Pinelands recreation guide

COURIER-POST

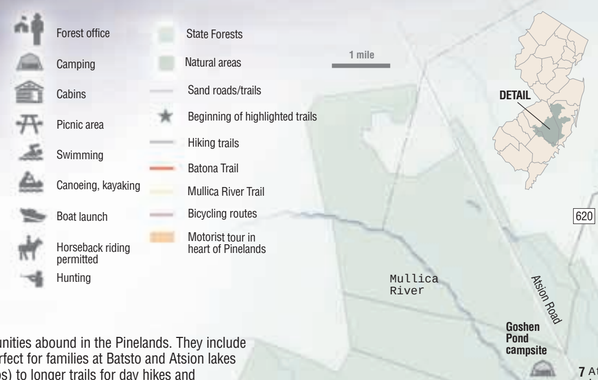
Canoeists paddle along Atsion Lake.
SHAWN SULLIVAN/ Courier-Post

Sometimes stark, often sparklingly beautiful, the Pinelands is a treasure trove for outdoors lovers. Canoeists and kayakers can paddle remote streams that meander through woods where campers and hikers seek solitude. Many miles of sand roads and county roads provide bicyclists with places to pedal. And all these adventures are readily accessible because they are tied together by three of the region's state forests – Wharton, Lebanon and Bass River – which preserve the heart of the Pinelands.

Motor route

Follow this 52-mile route marked in orange for a tour of the Pinelands that can be completed in less than a day. It passes through forests of pines and oaks and commercial cranberry operations (especially along Route 563). The approximate midway point is at Batsto, the restored iron forge and village. Batsto has a picnic area and restrooms.

For a bird's-eye view of the region go to Apple Pie Hill. From Route 206, 13.5 miles east on Route 532. Right on Ringler Avenue; stay straight on dirt road 2.3 miles to top of hill.



Hiking

Hiking opportunities abound in the Pinelands. They include short hikes perfect for families at Batsto and Atsion lakes (see inset maps) to longer trails for day hikes and overnight hikes. Miles of sand roads can be used for hiking, biking or horseback riding. Some trails are designated for hiking only, including the Batona Trail and trails around Batsto and Atsion lakes. Check with park offices for possible changes in routes or updated maps. Here's a sampling of hikes:

A Batona Trail

Many think of the 50-mile Batona (shorthand for BAck TO NAture) Trail as the spine of the Pinelands. Marked by pink blazes, it links Lebanon, Wharton and Bass River state forests. The entire length can be hiked in about three days, although many people hike sections accessible from the region's many side roads. Most of the trail is level, and some of its prettiest stretches follow the Batsto River below Quaker Bridge.

B Mullica River Trail
Distance: 9 miles
This trail follows the Mullica River, connecting the Atsion and Batsto areas; it passes through the Batsto Natural Area, which protects rare plants and animals.

C Carranza Memorial Loop Trail
Distance: 3.5 miles
Park behind the Carranza Memorial, a monument to Mexican aviator Emilio Carranza, and located off Carranza Road. Walk east on Carranza Road, cross railroad. Take first sand road on right and pick up the Batona Trail (marked by pink blazes). Cross the sand road and follow the Batona Trail .8 mile until trail intersects another sand road. Turn right leaving the Batona Trail. Turn right after railroad tracks and follow back to Batona Trail. Turn left on Batona Trail to Carranza Memorial.

D Carranza Memorial to Apple Pie Hill
Distance: 8.2 miles
From Carranza Memorial, go north to the Batona Wilderness Camp. After 200 yards you will pick up the Batona Trail. From here, follow the pink blazes to Apple Pie Hill, marked by a fire tower. At 205 feet, this is the highest point in the Pinelands. The trail begins along a swampy brook, the Skit Branch of the Batsto River, and leads to a commanding view of pitch pine forests from Apple Pie Hill.

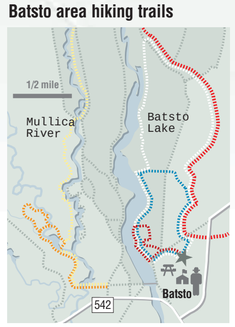
E Sandy Ridge to Pine Crest
Distance: 6.5 miles
Park near bridge on Carranza Road 2.5 miles southeast of Carranza Memorial. Take sand road on north side of Carranza road. Take first right fork, keep left at all subsequent forks. Pass hunting lodge and take left fork to railroad. Turn left, walk southwest 1.8 miles and follow sand road crossing tracks. Walk south and stay left at all forks until a triangular convergence of roads, about a mile south of tracks. Take left road to open bog area and continue to Carranza Road; turn left to car.

AVI STEINHARDT/Courier-Post
A hiker walks along the 50-mile Batona Trail.

Before you hike

- Take a compass and map when taking a longer hike in the Pinelands because the area is generally flat and has few distinguishing landscape features.
- Carry water and a light raincoat. Wear sturdy shoes.
- Use a DEET-based insect repellent to guard against ticks. Stay away from brush and low branches. Ticks may be in these areas.
- Most of the more prominent trails are well marked with color-coded blazes, which are slashes usually painted on trees. If you stop seeing blazes, backtrack until you pick up the trail again.
- It's a good idea to have a hiking partner.

Batsto area hiking trails



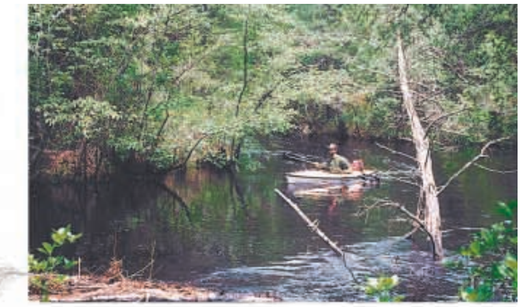
Atsion area hiking trail

Highbush Blueberry
Vaccinium corymbosum

A shrub commonly seen along the many trails in the Pinelands.
Fruits early July-early August

Pink lady's-slipper
Cypripedium acaule

This orchid is frequently seen along bog edges.
Blooms May-early June



LORI A. GALLO/Courier-Post
A kayaker paddles along the Mullica River near Batsto.

Canoeing, kayaking and boating

Four rivers flow through Wharton State Forest, providing kayaking and canoeing opportunities. Campsites are located along all but the Oswego River. A public boat launch is located at Crowley Landing on the Mullica River. Motor boats on Atsion, Batsto and Harrisville lakes are restricted to electric-powered boats under 10 horsepower.

Canoe and kayak outfitters

Location shown on map by number

1 The Forks Inn Marina
(609) 567-8889

2 Mullica River Marina
(609) 965-2120

3 Paradise Lakes Campgrounds
(609) 561-7095

4 Pine Barrens Canoe & Kayak Rental
(609) 726-1515; (800) 732-0793
www.pinebarrenscanoe.com

5 Bel Haven Canoes & Kayaks
(609) 965-2205; (800) 445-0953
www.belhavencanoe.com

6 Wading Pines Campground
(888) 726-1313
www.wadingpines.com

7 Adam's Canoe Rental
(609) 268-0189

Entry and exit points

Batsto River
Hampton Furnace to Batsto
7-9 hours
Quaker Bridge to Batsto
3-4 hours

Mullica River
Atsion to Pleasant Mills
7-9 hours
Pleasant Mills to Green Bank
3-4 hours

West Branch Wading River
Speedwell to Evans Bridge
5-6 hours
Hawkins Bridge to Evans Bridge
3 hours
Hawkins Bridge to Beaver Branch
5 hours
Evans Bridge to Beaver Branch
2 hours

Oswego River
Oswego Lake to Harrisville
4 hours

AVI STEINHARDT/Courier-Post
A biker rides on a trail in Lebanon State Forest.

Bicycling

The region's flat and remote paved and sand roads provide opportunities for biking. Suggested routes:

F Batsto to Lower Bank
Distance: 21.3 miles
Road surface: Paved
From Batsto parking lot go east on Route 542; right on Old Church Road; right on River Road to Lower Bank Bridge. Cross bridge and head west on Route 652 to junction with Route 563 and Egg Harbor City Park. Return north on Route 563 past junction with Route 652. Pick up Route 643 back to Batsto Village parking lot. For an alternate way back, take Route 563 North at Weekstown, then turn left on Route 542.

G Harrisville Lake to Evans Bridge
Distance: 17 miles
Road surface: Paved
Circuit trail starts on Route 679 south; right on Route 653 to Route 542 after Wading River Bridge; right on Route 563 at Green Bank. Return south on Route 679. Bald eagles and tundra swans may be seen in the fall and winter from bridge at Wading River.

H Bass River (north loop)
Distance: 12.8 miles
Road surface: Paved and sand
From Lake Absegami, head west and cross a small bridge over the East Branch of Bass River; right on Allen Road, over another small bridge and across wetlands. Left on Oswego Road; left on Martha Road; bear right on Prince Place Road; left on Stage Road back to Lake Absegami.

I Bass River (south loop)
Distance: 11.1 miles
Road surface: Paved
From Lake Absegami, take Stage Road west; left on Route 653; left on route 542 where you can view the scenic Wading River. Cross Ives Branch and go through a wetlands area. Left on Route 9 to Route 654 and back to lake.

J Chatsworth to Pakim Pond
Distance: 14.5 miles
Road surface: Paved
From Chatsworth, follow Route 532 east; left on Route 72; right on the second paved road to Pakim Pond and picnic site. From Pakim Pond, continue to fork in road. Stay left at fork to Route 72; turn left on Route 72, then right on Route 563 south and back to Chatsworth.

Great blue heron
Ardea herodias

This magnificent heron can be seen in shallow waters and marshes of the Pinelands fishing for food.

COURIERPOST ONLINE

Find video, a 360-degree iPIX photo, stories and photo galleries on our Web site.
courierpostonline.com/pinelands

Camping

The region's state forests offer a variety of camping experiences, from developed campgrounds with showers and flush toilets to primitive wilderness campsites. Wilderness camps include Bodine Field, Hawkins Bridge, Batona, Mullica River and Goshen Pond, which have potable water and pit toilets, and Buttonwood Hill and Lower Forge, which have no water. A number of private campgrounds are also located in the area.

	Lean-tos	Cabins	Campsites	Fire rings	Flush toilets	Pit toilets	Potable water	Showers	Picnic tables	Laundry facilities	Trailer sanitary station
Wharton State Forest											
Atsion		6	50	●	●		●	●	●		●
Godfrey Bridge			49	●		●	●		●		
Lebanon State Forest		3	82	●	●		●	●	●	●	●
Bass River State Forest	9	6	178	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Pitcher plant
Sarracenia purpurea

This insectivorous plant is seen along cedar bogs.

AVI STEINHARDT/Courier-Post
Wharton State Forest offers wilderness camping.

For more information

Wharton State Forest
(609) 561-0024

Batsto Village
(609) 561-3262

Atsion office
(609) 268-0444

Lebanon State Forest
(609) 726-1191

Bass River State Forest
(609) 296-1114

NJ Division of Parks and Forestry
www.njparksandforests.org

Pineland Preservation Alliance
pinelandsalliance.org

NJ Pinelands Commission
www.nj.gov/pinelands

Take Ten - 5 hikes and 5 bikes can be downloaded here for more detailed information on hiking and biking trails.

Illustration, research and design by LORI A. GALLO,
Edited by LAWRENCE HAJNA
Courier-Post

Sources: *Take Ten - 5 Hikes and 5 Bikes*, by Bert Nixdorf; New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry State Park Service; *50 Hikes in New Jersey* by Bruce Scofield, Stella Green, and H Neil Zimmerman; *Coasting Along* by Kurt B. Detwiler