

Sarnoff Preserve

5.9 miles one way—white blazes

Why:

Directly south of the center of Riverhead lie some of Long Island's most important tracts of protected open space, the 2,324-acre David Sarnoff Preserve administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Sarnoff Preserve has been in state hands since 1978, when R.C.A. donated it to the public along with Rocky Point Preserve. Both properties were used as antenna fields for overseas communication until satellite technology rendered them superfluous. Now, areas that once were cleared for transmitting use are returning to a natural state. Fire roads and trails abound.

Directions:

Drop a car at Field 1 at Suffolk Community College—Riverhead. Go north on County Route 51 to a right onto C.R. 63, then a quarter turn at the Riverhead traffic circle. Take C.R. 104 south to the most convenient parking place, on the west (right) side 104 south of the junction with C.R. 105, prominently marked with a D.E.C. sign, complete with a map of its trails. Oddly, the Paumanok Path does not appear on the map, but it does exist!

From the traffic circle in downtown Riverhead, go south on 104 to the parking area; from NY 27, go north from Exit 63 on C.R. 31, turn left onto 104, and go north a half mile; from NY 27 Exit 64, go north on 104 to the parking area.

To hike here you'll currently need a free, annual D.E.C. permit, and can be obtained by writing to or visiting NYSDEC, Division of Lands and Forests, 50 Circle Road SUNY-Stony Brook, Stony Brook, NY 11790-3409; or phone the license clerk at (631)444-0273.

Description:

Be prepared for light bushwhacking—budget cuts have effected maintenance here. From the kiosk in the parking lot, walk west a bit more than 150 feet and locate a sign for the D.E.C.'s Blue and Red Trails. (A map at the kiosk illustrates their routes.) You'll also find the white blazes of the Paumanok Path. For this hike, follow them to the left for 150 feet or so, where the trail turns westward and soon immerses you in pine barrens with a dense understory of scrub oak, blueberry, huckleberry, wintergreen, and the triangular fronds of bracken fern.

The trail passes a junction with a yellow side loop of about 0.9 miles which heads south, turns around a glacial kettlehole pond, and returns north to the main trail. This short walk is a fine excursion in itself.

The Paumanok Path continues west and northwest through dense patches of scrub oak occasionally opening into viewpoints north and east. At 4.1 miles Wildwood Lake appears below and to the right. In less than a quarter mile the trail crosses the paved road into Hampton Hills golf course. The Hampton Hills tract was one of the first major purchases of open space in the Pine Barrens. This section ends at Speonk-Riverhead Road, across from parking Field 1.

Options:

Following the Paumanok Path eastward from the D.E.C. lot will bring you to the Pleasure Drive trailhead described below in 2.6 miles. The trail first heads north on the west side of 104, crosses and continues eastward, then swings south around an area that saw a controlled burn in the early 2000's. Controlled burns are an occasional management tool to eliminate heavy fuel load in the understory.

**Happy Hiking
from the
Long Island Pine Barrens
Society!**

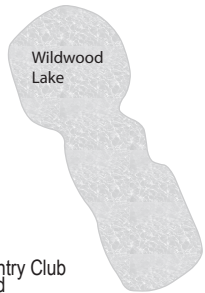


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Sarnoff Preserve

KEY

-  Kiosk
-  Parking
-  Main Trail
-  Other trails
-  Power Lines



East Moriches Riverhead Road/
Rt. 51/Center Dr. S

Rt. 104 / Quogue Riverhead Road

Hampton Hills Country Club
access road

Hampton Hills
Country Club

Yellow
Trail

Yellow
Trail

Yellow
Trail

Yellow
Trail

THE TRAIL DIPS DOWN AND UP
AGAIN - WATCH FOR METAL
TUBES PARTIALLY EXPOSED
THAT WERE TO HOLD WOODEN
CROSS PIECES IN PLACE AS
STEPS - ONLY NOW MOST OF
THE STEPS ARE GONE

Suffolk
Community
College

Speonk Riverhead Road

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