

In the spring of 2025, PA Parks & Forests Foundation conducted an online survey of “Your Favorite Trail to ...”. Here are some resulting ideas for a challenging climb.

Recommended State Parks and Forests for a Challenging Climb:

- Tiadaghton State Forest
- Susquehannock State Forest
- Loyalsock State Forest
- Pine Grove Furnace State Park
- Blue Knob State Park
- Buchanan State Forest
- Clear Creek State Forest
- Colonel Denning State Park
- Cook Forest State Park
- Gallitzin State Forest
- McConnells Mill State Park
- Ravensburg State Park
- Ricketts Glen State Park
- Sinnemahoning State Park
- Tioga State Forest
- Worlds End State Park

Tiadaghton State Forest

Within the Pine Creek Area of Tiadaghton State



Susquehannock State Forest. Photo by Douglas Clifford.

Forest lies 44 miles of orange-blazed trail. Forget about the challenging climb— many consider the Black Forest Trail to be the most difficult hike in Pennsylvania. If a hiker has three to four days to kill and a hunger for the harrowing, the trailhead is at Slate Run Road. If someone doesn't have a long weekend to spare, the Half Dome Trail is a more

manageable 4.3 miles out-and-back. Beginning at the Naval Run Trail Trailhead, hike along the Pine Trail for approximately 1.5 miles before reaching access to the Half Dome Trail proper. Hike with caution, for this steep ascent is made more challenging by the loose, rocky

terrain. The effort of the climb is rewarded with stunning views of Pine Creek Gorge.

Appalachian National Scenic Trail

The survey results specifically recommended the aptly named Leg Destroyer Trail for a challenging climb, a 3.41 mile loop along the Appalachian Trail. Should one wish to conquer this steep ascent of

loose and rocky terrain, there is parking off of Route 61 in Port Clinton, PA.

Pine Grove Furnace State Park

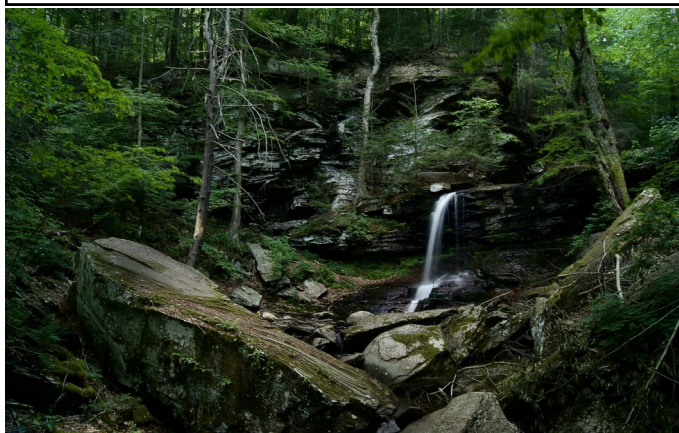
The shortest of the highly recommended hikes for a challenging climb is nothing to sneeze at. The Pole Steeple Trail is 1.4 miles out-and-back, marked by blue blazes. Beginning on the opposite side of Railroad Bed Road from Laurel Lake, the trail proceeds up Piney Mountain, terminating at the Pole Steeple Overlook. This stunning overlook watches over the entire park.



Ricketts Glen State Park. Photo by Tasha Ferris.

Tips for Hiking Uphill:

1. Keep moving.
2. Use those arms (or trekking poles)! It may look a bit silly, but swing your arms with your legs, it helps propel you forward. With trekking poles, push off of the ground with each step.
3. Take shorter, deliberate steps to take advantage of every leg muscle.
4. Remember to breathe.
5. Stay hydrated and fed.



Ricketts Glen State Park. Photo by Ellory Potter.

Tips for Hiking Downhill:

1. Take small steps to keep feet below the center of gravity. This makes it much easier for a hiker to catch themselves when they stumble.
2. Lean back. Unfortunately, the natural instinct is to lean forward when going downhill, but this moves the center of gravity away from the feet, making it harder to keep footing. Leaning back counteracts this tendency, providing more stability on the descent.
3. Zig zag. Walking diagonally down a slope reduces the amount of “down” traveled with each step, making it easier and safer.
4. When encountering a particularly steep spot in the trail, hikers should swallow their pride; do not be afraid to sit down and scoot down the trail safely.

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