

HIKE RAMAPO LAKE SPUR, CASTLE, CANNONBALL, AND RAMAPO LAKE TRAIL

*This scenic loop combines forested trails, lake views, and historic ruins in the heart of **Ramapo Mountain State Forest**. Along the way, we'll explore diverse terrain and visit the famous **Van Slyke Castle ruins**, a striking reminder of the area's past.*

Distance: ~5.5 miles (loop)

Hiking Time: 2.5–3 hours

Difficulty: Moderate

Ascent: ~650 ft

Expect: Varied forest trails with some rocky and root-covered sections, gradual climbs, and rewarding lake and mountain views. We'll pass the castle ruins and walk along the shores of Ramapo Lake before returning via the Cannonball Trail.

Bonus: The castle's panoramic overlook offers one of the best photo opportunities in the park.

Fun Fact: Van Slyke Castle was built in the early 1900s by stockbroker William Porter for his wife, Ruth. After years of abandonment, it fell into ruin—but its stone walls still stand as a hauntingly beautiful landmark.

Map: <https://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/maps/ramapo-area.pdf>

Meeting Point: Upper Parking Lot, Ramapo Mountain State Forest (off Skyline Drive)

Google Map: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/FKJAesNRqMrUmz4M7>

Date: May 31 (Sunday)

Time: 9:00am

RSVP: Hagit Tal



Hike Description

Embark on an invigorating autumn adventure through the rolling woodlands and lakeside paths of Ramapo Mountain State Forest. Our route begins at the **Ramapo Lake Spur**, gradually climbing to the ruins of **Van Slyke Castle**, where we'll enjoy sweeping views of the surrounding mountains and lakes.

From the castle, we'll follow sections of the **Cannonball Trail** and loop around **Ramapo Lake**, a serene reservoir framed by forested hillsides. The trail offers a mix of broad woodland paths, narrow rocky sections, and gentle descents, making it a satisfying hike for those who enjoy variety in terrain.

Along the way, we may spot migrating birds, deer, and other wildlife that thrive in the forest. The fall foliage should add vibrant colors to our journey, making this hike as visually stunning as it is refreshing. This moderate hike is ideal for outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy history, nature, and a touch of adventure.

What to Bring

- Comfortable, sturdy hiking shoes or boots
 - Water bottle
 - Snacks or light lunch
 - Backpack to carry essentials (snacks, camera, layers, etc.)
 - Hiking poles (optional)
 - Sun hat or cap
 - Sunglasses
 - Sunscreen
 - Bug spray
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The Group

Groups usually consist of up to 16 hikers. Anyone over 18 can join these day hikes, while teens as young as 14 are welcome when accompanied by a parent or adult.