To end the hike immediately after visiting Indian Cliffs, simply retrace your steps back to the trailhead at the Kunatah gate, 1.52 mi. away.

To continue onwards to Rock Lake, retrace your steps back to the intersection earlier in the hike with the blue marked Rim Trail, at the 1.00 mi. mark (1.93 mi. from the trailhead), as shown in *[Picture 10]*. Note that this section of the Rim Trail is marked with older blue markers. As the trail markers indicate, leave the red marked TMR Trail and make a left hand turn onto the Rim Trail.



Picture 10

The trail now begins its descent from the ledges that form Indian Cliffs down to the shore of Rock Lake. This section is very steep in sections, be particularly careful in the winter of iced-over rocks. As you descend, the magnificent Rock Lake will come into view on your right hand side.

At 2.21 mi., the trail abruptly makes a right-hand turn. This spot is easy to miss if you are not watching the markers. Every attempt has been made by the author to make this turn obvious. You will know you are getting close to this turn after you pass the end of Rock Lake on your left *[Picture 11]*.



Picture 11

After making the right hand turn, follow the blue markers down to the southern shore of Rock Lake at 2.27 mi. A footbridge is in place over the dam. This is one of my favorite places in all of Ten Mile River as the viewpoint from atop the dam cannot be beat, particularly at sunset in the early spring and late fall *[Picture 12]*.



Picture 12



Picture 13

Cross the footbridge over the dam, and note that Cochection Turnpike is straight ahead, where we will make a right turn onto the turnpike [Picture 13]. Our hike continues on a short section of this infamous gravel road.

The Newburgh - Cochection Turnpike was built in the first decade of the 1800's. Completed by 1810, its aim was to connect the Town of Cochection (on the Delaware River) with Newburgh (on the Hudson River). The construction of the road led to a large influx of workers, leading to the establishment of Sullivan County in 1809. It cut the amount of time needed to ship goods from northeastern Pennsylvania to New York City in half. This road remained a significant part of Sullivan County's economy until it was ultimately replaced by today's state highway system in the early part of the 20th century. Today, this section of the Turnpike is entirely on TMR property and maintained by the town of Tusten. Note that it is an active town road. Although used infrequently, adequate precautions should be taken when hiking it.

The turnpike and our hike begin to ascend almost immediately after leaving the dam. We now need to regain all the elevation we lost on Rim Trail (about 200 feet total). Take it slow and stop to look for wildlife around Rock Lake.

At 2.93 mi., the Kunatah reservoir gate is passed on your left. This is a restricted area, do not pass the yellow gate or attempt to access the reservoir.

At 3.05 mi., the Cochection Turnpike passes through a set of stone pillars [Picture 14]. After passing the pillars, a spur of Mahl's Pond Road is on your left. Continue straight ahead and stay on Cochection Turnpike.



Picture 14

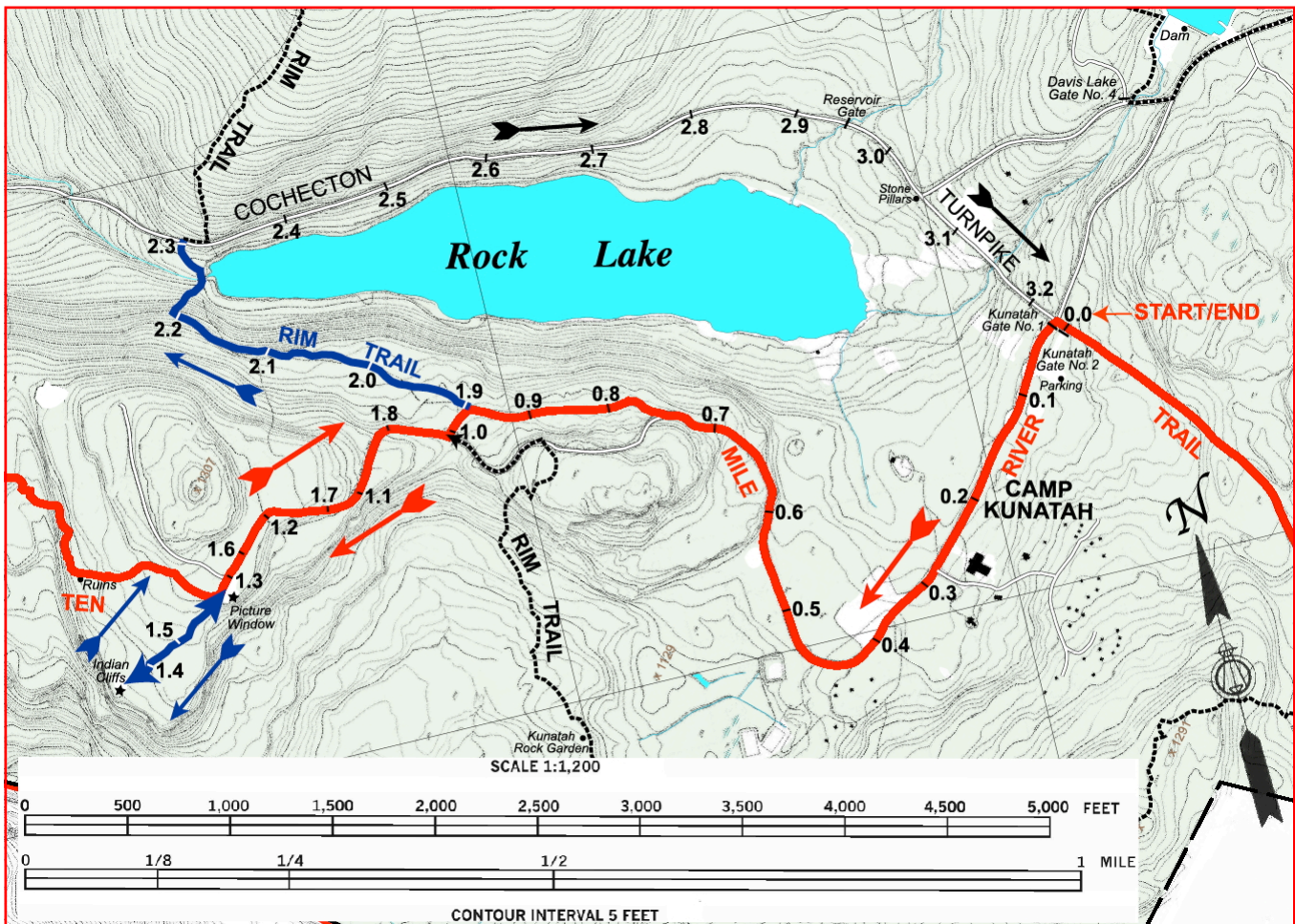
In the days of this area being an active part of Ten Mile River's summer camp program, it marked the entrance to one of the many summer camps that operated here. The amount of history in this area is impossible to even summarize in short here - interested parties should contact the Ten Mile River Museum for more information.

After passing the pillars, the now closed Rock Lake cabins will be on your left [Picture 15], and another yellow gated road will be on your right at 3.15 mi. The road past the gate leads down to the opposite shore of Rock Lake from the dam crossing. Again - the view is magnificent here.

The trailhead is just past the Rock Lake cabins. Upon returning to your car, this hike ends at 3.22 mi.



Picture 15

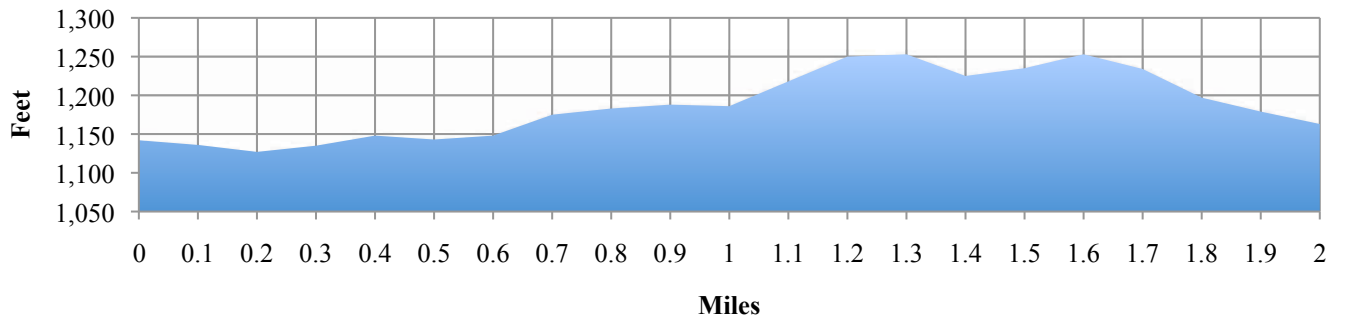


Hike Summary

- 0.00 mi. Camp Kunatah entrance.
- 0.20 mi. Former Camp Kunatah office.
- 0.25 mi. Kunatah Dining Hall.
- 0.37 mi. Baseball Field.
- 0.60 mi. Open Field (former archery range).
- 0.75 mi. TMR Trail leaves camp service road.
- 0.97 mi. Junction with Rim Trail, turn left.
- 1.00 mi. Regain camp service road.
- 1.17 mi. First glimpses of Indian Cliffs.
- 1.30 mi. Picture Window. (Large open field.)
- 1.43 mi. Indian Cliffs. Turn around and head back on blue-marked trail.
- 1.93 mi. Turn left onto blue-marked Rim Trail.
- 2.21 mi. Turn Right towards Rock Lake.
- 2.27 mi. Rock Lake Dam/Bridge.
- 2.30 mi. Turn right onto Cochecton Turnpike
- 2.93 mi. Pass Reservoir Gate.
- 3.05 mi. Stone Pillars.
- 3.15 mi. Pass yellow gate to Kunatah waterfront.
- 3.22 mi. Camp Kunatah entrance.

Trail Elevations

0 mi. - 2 mi.



2 mi. - 3.2 mi.

