

## **TRAILS OF WHARTON STATE FOREST**

Wharton State Forest has 19 official trails totaling over 110 miles. Trails vary in length, difficulty, and use. Located in the heart of the New Jersey Pinelands, Wharton State Forest is the largest tract of land in the New Jersey State Park system, with over 123,000 acres. Roughly half of the 53-mile-long Batona hiking trail is located within its boundaries. The trails pass through dry upland and low wetland landscapes typical of the region. The terrain is relatively flat with some low hills; the soil is sandy and the climate varies from hot and humid in summer to below freezing in winter. Ticks, chiggers, biting flies and mosquitoes can be common, so be prepared. The fire-prone uplands of the region consist mostly of pine-oak and oak-pine forests often with a dense shrub layer. About one quarter of the New Jersey Pinelands is comprised of wetlands. Atlantic white cedar and red maple swamps, wetland savannas and bogs occur along slow-moving tannin-stained rivers and creeks. Wetlands provide habitat for the majority of the rare and endangered plants and animals of the pine barrens ecosystem.

### **Atsion Lake Blue Trail**

*Blue • 1-mile loop • Hiking*  
*Easy • Smooth graded gravel trail*

**Trailhead** West end of the paved parking lot of Atsion Recreation Area. **Atsion Lake Blue Trail** follows along the south shore of the lake. Wildflowers such as mountain laurel, leatherleaf, pyxie and turkeybeard are found here. Visiting in May during the sheep laurel bloom can be spectacular.

### **Atsion Lake Red Trail**

*Red • 0.5 mile loop • Hiking*  
*Easy • Smooth graded gravel trail*

**Trailhead** West end of the paved parking area of Atsion Recreation Area. **Atsion Lake Red Trail** follows along the south shore of the lake. Pitch pine lowlands surround this portion of the lake along with some Atlantic white cedar interspersed with highbush blueberry. This site of a former ice packing house is home to typical pine barrens amphibians.

### **Batona Trail**

*Pink • 28.2 miles (in Wharton) • Hiking*  
*Moderate • Long distance hiking trail*

**Trailhead** Apple Pie Hill in the north, or Evans Bridge in the south. Batona Trail is a 53-mile-long trail through the heart of the Pinelands. Short for BA-ck TO NA-ture, Batona Trail traverses sections of Bass River State Forest, Wharton State Forest, and Brendan T. Byrne State Forest. There are 28 miles of Batona Trail within Wharton.

### **Batsto Blue Trail**

*Blue • 1.8 mile loop • Hiking*  
*Easy • Natural sandy soil*

**Trailhead** Northeast corner of the paved parking area at Batsto Village. **Batsto Blue Trail** begins with Batsto Red Trail and travels through typical pine barrens forests. This section of the trail follows a north-south oriented ridge and reaches an elevation of 70 feet above sea level. The south end of the ridge terminates at Batsto Village. The western portion of the trail is home to early spring wildflowers including trailing arbutus, and pyxie as well as some scenic views of Batsto Lake from an elevated vantage about 10 feet above the lake.

### **Batsto Red Trail**

*Red • 0.5 mile loop • Hiking*  
*Easy • Smooth graded gravel*

**Trailhead** Northeast corner of the paved parking area at Batsto Village. **Batsto Red Trail** offers an introduction to several habitats typical of the New Jersey Pinelands. An upland, predominantly of pine and oak with a lush growth of huckleberry, slopes down into a hardwood swamp with red maple, sour gum, sweet bay magnolia and highbush blueberry. In between, a lowland pine forest contains abundant pitch pine and short-leaf pine.

### **Batsto White Trail**

*White • 4 mile loop • Hiking*  
*Moderate • Natural sandy soil*

**Trailhead** Northeast corner of the paved parking area at Batsto Village. **Batsto White Trail** continues further north along the route of the Batona Trail through upland pine-oak forests then heads west, dropping in elevation to the Batsto River just north of Batsto Lake. Turning south, the trail skirts an Atlantic white cedar swamp. Pine barrens treefrogs can be heard in this area and signs of beaver activity can also be found here. A view of the uppermost portion of the lake can be seen from the trail.

### **Beaver Pond-Quaker Bridge Trail**

*Purple • 1.8 miles • Hiking*  
*Easy • Access trail to Wilderness Camp*

**Trailhead** Mullica River Trail or Quaker Bridge on Batona Trail. **Beaver Pond-Quaker Bridge Trail** links Mullica River Trail to Batona Trail through pine-oak woodlands. The trail provides access to Lower Forge Wilderness Camp from Atsion and a great view of the largest beaver pond along the Mullica River in Wharton State Forest. Buttonwood Camp Connector Light blue • 1.2 miles • Hiking Easy • Sandy forest road Trailhead Buttonwood Campground. Buttonwood Camp Connector is a spur trail of the Batona Trail that leads from the trail to Buttonwood Campground. Across the highway (Route 542) from Buttonwood Camp is Crowley's Landing picnic area on the Mullica River.

### **Mullica River Trail**

*Yellow • 9.4 miles • Hiking*  
*Moderate • Natural sandy trail along river*

**Trailhead** North side of Route 542 west of Batsto Village or Atsion Forest Office. **Mullica River Trail** leads to Mullica River Wilderness Camp from either Atsion or Batsto. Both were important industrial centers during the 1700s and 1800s particularly for the production of iron from the locally abundant ore. To create a primitive camping experience, wilderness campgrounds are not open to motorized vehicle access. The trail travels through a variety of pine barrens forest types and wetlands along the Mullica River. Wildlife such as beaver, whitetail deer, great blue heron and the red-tailed hawk are frequently observed in the area. The trail is linked to Batona Trail by Beaver Pond-Quaker Bridge Trail and Wilderness Camp Connector Trail. Starting from Atsion, a 9.4 mile out-and-back loop hike can be followed by taking Mullica River Trail to Wilderness Camp Connector Trail, offering a view of Batsto River from Quaker Bridge, then turning back via Beaver Pond-Quaker Bridge Trail. A 12 mile loop hike can be followed from Batsto by starting on either Mullica River Trail or Batona Trail and utilizing Wilderness Camps Connector

### **Tom's Pond Trail**

*Gold • 1.1 mile loop • Hiking*  
*Easy • Natural sandy soil*

**Trailhead** North side of Route 542 west of Batsto Village. **Tom's Pond Trail** begins in a dry pine-oak forest with a lush growth of huckleberry and other upland shrubs typical of the region. The trail gradually descends

to an Atlantic white cedar swamp along the Mullica River. After crossing to the west side of the river, the trail is generally dry with abundant pitch pine and short leaf pine. This portion of the trail travels through dry pine woods with huckleberry, low blueberry and particularly abundant growths of teaberry and lichens. (To the right just beyond the west end of the foot bridge an alternate loop that closely follows the Mullica River is often dry enough to take back to the main portion of the trail.) The scrubby pitch pine borders Atlantic white cedar growing along a small creek. Beneath the cedar, carnivorous plants and other typical bog plants thrive.

### **Wilderness Camps Connector**

*Light green • 0.75 miles • Hiking*

*Easy • Short trail*

**Trailhead** Mullica River Trail or Beaver Pond/Quaker Bridge Trail. **Wilderness Camps Connector Trail** creates a route between the Mullica River and Lower Forge Campsites. It passes through wooded pine-oak uplands linking Mullica River Trail to Batona Trail.

### **Mountain Biking in Wharton**

Mountain Biking in Wharton Mountain biking is a popular activity in Wharton State Forest. There are 5 trails designed for mountain bike use. Consider the following:

**1. Ride Open Trails** Respect trail and road closures and obey trail use markings. Stay on existing trails and do not create new ones.

**2. Leave No Trace** Be sensitive to the dirt beneath you and environment around you. Be sure to pack out at least as much as you pack in.

**3. Control Your Bicycle** Inattention for even a moment could put yourself and others at risk. Ride within your limits.

**4. Yield** Appropriately Let other trail users know you're coming with a friendly greeting or bell ring. Try to anticipate other trail users as you ride around corners. Mountain bikers should yield to other non-motorized trail users.

**5. Plan Ahead** Know your equipment, your ability and the area in which you are riding and prepare accordingly. Keep your equipment in good repair and carry necessary supplies for changes in weather or other conditions. Always wear a helmet and appropriate safety gear.

*The following trails are designated for mountain biking in Wharton State Forest.*

### **Batsto Fire Trail**

*Green • 6.2 mile loop • Mountain biking*

*Easy • Natural soil single-track and unpaved road*

**Trailhead** Northwest corner of the parking area at Batsto Village. **Batsto Fire Trail** is an easy loop that consists of winding single-track and fire roads. This trail serves as an introduction for beginners new to the Wharton State Forest mountain bike trail system. The sand, gravel and clay based trail generally packs down well. The portion of the trail that follows unpaved fire roads for a little over one and half miles can accumulate some rainwater runoff which can be easily avoided. The winding narrow single-track that makes up most the trail can provide a learning experience for riders used to wide multi-use style trails. This trail guides the rider through dry upland pine and oak woodlands with a brief diversion of highbush blueberry located about halfway along the eastern side while crossing a freshwater wetland swamp.

### **Huckleberry Trail**

*Light blue • 5 miles • Mountain biking*

*Easy • Natural soil, single-track*

**Trailhead** Batsto Fire Trail. **Huckleberry Trail** is a loop trail that begins and ends from Batsto Fire Trail. On the eastern side, look for the blue blazes shortly after Batsto Fire Trail turns left. On the western side,

look directly across the intersection with the unpaved fire road for the blue circle blazes. Both western and eastern ends of Huckleberry Trail share a little less than a mile of Penn Branch Trail. The trail then courses along the sides of low ridges for about three and a half miles until it merges with Penn Branch Trail once more. Huckleberry Trail offers riders a series of low elevation changes that can provide a great physical workout. When combined with Batsto Fire Tower Trail, the trails form a 9.6-mile loop.

### **Oak Hill Trail**

*White • 2.5 miles • Mountain biking*

*Easy • Natural soil, single-track*

**Trailhead** Batsto Fire or Huckleberry Trail. **Oak Hill Trail** interconnects with Batsto Fire Trail, Teaberry Trail and Huckleberry Trail. Running generally north-south in orientation, Oak Hill Trail offers a variety of optional routes for riders to take between the other mountain bike trails that leave Batsto Village. The trail traverses upland forest with gentle grades.

### **Penn Branch Trail**

*Orange • 19.3 mile loop • Mountain biking*

*Moderate • Natural soil, single-track*

**Trailhead** Northwest corner of the parking area at Batsto Village. **Penn Branch Trail** is a moderately difficult trail stretching over 19 miles, making it the longest mountain bike trail in Wharton State Forest. The forest's mountain bike trails provide an opportunity for easy-paced adventure in the New Jersey Pinelands region. Average riders should allow about 3 to 5 hours for this often tightly winding, single-track trail. The sand and gravel based cross-country trails can prove challenging for all levels of experience and wearing a bicycle helmet is strongly recommended. Many miles of the trail typically pack down quite firmly with only short lengths becoming loose particularly during a drought. Bring plenty of water for this ride on warm days. Riders experience New Jersey Pinelands upland forests punctuated on the west side by a brief view of Penn Branch Creek. The creek flows through a regionally significant Atlantic white cedar swamp and along the eastern side of the route is the historic town site (with no buildings remaining) known as Mount.

### **Teaberry Trail**

*Red • 0.8 miles • Mountain biking*

*Easy • Natural soil, single-track*

**Trailhead** Oak Hill or Huckleberry Trail. **Teaberry Trail** connects with Oak Hill Trail and Huckleberry Trail just north of Batsto Fire Trail to create another extension option. Running generally northeast-southwest in orientation, Teaberry Trail offers a variety of optional routes for riders to take between the other mountain bike trails that leave Batsto Village. The trail traverses upland forest with gentle grades.

### **Burnt Mill Road Trails**

The Burnt Mill Road trails follow a network of sand roads and paths and are popular for horseback riding.

### **Burnt Mill Trail**

*Red • 12 miles • Multi-use*

*Moderate • Sandy unpaved road*

**Trailhead** Burnt Mill Road east of Atco. **Burnt Mill Trail** follows a network of sand roads through pine barrens with access to the remote and fascinating landscapes of Wharton State Forest. The trails of this area explore a section of Wharton known as "Maple Island," threaded by tributaries of the Mechescatauxin (a.k.a. Sleeper) Branch and the Mullica River. Users may encounter small ponds and creeks, where rare plants, reptiles, amphibians, dragonflies and damselflies can be seen during warmer months.

### **Goshen Pond Trail**

*White • 15.5 miles • Multi-use  
Moderate • Sandy unpaved road*

**Trailhead** Burnt Mill Road east of Atco. **Goshen Pond Trail** follows sand roads through typical pine barrens landscapes. The trail is shared with Burnt Mill Trail along its southern portion, then makes its way north to Goshen Pond and Goshen Pond Campground before returning to the south.

### **Sleeper Creek Trail**

*Blue • 5.4 miles • Multi-use  
Moderate • Sandy unpaved road*

**Trailhead** Burnt Mill Road east of Atco. **Sleeper Creek Trail** is a short loop trail that follows sand roads and secondary paths through riparian areas along Sleeper Creek. Search for rare plants, reptiles, amphibians, dragonflies and damselflies during warmer months.

### **TRAIL SENSE AND SAFETY**

**Trail Markings** Official trails are marked by colored blazes on posts and trees. For your safety and habitat protection, please stay on the trails and don't alter trail markings or create new trails.

**Preparations** Consider bringing water, snacks, sunscreen, insect repellent, and a hat. Dress for the weather. Tell someone where you plan to go and when you expect to return.

**Hunting** Sections are open to hunting. Bright orange clothing is recommended during hunting season.

**Pets** All pets must be on a leash (maximum 6 feet) and under the physical control of the owner. Please clean up after your pets. Carry-in/Carry-out Help keep the park clean and beautiful by carrying out your trash.

**Bear Aware** Bears are active in this area. Don't approach them. Bear sightings should be reported to State Park Police (1-877-927-6337) or to the forest office.

**Bikers** Follow the IMBA "Rules of the Trail" guidelines for trail etiquette and yield appropriately. Helmets are required by law for children under 17 and recommended for all riders.

**Forest office phone** (609) 561-0024 or (609) 264-0444

**Emergency Numbers** 1-877-WARN-DEP (1-877-927-6337) or 911

### **Wharton State Forest**

31 Batsto Road  
Hammonton, NJ 08037  
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