

HIKE AMERICA™ GUIDES

*Hike*

AMERICA™



# PENNSYLVANIA

An Atlas of Pennsylvania's Greatest Hiking Adventures

by **John Young**

## Sunset Rocks

The  
Globe  
Pequot  
press

Guilford, Connecticut

In Partnership with



**Trails.com**™

## Sunset Rocks

### Hike Specs

**Start:** From the parking lot for the furnace stack in Pine Grove Furnace State Park

**Length:** 8.3-mile lollipop

**Approximate Hiking Time:** 5 hours

**Difficulty Rating:** Moderate, due to short climbs [*Note. There is a short section of two-handed climbing over boulders.*]

**Terrain:** Abandoned logging roads, paved roads, and forest footpaths wind through forested mountain trails, along mountain streams, and lead to a ridge-top boulder outcrop.

**Elevation Gain:** 1,147 feet

**Land Status:** State park and state forest

**Nearest Town:** Shippensburg, PA

**Other Trail Users:** Through-hikers and hunters (in season)

**Canine Compatibility:** Leashed dogs permitted

### Getting There

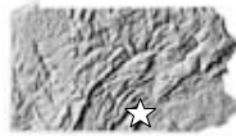
**From Allentown:** Drive west on I-78 and connect with I-81 toward Harrisburg. Continue south on I-81 through Harrisburg to Exit 11. Take Exit 11 and drive south on PA 233 for 8.5 miles; turn left into Pine Grove Furnace State Park and drive to the furnace stack.

**DeLorme: *Pennsylvania Atlas & Gazetteer*:** Page 77 D6

**NOTE:** *Although the boulder outcrop section is only 0.3 miles in length, hikers should be in good physical condition to attempt this. This section is not for inexperienced hikers or small children. For hikers who want to visit Sunset Rocks and don't feel comfortable with maneuvering through the outcrop, turn left onto the Sunset Trail at mile 1.4 and climb to the mountaintop, bypassing the outcrop.*

From the Revolutionary War period to the beginning of the 20th Century, the iron industry flourished in the mountains of Pennsylvania. The iron ore was extracted from the earth, and the surrounding trees were harvested to produce charcoal to fire the furnaces, leaving behind denuded forests, abandoned quarry pits, the scarred earth of the charcoal flats, and a network of logging and mining roads. Take a trip along these abandoned roads to explore the unusual history of this area.

In 1912 the South Mountain Mining & Iron Company sold 60 square miles of clearcut forest and a 250-acre tenant farm to the state. The land was neglected and steadily deteriorated until 1933, when President Franklin Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC, which provided forestry work for mostly unmarried young men, was one of the social programs established to alleviate the widespread unemployment during the Great Depression. Here in Pennsylvania, what came to be known as Camp Michaux was actually Camp S-51, the first CCC camp in the state. For the next nine years the young men of Camp S-51 built themselves a home, improved old forest roads, and built new ones. In 1942, with the United States involvement in World War II, young men were needed



in Europe and the Pacific, so the camp was closed and Army Intelligence chose the site to set up the Michaux Prisoner of War Camp.

Just a two-hour drive from the District of Columbia, the camp was also close to the Carlisle Army Post, and because of its remote location, the Army felt it could keep the location a secret. Staffed by 150 soldiers, the camp, which first handled only German naval officers, was expanded to include officers from Rommel's African Corps, as well as Japanese officers—for a total of 1,500 prisoners.

The POW camp was closed after the war. Then, in 1948, a church coalition signed a 10-year lease to use the site as a church camp. When the leased expired the land reverted to the state. In 1972, all the buildings were removed. Today, all that remains are the stone ruins of the barn foundation next to a giant spruce tree. Here and there along the trail, you may find posts from the barbed wire fence that once surrounded the compound.

At a little over 3.5 miles into the trail you'll come to Toms Run Shelter. The shelter, which is part of the Appalachian Trail, is on the site where the tenant

## Hike Information

### 📞 Trail Contacts:

**Pine Grove Furnace State Park,**  
Gardners, PA (717) 486-7174 •  
**Michaux State Forest,** Fayetteville, PA  
(717) 352-2211

### 🕒 Schedule:

Open year round

### 💰 Fees/Permits:

No fees or permits required

### ❓ Local Information:

**Harrisburg-Hershey-Carlisle-Perry  
County Tourism and Convention  
Bureau** (includes Cumberland  
County), Harrisburg, PA (717)  
231-7788 or 1-800-995-0969 or  
[www.visithc.com](http://www.visithc.com)

### 📍 Local Events/Attractions:

**Railways to Yesterday,** Rockhill  
Furnace, PA (814) 447-9476

### 🏠 Accommodations:

**Wilmar Manor Bed & Breakfast,**  
Shippensburg, PA (717) 597-2831 •  
**Pine Grove Furnace State Park,**  
Gardners, PA (717) 486-7174 – *for  
camping information*

### 🍽️ Restaurants:

**Gingerbread Man,** Shippensburg, PA  
(717) 532-2049

### 👥 Organizations:

**Potomac Appalachian Trail Club,** Vienna,  
VA (703) 242-0965 or [www.patc.net](http://www.patc.net)

### 🛒 Local Outdoor Retailers:

**Rocks & Water Mountain & River  
Sports,** Fayetteville, PA (717)  
352-3217 or 1-877-729-9286 or  
[www.rocksandwater.com](http://www.rocksandwater.com)

### 📄 Maps:

**USGS maps:** Dickinson, PA

## MilesDirections

**0.0 START** at the parking lot for the furnace stack. Walk across Quarry Road and turn left onto Bendersville Road. Walk past the American Youth Hostel to PA 233. Follow the white blazes.

**0.1** Turn left at PA 233.

**0.2** Turn right to cross PA 233 and arrive at the Appalachian Trail trailhead.

**0.3** Turn right at the fork and arrive at a trail sign: "Appalachian Trail, Foot Traffic Only."

**1.4** Bear to the left at the fork in the trail. Come to a trail intersection. Continue straight on the white-blazed Appalachian Trail. (The blue-blazed Sunset Trail goes off to your left.) Cross Toms Run on a footbridge and turn left on the other side.

**1.6** The trail merges onto a shale road. Pass a trail sign on your left: "Halfway Springs 50 Yards."

**2.1** Turn right at the double white blazes. The trail becomes a forest footpath and you pass stone ruins on your right.

**2.2** The trail merges onto the paved Old Shippensburg Road.

**2.5** Turn left at a trail sign for the Appalachian Trail. Notice the log gate across the trail

**3.7** Arrive at Toms Run Shelter. Cross Toms Run.

**3.8** Turn left at the double blue blazes onto the Sunset Rocks Trail.

**4.4** Arrive at a clearing. Bear right at a fork in the trail.

**4.8** *[FYI. Note the fence posts beside the trail. The fence was the perimeter of the Michaux POW camp during World War II.]*

**4.9** Turn right onto the paved Michaux Road.

**5.0** Turn left at second gravel road. Look for the blue blazes.

**5.4** Arrive at the trail sign: "Little Rocky Ridge."

**5.5** Enter a boulder outcropping where the trail goes over the boulders.

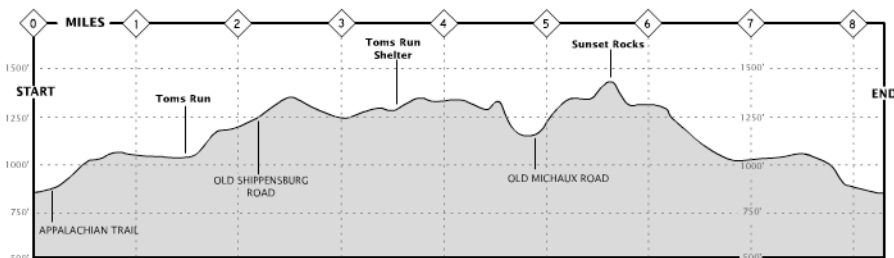
**5.7** At the intersection with the Sunset Trail continue straight to Sunset Rocks, then retrace your steps back to the trail intersection.

**6.2** Arrive back at the trail intersection and turn right.

**6.7** Turn right at the intersection with the Appalachian Trail and retrace your steps back to PA 233.

**8.0** Turn left at PA 233.

**8.3** Arrive back at your vehicle.



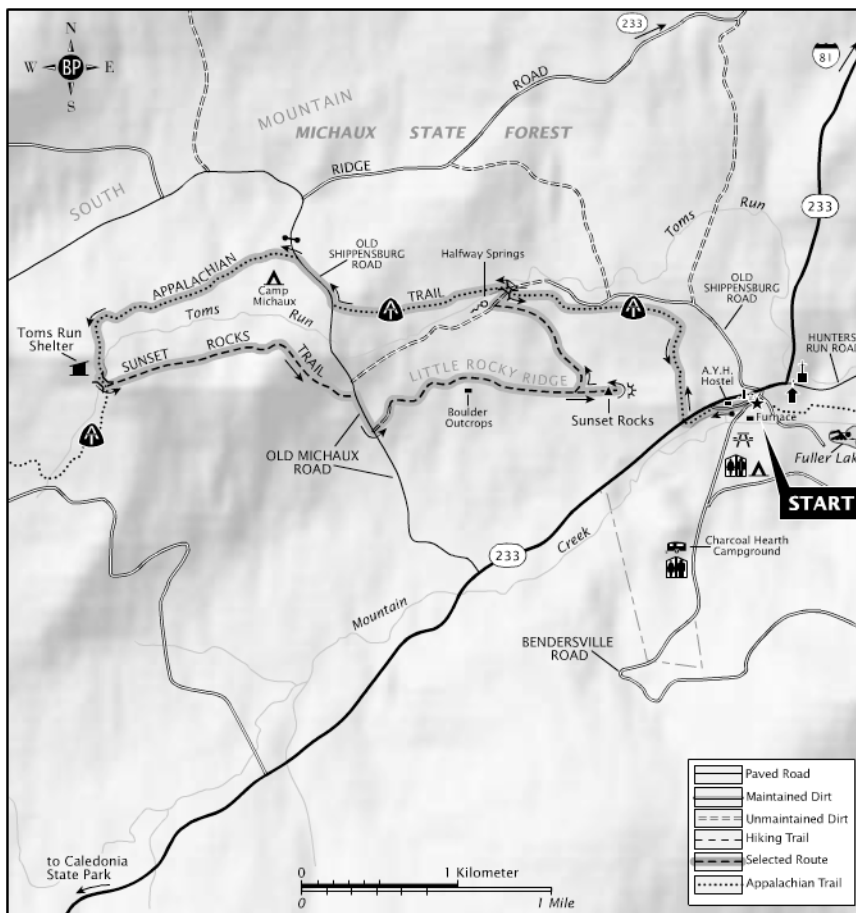
farmhouse was once located. There is a spring here and an outhouse and picnic tables. Local lore says that somewhere near the site there are the unmarked graves of three children who died of smallpox.

After you've switchbacked your way to the summit of Little Rocky Ridge, you'll need both hands to navigate over a section of precariously perched boulders. The trail is well marked (blue blazes are painted right on the rocks); however, this section is not suitable for anyone who is not in good physical condition. And, because the ridge top is narrow, there is no way around the boulders. You either climb over them, or turn around and go back the way you came.

Your hard work pays off soon enough, though. The view at Sunset Rocks is a spectacular south-facing view of the valley and the flat ridge tops spanning the 85,000-acre Michaux State Forest.



Bridge across Toms Run.



## Map Legend

**W**e don't want anyone, by any means, to feel restricted to just the routes and trails that are mapped here. We hope you will have an adventurous spirit and use this guide as a platform to dive into Pennsylvania's backcountry and discover new routes for yourself. One of the simplest ways to begin this is to just turn the map upside down and hike the course in reverse. The change in perspective is fantastic and the hike should feel quite different. With this in mind, it will be like getting two distinctly different hikes on each map.

	Interstate Highway
	U.S. Highway
	State Road
	County Road
	Township Road
	Forest Road
	Paved Road
	Paved Bike Lane
	Maintained Dirt Road
	Unmaintained Jeep Trail
	Singletrack Trail
	Highlighted Route
	Ntl Forest/County Boundaries
	State Boundaries
	Railroad Tracks
	Power Lines
	Special Trail
	Rivers or Streams
	Water and Lakes
	Marsh
	Airfield
	Airport
	Bike Trail
	No Bikes
	Boat Launch
	Bridge
	Bus Stop
	Campground
	Campsite
	Canoe Access
	Cattle Guard
	Cemetery
	Church
	Covered Bridge
	Direction Arrows
	Downhill Skiing
	Fire Tower
	Forest HQ
	4WD Trail
	Gate
	Golf Course
	Hiking Trail
	Mine
	Overlook
	Picnic
	Parking
	Quarry
	Radio Tower
	Rock Climbing
	School
	Shelter
	Spring
	Swimming
	Train Station
	Wildlife Refuge
	Vineyard
	Most Difficult
	Difficult
	Moderate
	Easy

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