

**Backpack
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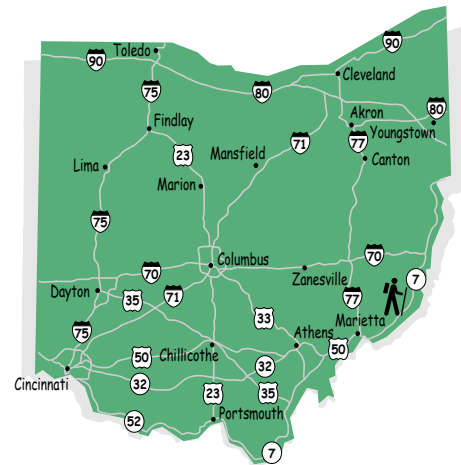
eTrailsOhio



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Wayne National Forest - Archers Fork Trail including the North Country Trail/9 Bell Trail Connector to the Scenic River Trail

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Wayne National Forest - Archers Fork Trail

Including the North Country Trail/9 Bell Trail Connector to the Scenic River Trail

County: Washington

Nearest town: Marietta

Total distance: 11.9-mile loop, 2.6-mile connector via the North Country Trail/9 Bell Trail to the Scenic River Trail's northern trailhead

Hiking time: Approximately 6 to 8 hours, or 2 days for overnight

Trail conditions: Well established

Blazes: Yellow diamonds; blue diamonds and yellow diamonds with a red dot mark the North Country Trail/9 Bell Trail connector to the Scenic River Trail

Water: No potable water available along trail; water drawn from Archers Fork, Jackson Run, Irish Run or feeder streams must be treated or filtered first

Highlights: Seclusion, spring wildflowers, wildlife, Irish Run Natural Bridge and other rock outcroppings

Maps: USGS 7.5': Rinard Mills & Raven Rock; Wayne National Forest Hiking and Backpacking Trails map; BackpackOhio.com eTrailsOhio

Contact info: Wayne National Forest – Marietta Unit, phone: 740-373-9055

Internet: www.fs.fed.us/r9/wayne/

Getting there: Take State Route 26 northeast from Marietta, Ohio for 25 miles to State Route 260 and turn right. Travel 2.9 miles on SR 260 and turn right onto Shay Ridge Road (T-34). In 1.4 miles turn left on a gravel road marked by a North Country Trail Parking sign. Travel this road a short distance and park in front of the cemetery. Do not attempt to drive past the cemetery.

Trailhead coordinates: 39° 31' 26"N, 81° 10' 51"W (WGS84); UTM 17 484443E, 4374714N (NAD27)

Background

The Archers Fork Backpack Trail is located in far southeastern Ohio in the heavily forested and sparsely populated northeast corner of Washington County, which is part of the Marietta Management Unit of Wayne National Forest. Archers Fork is farther from Ohio's major metropolitan areas than any other trail in the state. Getting to the trailhead may not be as convenient as some other hikes, but to experience this trail in hardcore Appalachian Ohio is worth the trip. Walking the Archers Fork Trail is a glimpse into the natural, mineral and human history defining this region.

The name Archers Fork is both the name of a stream draining the area and a very small community about a mile south of where the trail crosses the stream. Archers Fork (the stream) empties into the Little Muskingum River and forms at the confluence of two smaller streams: Irish Run and Jackson Run, which lie at the center of the trail's loop. The Macksburg oil and gas field underlies this entire region, so expect to see results of active and historic exploitations of these resources. The area's rocky ridges attain an average elevation relief of approximately 350 feet.

Archers Fork offers more than just a hike through the forest. Along the way you will see many rock formations in the form of caves, cliffs, overhang shelters and even a natural bridge. The Irish Run Natural Bridge is located near the trail and worth a few minutes of your time to explore. A large cave, named the Great Cave on trail signage, is located just off the trail near the St. Patrick's Cemetery trailhead. A network of lightly used connecting trails threaded through contiguous tracts of federally owned land extends miles beyond the Archers Fork Trail and offers the opportunity for multi-night trips.

Although not old growth by any means, the forests in this part of the Wayne are still stately with oak and hickory forests dominating upland areas. A mixed forest type of cherry, tuliptree, walnut and ash can be found on many slopes. Sycamore and beech are found in wetter bottomlands. This middle-aged forest is home to an abundant variety of bird and mammal life. As the sun fades, it is not uncommon to hear a pair of noisy barred or great horned

owls, or the unmistakable call of the whip-poor-will. Coyote and bobcat roam these hills and their calls are often heard after sundown as well. Don't be too surprised if you spot a black bear in the area as they are known to populate this part of the state. This is also copperhead and timber rattlesnake country, so a little extra caution should be exercised in warmer months. Of course, deer and turkey are well represented here as well.

The Trail

Yellow diamonds mark the Archers Fork Loop. Since the western half of the Archers Fork loop is shared with the North Country Trail, you'll also see blue diamonds marking that trail. Due to a history of oil and gas development in the area, expect to sporadically encounter old oil and gas wells (some still operational) and old steel and newer plastic pipelines (some leaking) lying on top of the ground and across the trail. A portion of the loop is maintained by the River Valley Mountain Bike Association (RVMBMA) so efforts of their ongoing maintenance program may be noticed along the way, too.

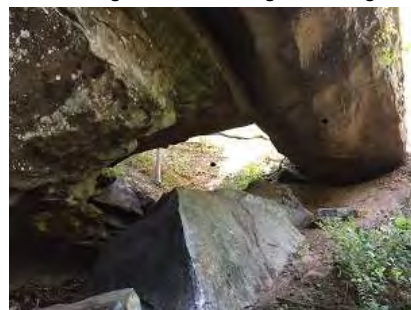
Since this is Wayne National Forest, camping is allowed anywhere on forest land. There are no WNF established campsites on the trail, and, as of this writing, only a few sites have been established by backpackers before you. Two campsites located in the same general area were noted on the North Country Trail/9 Bell Trail connector to the Scenic River Trail. Campsites appearing to receive ongoing use, either frequent or infrequent, are included on the enclosed map. Appendix A contains a table of campsite GPS coordinates. Most sites are located very near the trail or just a few yards away. Skilled topo map readers may be able to pinpoint flat areas agreeable for camping away from the trail on ridgetops or in hollow bottoms; however, a thick forest understory in most areas may make conditions difficult or unsuitable.

If treating water trailside is not an option for you, then your potable drinking water will have to be carried in. Caching water, or even gear, is a possibility near the halfway point along a gravel road (Jackson Run Rd.) that travels through the valley of Jackson Run, but your trip to here and then back to the trailhead would greatly delay your start as there is no direct route between the two locations. Cady Run at the 0.6-mile mark of the North Country Trail/9 Bell Trail connector to the Scenic River Trail is the most reliable source of water along that stretch of trail.

Archers Fork is located in a very rural corner of southeastern Ohio. Gravel roads in this region often cross streams without the use of bridges, thus making such crossings impossible during storms or with a low clearance vehicle. Additionally, many roads still appearing on some maps (paper or Internet) and perhaps in-car navigation systems are deeply rutted and impassable, and even some now abandoned. Unless you are familiar with this area, it is advisable not to venture on roads away from the route to the trailhead. The many miles of old, muddy roads throughout the area are a weekend draw for ATV and off-road 4x4 enthusiasts.

As mentioned, the North Country Trail and the Archers Fork Trail share the path for several miles. From the Archers Fork loop, there are also connector trails to the Covered Bridge Trail, the Ohio View Trail and the Scenic River & Greenwood trails. Multi-night trips are an option using this network of lightly traveled trails. Hiking the 2.6-mile connector to the Scenic River Trail via the North Country Trail/9 Bell Trail creates the most exciting possibility for an extended trip. From the Scenic River Trail's northern trailhead, a loop hike of an additional 10.6 miles can be completed. This loop utilizes most of the Scenic River Trail and the entire Greenwood Trail. These two trails offer beautiful rocky scenery and are exceptionally well designed. A separate eTrailsOhio product is available for the Scenic River & Greenwood trails.

A hike on the 11.9-mile Archers Fork Trail loop starts at a small parking area in front of St. Patrick's Cemetery. You'll begin immediately north of the cemetery on an old road blocked off to vehicles by an iron gate. As of this writing, a wooden sign reading "Archers Fork Loop" stands near the gate to confirm you are at the right spot. The



Irish Run Natural Bridge from below

first section of trail is a 0.3-mile two-way section of trail between the parking area and the main loop. Once you reach the main loop, you can go either left or right. Since we had to choose, we chose to describe the trail by going right, or hiking the main loop in a counterclockwise direction.

As an alternate to the above start, you can walk approximately 0.15 mile along an old township road heading downhill past the cemetery to reach the main loop. A wooden sign reading "Natural Bridge/Great Cave" will mark your exit left point from the old road.

From the intersection of the two-way section of trail and the main loop, right will take you over a recessed cave formation named the "Great Cave" in 0.25-mile and then shortly to an intersection with the trail coming down from the old road used as the alternate beginning discussed above.

The main loop continues left at this intersection. In 0.6 mile you will arrive at the Irish Run Natural Bridge. A sign points left where a short side trail forks and heads steeply downhill to the bridge. You'll want to take some time to explore this interesting formation. The official trail stays on the same elevation and



Cemetery at trailhead

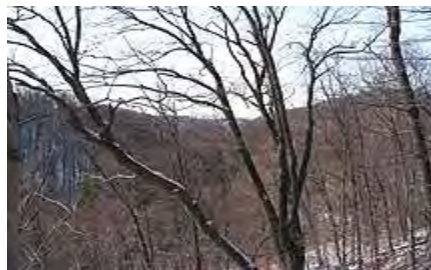
swings around the head of a ravine above the bridge. Optionally, you can hike over the top of the bridge and join the main trail on the opposite side of the ravine.

In just under 1.0 mile past the natural bridge, the trail descends into a side hollow of the valley of Archers Fork, goes up and then back out this hollow, before emerging into the much larger valley. A nice campsite is located in the mouth of this hollow just off the trail to the left. The trail will stay in the valley to the north of Archers Fork and Upper Archers Fork Road for nearly 0.7 mile, utilizing a powerline right-of-way for part of the way. This stretch of valley trail is heavily overgrown in summer, so consider walking the road to where the trail crosses it ahead. Near the end of this section of valley walking a marked connector trail leading to the Covered Bridge Trail will fork to the right. In 0.1 mile, 3.6 miles into the hike, the main trail will cross Archers Fork. Soon after, the trail crosses Upper Archers Fork Road and heads uphill, passing over a cave in the process of rising over 350 feet in 0.5 mile.

Once atop the ridge, the next 1.0 mile of trail travels on gated Forest Road 4346 until the trail forks left and heads downhill. The North Country Trail/9 Bell Trail exits the Archers Fork Trail to the right at this point. After passing through a rock outcropping on the descent, the trail arrives in the valley of Jackson Run. Two campsites are located in two upcoming consecutive side hollows. The first site encountered is well established with stone tables and seating (as of this writing). The second site is lightly used and sits near an abandoned road that receives ATV use. Soon to follow, the trail will ascend approximately 200 feet in elevation through a rock outcropping to a flat ridgetop. Day hikers can enjoy a break and a nice view from atop the flat rocks located near the top of this ridge.

After a 0.5-mile ridge walk and past two more campsites, the trail will drop into another hollow and arrive at a junction with the Jackson Run Trail, which is a connecting trail to the Ohio View Trail that goes both left and right. Left will take you to an unmarked parking area on Jackson Run Road. Two campsites were noted in this hollow near the trail. 7.6 miles of trail are behind you.

Past the intersection with the Jackson Run Trail, enjoy another ascent, this one with an elevation gain of approximately 250 feet. The trail soon crosses Jackson Run Road and follows a ridge for 1.0 mile before dropping into the valley of Irish Run, by way of a rock outcropping covered in mountain laurel. In the valley, the trail arrives onto an unmaintained section of Irish Run Road and a junction with the North Country Trail, followed by a stream crossing. After the stream, the trail stays at mid-elevation for nearly 1.0 mile before crossing McCormick Hill Road. The final climb of the hike follows quickly after. At the crest of the ridge, you'll soon arrive at the intersection with the two-way section of trail leading back to the trailhead.



Vista from trail

Archers Fork Trail Notes and Mileage

0.0 Start from St. Patrick's Cemetery and walk east down an old road found adjacent to the cemetery on the north side. A metal gate blocks vehicle traffic. A wooden sign by the gate reads "Archers Fork Trail".

0.3 Arrive at a junction with the main loop. Go right to begin hiking the loop in a counterclockwise direction. The trail soon crosses over the "Great Cave".

0.6 Arrive at a junction with a trail leading down from an old road. This is an alternate beginning for the hike. Go left.

1.1 Reach a short side trail forking left and leading to the Irish Run Natural Bridge. A sign announces your arrival. Take time to explore this unique rock formation.

1.3 Reach a crossing of the same old road that leads down from the cemetery.

3.0 Pass a nice campsite on the left situated in a small pine grove.

3.5 Arrive at a junction with the Covered Bridge Trail marked with a sign. The main trail swings left.

3.55 Pass a small campsite on the left.

3.6 Cross Archers Fork stream. If needed, go upstream 50 yards for an easier place to cross. After crossing the stream, the trail takes aim on Upper Archers Fork Road. Be careful not to get sidetracked on any of several unofficial paths in the floodplain of the stream.

3.7 Emerge onto Upper Archers Fork Road. The trail continues straight across the road and starts a long uphill climb.

4.3 Road and trail make a sharp right. An old well site is located to the left.

4.9 Walk around an iron gate, if closed. Continue straight, remaining on the forest road.

5.25 Reach a junction where the trail leaves the forest road to the left and the North Country Trail/9 Bell Trail fork to the right. Follow signs and trail markings.

5.9 In the mouth of a hollow near Jackson Run, pass a nice campsite situated in pines on the right.

6.1 Pass a lightly used campsite in a pine grove. Just past the pines the trail crosses a stream and an old township road.

7.0 A campsite sits 20 to 30 feet in elevation below the north side of the trail.

7.3 Pass a small campsite on the left.

7.6 Arrive at a junction with the Jackson Run Trail. Continue straight, crossing a stream. A nice campsite sitting a few feet above the stream lies just ahead.

8.3 Emerge onto Jackson Run Road. The trail continues straight across the road.

9.7 Emerge onto an unmaintained section of Irish Run Road and a junction with the North Country Trail. Cross the road and then cross a wooden bridge over Irish Run soon after.

10.9 Cross McCormick Hill Road.

11.6 Arrive at the junction where the loop began. Go right to return to the trailhead and cemetery.

11.9 Arrive back at the trailhead adjacent to St. Patrick's Cemetery.

The North Country Trail/9 Bell Trail Connector to the Scenic River Trail

The 2.6-mile North Country Trail connector to the Scenic River Trail begins at the 5.25-mile mark of the Archers Fork Trail. This section of the North Country Trail is also named the 9 Bell Trail. The connector trail travels through a peaceful section of Wayne National Forest. Rock outcroppings are noted on the descent into the valley of Cady Run near the 0.5-mile mark and then again in the last few tenths of the hike. Two streams, Cady Run at the 0.6-mile mark and an unnamed one crossed near the 2.0-mile mark, are the most reliable sources of water if treating or filtering. A large streamside flat area at the second stream crossing is home to two established but lightly used campsites.



Vista on the NCT connector

From the 5.25-mile mark of the Archers Fork Trail on Forest Road 4346, The North Country Trail will fork to the south and begin to descend into an unnamed hollow. Near the 0.5-mile mark, the trail descends even more, steeply in places, until arriving at the floor of a peaceful valley containing a small stream named Cady Run and narrow Cady Run Road. The road becomes nothing more than an ATV path to the left of the trail crossing. A large sandstone outcrop can't be missed on the right as you descend into the valley.

The trail doesn't waste any time in the valley and quickly begins to climb the opposite hillside. Near the 0.9-mile mark, the trail passes under a high voltage powerline close to County Nine Road and then levels out for nearly the next 1.0 mile at an elevation 100' +/- below ridgetop level. In non-foliage seasons, nice vistas off to the right looking into Cady Run Valley can be enjoyed from this stretch of trail. As the trail approaches 2.0 miles, more rock outcroppings appear and soon a stream is crossed. Two lightly used campsites are located in this vicinity on a half-acre streamside flat area. One is found just to the right of where the trail crosses the stream. Another is found at the far northern edge of the flat area where a smaller stream joins the main one.

The connector trail approaches its end with a long ascent toward County Nine Road, passing more rock outcroppings along the way. The trail will emerge onto County Nine Road and cross it, next entering a short gravel driveway leading to a small parking area and a trailhead for the Scenic River Trail. Signs make it difficult to become lost or confused.

The North Country Trail/9 Bell Trail Connector to the Scenic River Trail - Trail Notes and Mileage

0.0 Start at a junction of the Archers Fork Trail and the North Country Trail/9 Bell Trail on Forest Road 4346. This junction is located at the 5.25-mile mark of the Archers Fork Trail, hiking counterclockwise.

0.6 Cross Cady Run and Cady Run Road in a peaceful valley. The valley offers flat ground for camping, but it is near the road.

0.9 Pass under an electrical transmission line. Watch for an unofficial trail forking left into the powerline right-of-way approximately 40 yards after the official trail crosses it.

2.0 Cross a stream and note the flat area on the right. Two lightly used campsites are located in this area.

2.6 Cross County Nine Road and enter a short gravel driveway leading to a small parking area and a trailhead for the Scenic River Trail.

Day Hikes

The Archers Fork loop is an attainable day hike for fit hikers; it would require 6 to 8 hours of time to complete. Because the trail crosses several gravel roads, it is possible to create your own loop hikes of shorter distance. An easy out--and--back hike of approximately 2.2 miles is all that is required to visit the Irish Run Natural Bridge. Visiting the natural bridge is what brings most visitors to Archers Fork, but most don't venture too far past it. For a little longer hike of just under 5.0 miles, continue past the natural bridge to the crossing of an old road, actually the same old road that may have been noticed heading downhill past the cemetery. In the Trail Notes and Mileage section for the Archers Fork Trail, this crossing will be at the 1.3-mile mark. Instead of following the trail across the road, turn left here and follow this old road downhill for 0.3 mile until it intersects with Irish Run Road. Turn left and walk Irish Run Road for 1.0 mile until you rejoin the main trail at the 9.7-mile mark, passing McCormick Hill Road on the left in the process. Finish up the hike on the last 2.2 miles of the main trail.

Appendix A: Campsite GPS Coordinates

Archers Fork Trail

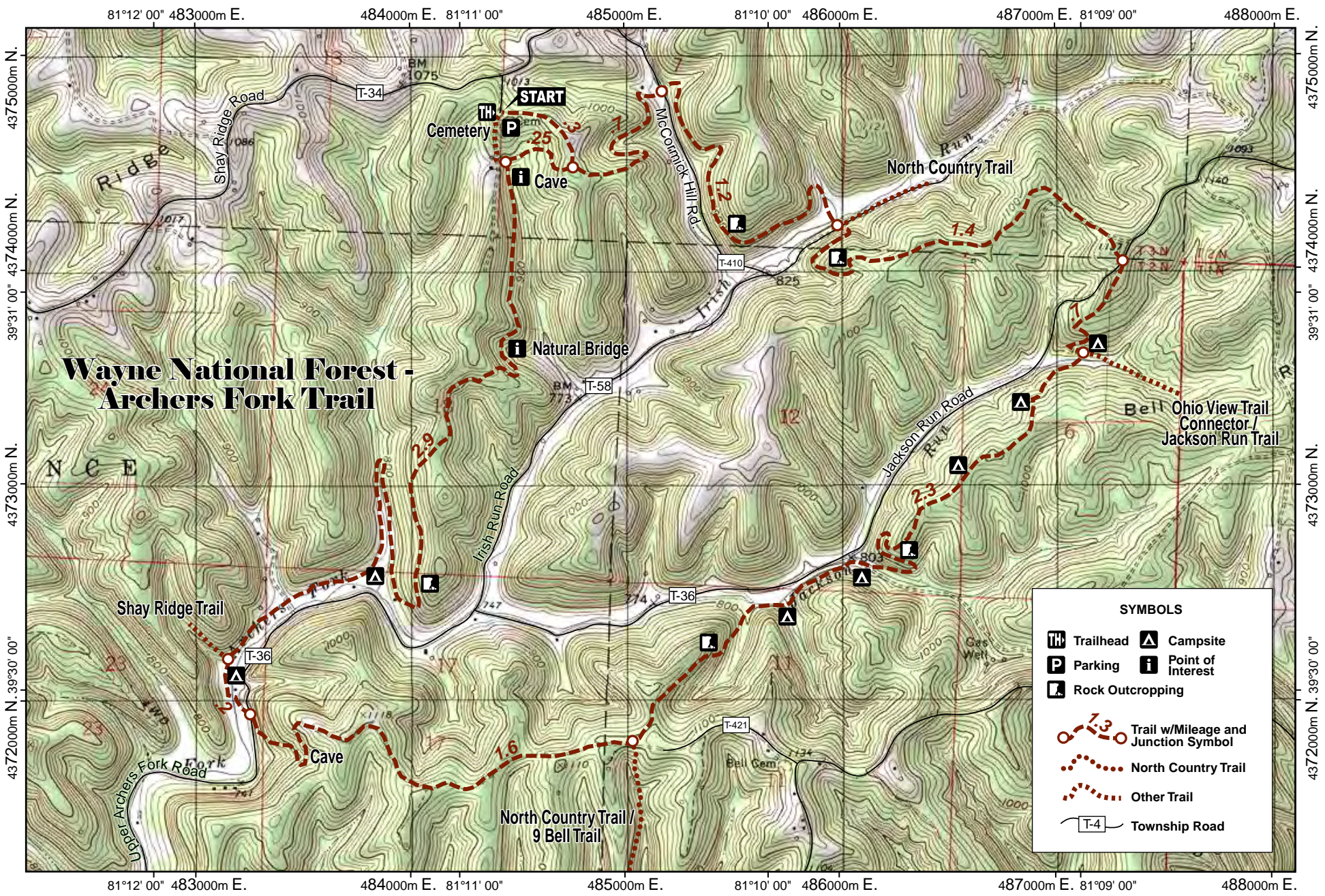
Counterclockwise direction of travel. Site # is for reference only to the order campsites appear on the map. Campsites are not numbered in the field.

Site #	Mile	Latitude/Longitude	UTM 17 (NAD 27)	Notes
1	3.0	39° 30' 19"N, 81° 11' 15"W	483846E, 4372657N	nice site
2	3.5	39° 30' 02"N, 81° 11' 44"W	483156E, 4372134N	small site adjacent to trail
3	5.9	39° 30' 10"N, 81° 09' 55"W	485760E, 4372396N	well established
4	6.1	39° 30' 17"N, 81° 09' 43"W	486041E, 4372606N	near abandoned road often used by ATVs
5	7.0	39° 30' 31"N, 81° 09' 21"W	486585E, 4373021N	downhill from trail
6	7.3	39° 30' 42"N, 81° 09' 09"W	486869E, 4373370N	lightly used as of this writing
7	7.6	39° 30' 49"N, 81° 08' 59"W	487094E, 4373599N	two sites in area

North Country Trail/9 Bell Trail Connector to the Scenic River Trail

North to south direction of travel. Site # is for reference only to the order campsites appear on the map. Campsites are not numbered in the field.

Site #	Mile	Latitude/Longitude	UTM 17 (NAD 27)	Notes
1	2.0	39° 28' 54"N, 81° 10' 55"W	484339E, 4370030W	two sites in area



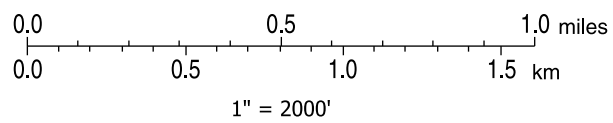
Wayne National Forest - Archers Fork Trail

SYMBOLS

	Trailhead		Campsite
	Parking		Point of Interest
	Rock Outcropping		



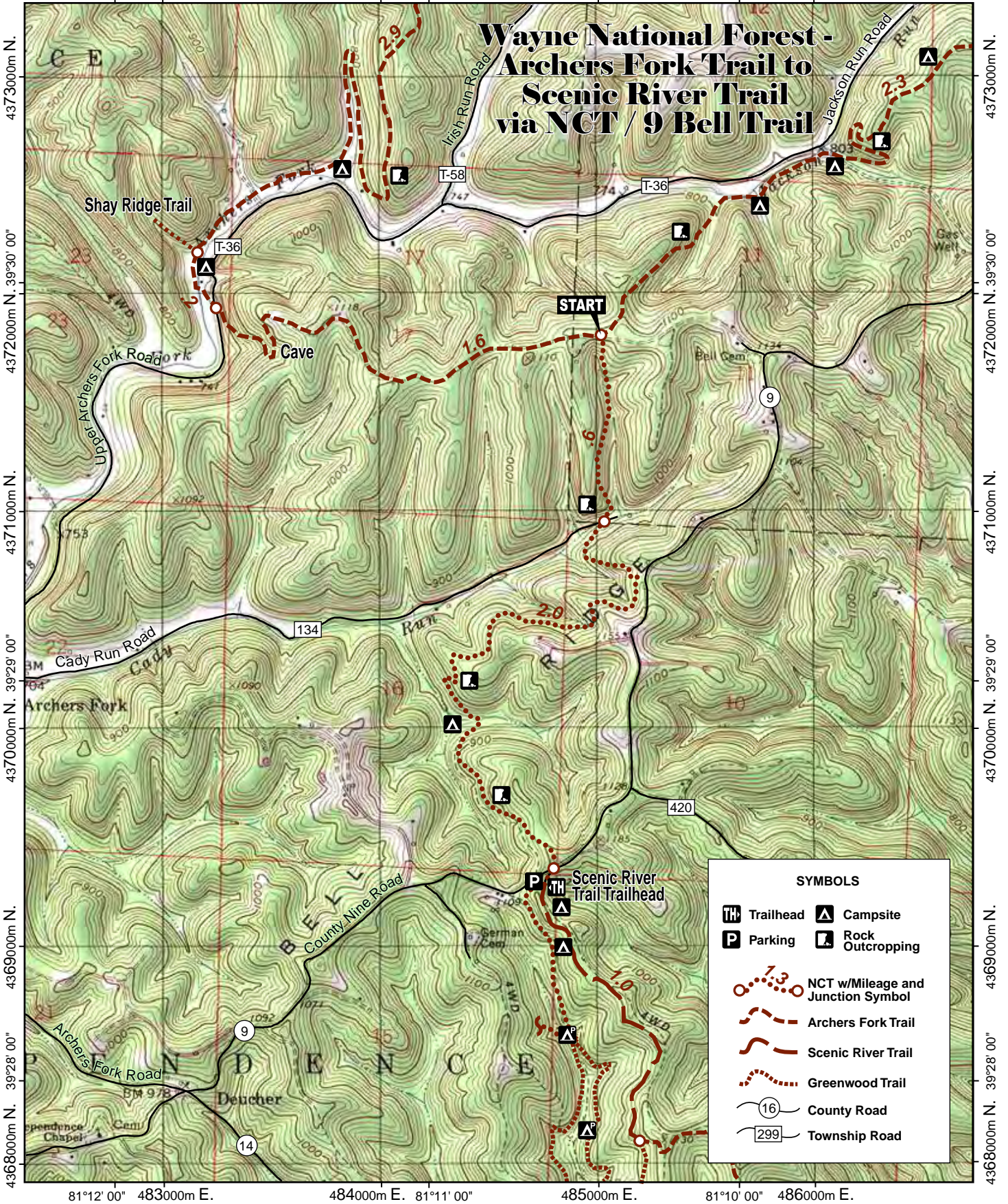
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 Base map created with TOPO!
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1000-Meter UTM 17 Grid
 NAD 27

81°12' 00" 483000m E. 484000m E. 81°11' 00" 485000m E. 81°10' 00" 486000m E.

Wayne National Forest - Archers Fork Trail to Scenic River Trail via NCT / 9 Bell Trail

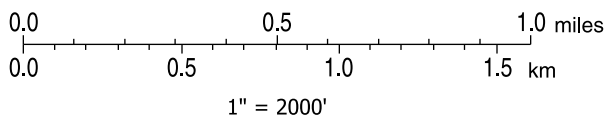


SYMBOLS

	Trailhead		Campsite
	Parking		Rock Outcropping
	NCT w/Mileage and Junction Symbol		Archers Fork Trail
	Scenic River Trail		Greenwood Trail
	County Road		Township Road



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1000-Meter UTM 17 Grid
NAD 27
contour interval 20'

