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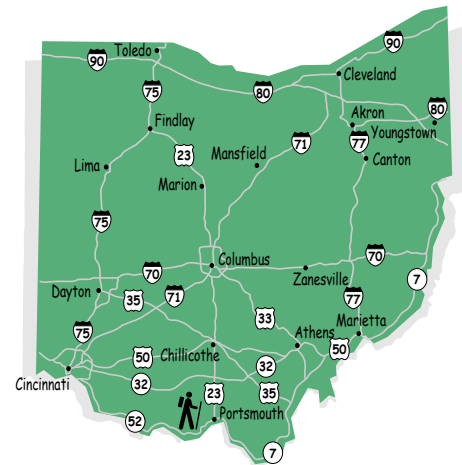
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# Shawnee State Forest Backpack Trail

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# Shawnee State Forest Backpack Trail

**County:** Scioto, Adams

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**Nearest town:** Portsmouth

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**Total distance:** 36.4-mile main trail; 19.6-mile north loop using cutoff side trail, 26.0-mile south loop using cutoff side trail; 9.5-mile wilderness side trail. Side trails to camps add additional light mileage.

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**Hiking time:** Up to 5 days

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**Trail conditions:** Well established

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**Blazes:** Main trail blazed with orange, side trails blazed with white

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**Water:** Hauled water available at or near all backpack camping areas, except Camp 6. Water can be filtered at Camp 6 from year-round streams

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**Highlights:** Vast forest, remote campsites, diverse fauna and flora, 8000-acre wilderness area

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**Maps:** USGS 7.5': Buena Vista, Otway, Pond Run, West Portsmouth & Friendship; ODNR Div. of Forestry Shawnee State Forest and Backpack Trail maps; BackpackOhio.com eTrailsOhio

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**Contact info:** Shawnee State Forest, 13291 U.S. 52, West Portsmouth, Ohio 45663, phone: 740-858-6685; Shawnee State Park, 4404 State Route 125, West Portsmouth, Ohio 45663, phone: 740-858-6652

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**Internet:** [www.ohiodnr.com](http://www.ohiodnr.com)

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**Getting there:** From U.S. 23 in Portsmouth, take State Route 52 west for 6.8 miles to State Route 125. Turn right onto SR 125 and travel 6.7 miles to the entrance for the lodge, cabins and state park office and turn left. Make a quick right into the trailhead parking area.

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**Trailhead coordinates:** 38.7413°N, 83.1972°W (WGS84); UTM 17 309029E 4290145N (NAD27); UTM 17 309043E 4290361N (NAD83)

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## Background

Shawnee State Forest, also called the "Little Smokies of Ohio", is Ohio's largest state forest, coming in at nearly 64,000 acres, or 100 square miles for comparison. Located in the heart of the forest, 1095 acres is set aside for Shawnee State Park and its elegant lodge, cabins, campground and two lakes. A marina and golf course are located a little farther south on the Ohio River.

Shawnee Indians used the forest as hunting grounds until the 1700s when settlers, using the Ohio River as a boulevard, began to penetrate the forest, clearing and thrashing the wilderness as they sought to create homesites and farms. By the early twentieth century, the Shawnee hills were left denuded of trees, burned and abandoned. In 1922, 5000 acres of ravaged lands were purchased, building the foundation for Ohio's biggest reforestation project. In the 1930s, six Civilian Conservation Corps camps were located in the forest. Many roads and lakes still used today were constructed during this period.

Shawnee's size, ruggedness and opportunities for solitude are unparalleled in Ohio, making the forest a special place to visit. The seemingly endless trees comprise Ohio's largest contiguous forest, and home for a large number of animal species--including bobcat, black bear and timber rattlesnakes, a great number of bird species and many rare and endangered plants. Ohio's only designated wilderness area—state designation, not federal—occupies 8,000 acres in the southwest corner of the forest and is off limits to timber management and motorized travel. In 1999, an additional 8,000 acres adjacent to the wilderness area was designated as a backcountry management area. This area provides wildlife and endangered plant management, as well as walk-in recreation and hunting opportunities. Motorized travel is restricted.

The hills in the forest represent some of Ohio's highest. Terrain relief commonly reaches 400 feet and exceeds 600 feet in some areas, especially in the southwest quadrant. Average ridgetop elevations peak between 1100 to 1200 feet above sea level with a few high points breaking the 1300-foot contour. The normal pool elevation of the Ohio River represents the lowest elevation in the region and averages 500 feet above sea level.

A variety of vegetation grows in Shawnee State Forest. Several species of oaks and hickories grace the ridges alongside sassafras and native pitch and shortleaf pines. On the mid-slopes, expect to find oaks and hickories in addition to maple, basswood, yellow poplar, buckeye, blackgum, ash, elm, hackberry and aspen. Sweetgum, beech, black cherry, black walnut, sycamore, birch and butternut can be found in bottomland areas. Hemlocks can be found thriving in narrow, cooler valleys.

In April 2009, a forest fire burned nearly 3000 acres in the central section of the forest, centered roughly on Mackletree Road. Only 10% of this acreage burned completely, with little timber worth salvaging. The remainder of the burn area suffered less damage and any salvageable timber was removed. Remaining timber stands in the burn area are recovering quickly and effects of the fire will be virtually unnoticeable in a few short years. Nearly 2.5 miles of the backpack trail pass through the burn area between Camps 6 and 7.

## The Trail

The 36.4 miles of the orange-blazed main trail is laid out in a large loop, with State Route 125 nearly bisecting it in the middle. A 4.6-mile cutoff side trail paralleling SR 125 from near Camp 3 to the trailhead divides the main loop into two smaller loops: a 19.6-mile north loop and a 26.0-mile south loop. Alternately, SR 125 can be used as the cutoff between FR 1 and the trailhead. The distance is shorter at only 2.8 miles, plus two 300-foot plus elevation gains are bypassed. Camp side trails will add additional light mileage to your overall trip, all are 0.25 mile or less.

Most backpackers refer to the backpack trail in terms of its north and south loops, and usually base trips on one or the other. The trail's north and south loops are described separately in this document. The 9.5-mile wilderness side trail takes hikers into the remote 8000-acre Shawnee Wilderness Area. For backpackers, visiting the wilderness area usually involves a multi-night trip, allowing one day to hike to a base camp, usually Camp 6, and then day hiking the wilderness side trail the next. Day visitors can access the wilderness side trail via County Road 96 alongside Upper Twin Creek.

The official trailhead is located very near the junction of the main backpack trail and the western end of the bisecting cutoff side trail, which means the official trailhead can and should be used for a trip on either the north or south loop, or, of course, an extended trip of the entire trail. Beginning a trip anywhere else along the main trail would require leaving your vehicle overnight in a rural location. This is not recommended as these areas are not regularly patrolled by state park or state forest rangers.

The Division of Forestry provides for trail users a two-color topographic trail map at a trailhead registration kiosk adjacent to the trailhead parking area. Their map is published at a scale of approximately 1" = 6000'. Our series of enclosed maps are published at 1" = 3000' and show more detail. Forestry's method of cartographic compilation and frequency of updates is unknown, so some distance and trail location discrepancies may be noted between the two publications.



**Trailhead registration kiosk**

The main trail and all side trails are adequately blazed in both directions. Carsonite signs are found at most road crossings, bridle trail intersections and other points along the trail where additional direction is needed. Overall, the trail is easy to follow, with few intersecting unofficial trails to lead you astray. The trail's crossing of many forest roads offers the opportunity to cache gear or water pre-trip.

All side trails, including the wilderness side trail, the cutoff side trail from Camp 3 to the trailhead and side trails leading camping areas are blazed with white. A 7.2-mile designated day hike trail is blazed blue, and is shared with the cutoff side trail between Camp 3 and the trailhead for 3.0 miles. The North Country Trail and Buckeye Trail share the path with the backpack trail along the northwestern side of the main loop, all the way from the top of Buckhorn Ridge in the wilderness area to Forest Road 6 north of the trailhead. Along the entire trail system, expect to find considerable up and down hiking--with numerous climbs gaining 300+ feet in short distances, few switchbacks and numerous stream crossings. For these reasons, Shawnee may not be the smartest choice for beginning or unconditioned backpackers.

Seven primitive camping areas are spaced approximately every five miles along the backpack trail's main loop. Camps are numbered in order from the trailhead in a clockwise direction of travel. Most backpackers plan trips with stays at every other camp, meaning a day's mileage will be in the 10.0-mile range. A self-registration permit (no fee) is required of all hikers. The forest service provides registration forms at the trailhead kiosk. The forms provide space for you to write in your planned schedule and dates you will be visiting each camping area. You should try to adhere to your reported schedule in case a mishap causes you to miss your stated return. Groups are limited to a maximum of 10 persons.

You'll find most camping areas located off the main trail, the exceptions being Camps 3 and 4, which sit very near the trail. Camp 6 is the most remote and scenic camp in the forest, and a must-do for any Ohio backpacker. Its location in a hemlock pocket at the confluence of two streams is very scenic. Pit toilets are located in the vicinity of each camping area. Some of



**Typical water hydrant**

these have been rebuilt in recent years, while others are in need of rehabbing. Potable water is also provided in buried tanks at all camping areas except Camp 6; however, water can be treated from year-round streams running through this camp.

At some camps, you may have to search to find the latrines and/or water hydrants because neither is typically located near the actual camp. At Camps 2 and 5, water is located at the beginning of each camp's side trail. At Camps 1 and 3, water is located on the trail before each camp, well before at Camp 1. Water for Camp 4 is located on the main trail just past that camp's side trail. Finally, water for Camp 7 is located down-valley toward a road. All this is assuming a clockwise direction of travel. Due to bad road conditions, water may not always be provided in winter. It is advisable to check with forest headquarters before setting out in the off-season.

In recent years, the forest service began bulldozing many sections of the main and cutoff side trails. Their goal is to create a trail wide enough for forest staff to access the trail via mechanized vehicles, as opposed to foot-only access, thus reducing the number of man hours required to maintain such a vast trail system in an era of shrinking resources. It is not the intent for bulldozing to become the standard method for trail maintenance. After the initial widening, it is the intent of the forest service to allow these bulldozed areas to settle back to a more natural state and meld with the surroundings, then only using forest staff on ATVs armed with chainsaws to perform trail maintenance. If you are unlucky enough to hike one of these freshly bulldozed sections, you will find very rough, rocky and unstable conditions. Given a chance to heal, these conditions will vastly improve in a few short years.

Shawnee State Forest is big, remote, rugged and not heavily used away from improvements in the state park. The forest is also home to copperheads, timber rattlesnakes, coyotes, bobcats and possibly black bears. Taking the time to learn proper backcountry camping and hiking techniques will reduce the chances of a negative incident cutting your trip short, or worse, requiring ranger or medical assistance.

### **Distances between Camps**

The table below highlights distances in miles along the main trail between camps or intersections with camp side trails. Camp side trail distances are not factored into the figures below.

Trailhead to Camp 1	6.3
Camp 1 to Camp 2	5.4
Camp 2 to Camp 3	3.5
Camp 3 to Trailhead – cutoff side trail	4.4
FR 1 to Trailhead – via SR 125	2.8
Camp 3 to Camp 4	4.3
Camp 4 to Camp 5	4.4
Camp 5 to Camp 6	3.2
Camp 6 to Camp 7	4.9
Camp 7 to Trailhead	4.7

### **North Loop**

The north loop is masochistic 19.6-mile journey up and down some of the steepest terrain southern Ohio has to offer. In total, the elevation gain for the north loop approaches 5000 feet, with several climbs gaining 300 feet or more in elevation. If hills are your nemesis, walk the right-of-way along State Route 125 back to the trailhead instead of the cutoff side trail in order to bypass two 300-foot plus climbs.

The north loop travels through unbroken forest for most of its route. Away from improvements along the State Route 125 corridor, little of man's past and present impact on these hills is noticed from the trail, the main exceptions being five forest road crossings. Many sections of high ridge walking offer nice vistas of the surrounding hills and hollows in non-foliage seasons. The Buckeye Trail, North Country Trail and American Discovery Trail share the same path from the trailhead to the first crossing of Forest Road 6.

A trip on the north loop begins from the trailhead parking area just off State Route 125 on the road serving the resort lodge. The official trailhead sits on the opposite side of SR 125, a little to the left if facing the registration and information kiosk. A few steps up the trail, you'll encounter an intersection with the white-blazed cutoff side trail entering from the right. A little farther, the sounds of the highway fade and sounds of the forest prevail.

The north loop's first significant ascent is encountered soon after beginning at the mouth of Hoosier Hollow. On top, the trail stays on a ridge for approximately 0.3 mile before descending and then ascending again shortly after that for a more significant ridge walk. A first crossing of Forest Road 6 is encountered at the 2.4-mile mark. The BT, NCT and ADT part ways here and fork left on FR 6. FR 6 is crossed again at the 3.9-mile mark. Vistas to the north at the second road crossing of FR 6 are far reaching.

After Forest Road 6, a 0.5-mile stretch of ridge walking reaches an elevation of 1275 feet—600 feet above the trailhead--and one of the highest points of the entire trail system. Views over to the Copperhead Fire Tower are nice. An upcoming steep descent followed by an immediate 350-foot elevation gain can be avoided by walking along

FR 6 past the fire tower to the water haul road for Camp 1. The distance traveled by road is approximately 0.5 mile shorter than by trail. The road stays on the crest of the ridge but does have its share of ups and downs as well.



**Camp 1**

At the 5.6-mile mark, the water hydrant for Camp 1 is passed. It is located right on the trail at the crest of a ridge, just off of Forest Road 6. The hydrant is a good distance from the camp--about 0.7 mile, and 320 feet in elevation above it--so plan accordingly. Unprepared counterclockwise hikers will have nearly a 1.4-mile roundtrip and face a nasty climb to collect water. At the 6.3-mile mark, you'll arrive at the Camp 1 side trail. Camp 1 is remotely situated 0.1 mile down the side trail in a scenic setting at the head of Rock Lick Hollow. A large, flat area has room for numerous tents. Young hemlocks line the banks of a small stream draining the upper reaches of the hollow. The stream has good flow in wetter months and is a reliable source for mechanically filtering or chemically treating water.

After camp 1, the trail climbs to a ridgetop for a 0.4-mile ridge walk then drops to cross Forest Road 1. From there, it's back to the ridgetops for several miles until the main trail intersects the side trail leading to Camp 2 at the 11.7-mile mark and not far from Forest Road 14. Water for Camp 2 is located on the camp's side trail. Camp 2 is situated in a flat area near the mouth of Zorns Hollow. A wet weather stream drains the hollow. A latrine sits on the left as you walk into camp. Flat areas provide enough room for several tents. Even though Camp 2 sits fairly close to FR 14, the road is lightly traveled and the camp possesses somewhat of a remote feel.

The trail continues past Camp 2 and reaches Forest Road 14 in 0.1 mile via Camp 2's short water haul road. A brief walk on FR 14 will take you over Odell Creek and back into the forest for one of the largest climbs on the trail. First, though, you parallel Odell Creek in a northerly direction for 0.2 mile and then turn perpendicular to the contours to begin the climb. Over 400 feet in elevation is gained in the next 0.5 mile. Once on top of the ridge, it's another ridge walk for nearly 2.0 miles until the trail descends to Forest Road 1 in the valley of Harber Fork Creek.

After a road walk on Forest Road 1 for 0.3 miles, the trail leaves the right side of the road and descends to the creek for a crossing. The creek can be difficult to cross in high water. An alternate route is to proceed south on FR 1 to a point just across from the Camp Oyo Boy Scout Camp. Look for a gated old road. This is the water haul road for Camp 3 and the old location of FR 1. The water haul road also serves as part of the main trail for the south loop. Following it will take you to the junction of the main trail and the cutoff side trail. Space around the gate allows for hikers to squeeze through.

Proceeding from the crossing of Harber Fork above, the trail will intersect a couple of bridle trails before arriving at the junction with the white-blazed cutoff side trail leading to Camp 3 and the trailhead. Over 15.0 miles of north loop trail are behind you at this point. If continuing on to the south loop, follow the water haul road back out to Forest Road 1 and cross State Route 125.

Water for Camp 3 is located near the intersection of the main trail and the cutoff side trail. Camp 3 is ahead on the left. Camp 3 is situated in a small flat area near Turkey Creek. State Route 125 is located on the opposite side of the creek, way too close for a true backcountry camping experience. Traffic noise from the road will be a distraction.

To finish out the north loop, you'll follow the remainder of the cutoff side trail back to the trailhead. An alternate route is to follow State Route 125 back to the trailhead from Forest Road 1. The total distance via SR 125 is 2.8 miles, plus this route bypasses two additional big hills.

The cutoff side trail starts out rocky and stays just upslope of hemlock trees covering the hillside above Turkey Creek. The cutoff side trail has a very different and scenic quality in its early stage. Just short of the 16.0-mile mark, soon after crossing a beautiful, boulder-strewn stream in Lower Shaw Hollow, the cutoff side trail intersects the day hike trail. For the next 3.0 miles, blue blazes marking the day hike trail will be seen along with the white blazes of the cutoff side trail.

At the mouth of Williamson Hollow, the two trails will part ways, but not before ascending a 350-foot climb over a ridge separating Long and Williamson Hollows. Where the two trails part, look for the cutoff side trail to go right and follow a powerline right-of-way. The day hike trail will cross State Route 125 and enter a parking area. From Williamson Hollow, the cutoff side trail returns to intersect with the main trail near the trailhead in 0.8 mile.



**Cutoff side trail stream crossing**

## **North Loop Trail Notes and Mileage**

**0.0** Start at the trailhead across State Route 125 from the trailhead parking area. Facing the registration kiosk, the trailhead is slightly to the left. A wooden sign marks the beginning of the trail. Just past the trailhead, the white-blazed cutoff side trail arriving from Camp 3 intersects the main trail from the right. Stay left.

**2.4** Emerge onto Forest Road 6. Go right for 30 yards and exit the road. The North Country/American Discovery/Buckeye Trails go left on FR 6.

- 3.6** Cross Forest Road 6 for the second time. Take note of the nice vista to the north.
- 4.9** In a hollow, the trail crosses a logging road/Hobey Hollow Bridle Trail and then heads uphill.
- 5.6** Intersect the Rock Lick Bridle Trail. Watch for a water hydrant to the left. This is water for Camp 1. The trail goes past the hydrant for 40 yards and then forks left downhill.
- 6.3** Arrive at the side trail for Camp 1. Go right to arrive at Camp 1 in 0.1 mile.
- 7.4** Cross Forest Road 1. Forest Road 4 is in view to the left.
- 8.3** The trail emerges onto Forest Road 14 and goes left. After 200 yards the trail forks left from the road.
- 10.2** The trail forks right from an old road onto a wide section of trail. Watch for blazes and avoid going straight.
- 11.7** Arrive at the junction with the Camp 2 side trail. Go left to arrive at Camp 2 in approximately 0.15 mile. Water is located downhill to the right just after entering the side trail.
- 11.8** Emerge onto Forest Road 14. The trail goes left on the road for 50 yards, crossing a bridge over Odell Creek. The trail exits the road to the right and reenters the forest
- 14.4** Emerge onto Forest Road 1. Go left.
- 14.7** Exit Forest Road 1 downhill to the right. Cross Harbor Fork Creek just ahead.
- 15.1** Arrive at a water hydrant for Camp 3 and steps ahead an intersection with the white-blazed cutoff side trail leading back to the trailhead. Go right. The main trail continues toward Camp 4, following a haul road for Camp 3's water. Camp 3 is just ahead on the cutoff side trail.
- 15.2** Arrive at Camp 3 just off the trail to the left. A privy sits to the right of the trail.
- 15.8** Arrive at a junction with the day hike trail after a stream crossing. Go Straight. The day hike trail is blazed with blue.
- 17.2** The trail goes under a powerline near State Route 125 and goes right, following the powerline's right-of-way for 20 yards before reentering the forest. A short unofficial trail crosses SR 125 and leads to Roosevelt Lake and the state park camping area.
- 18.5** Intersect the west side of day hike trail in Williamson Hollow. Both trails are coincident in Williamson Hollow heading south for 0.4 mile.
- 18.8** In a powerline right-of-way, the white-blazed cutoff side trail forks right while the day hike trail crosses State Route 125 and enters the state park. Not far ahead, an old location of the cutoff side trail, paralleling State Route 125 at a lower elevation than the current trail, may be visible. If taken, this trail will also return you to the trailhead.
- 19.6** Arrive back at the junction with the backpack trail just above the trailhead. Go left to return to the trailhead parking area.

## South Loop

The south loop of the backpack trail travels 26.0 miles through Shawnee State Forest's central section. There is a noticeable contrast with north loop regarding the impact both man and Mother Nature have had on the forest here. For instance, many more tracts of harvested timber are noticed, especially in sections of the forest affected by the 2009 forest fire. Additionally, areas south of State Route 125 were severely impacted by an ice storm in February 2003. Many dead trees stripped of their limbs by the weight of the ice still stand like skeletons across this part of the forest.



East Fork Creek near Camp 6

The south loop also offers its share of ups and down, but seems to be a little more forgiving on the thigh muscles than the north loop. Still, you'll encounter sections of trail that will simply leave you scratching your head and asking, "What were they thinking?". To balance out some of the negative aspects of this loop, the south loop does offer Camp 6. Camp 6 sits beautifully in a hemlock pocket at the confluence of East Fork Creek and Bald Knob Run. It is Ohio's most remote campsite and worthy of a visit by all Ohio backpackers. Camp 5 is no slouch either, it sits high on a ridge and offers vistas down Massey Hollow to the hills beyond in Kentucky. Even though the vistas are courtesy of a several year old clear-cut, the camp is worthy of a visit. At twilight, coyotes and other nocturnal woodland critters can be heard in the valleys and hollows below camp. In warmer months, the soothing call of the Whip-poor-will resonates through camp.

Many backpackers will choose to hike the south loop in a counterclockwise direction of travel in order to reach Camp 6 or the wilderness side trail more quickly, and then return to the trailhead via the same route. To stay with the order of the numbered campsites and to aid those hiking the entire trail in one trip, we've documented the south loop in a clockwise direction of travel. This means the white-blazed cutoff side trail between the trailhead and Camp 3 will be the first section of trail traveled and not the last, as it is in completing the north loop.

A trip on the south loop begins at the trailhead across State Route 125 from the trailhead parking area. Just a few yards up the trail, you'll go right at the intersection with the white-blazed cutoff side trail and begin your first leg of the journey. A description of the cutoff side trail can be read in the north loop section above, but keep in mind you'll be traveling it in reverse. Key points to be mindful of are the intersections with the blue-blazed day hike trail and being certain not to inadvertently take off in a wrong direction. If time is a factor, consideration should be given to walking

alongside SR 125 to Forest Road 1 and beginning the trail there. The distance going this way is over 1.5 miles shorter than by trail, and bypasses two big climbs. It's mostly a downhill walk.

If you begin your trip using the cutoff side trail, once you've arrived at the water hydrant for Camp 3, take the water haul road to the right and follow it out to Forest Road 1. Travel FR 1 south for 200 yards and cross State Route 125. If following SR 125 for your first leg, watch for a Carsonite sign on your right opposite where FR 1 intersects SR 125. The trail crosses an open field here and heads in an angle toward a wooded hillside.

Once in the woods, the trail swings right and begins to climb. The next 1.8 miles offer more ups than downs, but after that stays mostly high until the descent into Camp 4 at the 8.7-mile mark. Bridle trails are intersected on the way to Camp 4 so be sure to follow the orange blazes carefully.

Camp 4 is situated at the confluence of Brush Fork Run and a smaller stream draining an unnamed hollow to the north. The smaller stream has to be crossed before entering the camp. The camp area is flat and has two established sites. There is room for additional tents. A latrine is located 50 yards up the unnamed hollow to the north. Water for Camp 4 is located approximately 75 yards past camp on the main trail. Follow the shared main trail/water haul road down valley and look for a water hydrant on the left. The hydrant is situated several yards off the trail in an area that sees tall undergrowth in the summer.

Heading out of Camp 4, the trail follows the water haul road and parallels Brush Fork Run. Along the way, Brush Fork Run dumps into Pond Lick Run. After 0.4 mile, the trail crosses Pond Lick Run and Forest Road 1 just above Pond Lick Lake and the site of an old Civilian Conservation Camp (CCC), which was closed and razed several years ago.

After traveling through Rock Lick Hollow, another climb elevates you to the ridgetops once again and a crossing of Forest Road 2 at the 10.7-mile mark. Soon after crossing FR 2 the trail descends into Pheasant Hollow. The 1.25-mile walk through Pheasant Hollow is pleasant and a welcome gradual descent the entire way. This is a good stretch of trail to kick-in the cruise control and enjoy the peaceful surroundings and easy walking. Take note of the variety of animal tracks in the mud of shallow puddles alongside the trail.

At the mouth of Pheasant Hollow, the trail passes an informational kiosk and crosses Forest Road 1, and then soon crosses Pond Run. Over 12.0 miles of trail are behind you at this point; a tough climb is just ahead of you. Once the trail reaches the next ridgetop, it emerges onto a service road, which also serves as the backpack trail, Grass Lick Bridle Trail and the water haul road for Camp 5. The side trail for Camp 5 is directly across from you. You may have taken note of two not-so-attractive campsites just before reaching the service road. If Camp 5 is full, you may find yourself at one of these sites.

Camp 5 is nicely situated on a narrow ridge between Stable Gut and Massey Hollows, 0.2 mile down a side trail from the service road. There is only one established campsite here with room for a couple of tents or so. A latrine sits forty yards past the campsite. Water for the camp is located at the beginning of the side trail. A clear-cut conducted several years ago in Massey Hollow has opened up a magnificent vista down the hollow and to the hills beyond. This clear-cut is regenerating nicely and is not the eyesore it once was just a few short years ago. Unfortunately, the view will eventually go away as the clear-cut fills in. Coyotes are often heard at dusk in the hollows below camp. Camping here is enjoyable.

Westward toward Camp 6, the trail follows the service road/bridle trail for 0.9 mile before forking left and eventually descending into the valley of East Fork Creek. The loss in elevation is approximately 450'. Once in the valley, a 1.0-mile walk upstream brings you to beautiful Camp 6.



Camp 5 vista

Camp 6 is beautifully situated in a hemlock pocket at the confluence of Bald Knob Run and East Fork Creek. One campsite is located on the trail side of the streams. Several additional sites are located on the opposite side. Crossing East Fork Creek can be a little treacherous as you will have to negotiate a steep bank and large rocks. No water is provided here, but the streams do flow throughout the year, providing the opportunity for mechanical filtering or chemical treating. A pit latrine is located across East Fork Creek. The wilderness side trail also begins here. White blazes marking that trail can be found across East Fork Creek as well. The lightly traveled East Fork Creek Bridle Trail enters camp from the northwest.

Exiting Camp 6, the trail continues north up the valley of Bald Knob Run. The scenery quickly changes just north of Camp 6 as the hemlocks wane. This part of the forest sustained heavy damage during the 2003 ice storm. At 0.7 mile north of Camp 6, the trail enters a large area burned in the 2009 forest fire. The blackened trunks of partially burned trees may be noticed. Only a small portion of the nearly 3000 acres burned was a complete loss. Native undergrowth is naturally reestablishing the burn area nicely, meaning you'll see more green than black, at least in the parts of the burn area visited by the trail. The trail travels through the burn area for nearly 2.5 miles.

Near the 17.8-mile mark, the trail makes a brutal ascent through a hillside clear-cut coming out of the valley of Bald Knob Run. Forest Road 2 is soon crossed. After FR-2, the trail crosses Mackletree Road (T-99) in 0.7 mile, passing an intersection with the north leg of the wilderness side trail along the way. From the wilderness side trail to the end of the hike, the trail is shared with the Buckeye Trail and the North Country Trail. After crossing Mackletree Road, the trail crosses Plummer Fork and climbs once again, gaining 340 feet of elevation in under 0.5 mile. A large clear-cut is noted on the right. At the top of the ridge, you may notice where the trail used to take a more northerly

route toward Long Hollow. This was a reroute of the trail that was in place for a couple of years. Old trail markers should be painted over. The side trail leading to Camp 7 is located just before the 21.3-mile mark ahead.



**Camp 7**

Camp 7 is located in an unnamed hollow a little more than 0.1 mile off the main trail. The camp side trail arrives at a T intersection marked with a Carsonite sign at the bottom of the hollow. The actual camp is located to the right, with a latrine and water to the left, in the direction of County Road 96. Water is found 0.25 mile past the T intersection; the latrine about 200 yards from the intersection. Camp 7 has two sites, each large enough for 2 to 4 tents each. There are not any special qualities about Camp 7 that make this camp a must-do. Camping here, it is not uncommon to hear jet engines being tested around the clock on outdoor stands at General Electric's Peebles Test Operation in northern Adams County--more than 13 miles away!

Exiting Camp 7, the trail enters its final segment, a nearly 5.0-mile stretch of largely up and down ridge walking. The Lamplack Bridle Trail is crossed 1.0 mile past Camp 7. Vistas from the ridgetop the last few miles are nice in non-foliage seasons. The forest corridor from Camp 7 to the end of the trail has been less impacted by clear-cutting and the 2003 ice storm. It also lies well north of the burn area. This means the trail finishes up in an attractive manner, despite a wonderfully designed original footpath having been bulldozed into a wide, often rocky swath. Approximately 1.0 mile before reaching the trailhead, the trail descends the ridge and eventually enters the state park at the north end of Turkey Creek Lake. The trail passes by a small beach, crosses a long footbridge and follows the road serving the resort lodge back to the trailhead.

### **South Loop Trail Notes and Mileage**

- 0.0** Start from the trailhead across State Route 125 from the trailhead parking area. Facing the registration kiosk, the trailhead is slightly to the left. Just past the trailhead, the white-blazed cutoff side trail heading to Camp 3 intersects the main trail. Go right. Alternately, walk along SR 125 for 2.8 miles and arrive at the backpack trail across from the intersection of Forest Road 1 and SR 125.
- 0.9** Arrive at a junction with the day hike trail. Go left. Both trails are coincident in Williamson Hollow for nearly 0.4 mile. The day hike trail is blazed with blue.
- 1.3** The day hike trail goes straight and right at this junction. Go right.
- 2.5** The trail follows a powerline right-of-way for 20 yards near State Route 125 and then goes left. A short unofficial trail crosses SR 125 and leads to Roosevelt Lake and the state park camping area.
- 4.0** Arrive at the eastern junction with day hike trail. Fork to the right and then in a few yards cross a beautiful stream. Watch for white blazes.
- 4.5** Arrive at the junction with the Camp 3 side trail. Go right for a few yards to arrive at Camp 3. Water for Camp 3 is just ahead on the left.
- 4.6** Arrive at the intersection with the main backpack trail. Go right, following a haul road for Camp 3's water.
- 4.7** Emerge onto Forest Road 1 after walking around a locked gate at the entrance of Camp 3's water haul road. Go right.
- 4.8** Emerge onto State Route 125. The trail crosses the road and angles across a grassy field.
- 8.75** Arrive at the short side trail to Camp 4. Go right to enter the camp. A water hydrant is located approximately 75 yards past camp on the left, just off the main trail/water haul road.
- 9.0** The water haul road curves right to cross Pond Lick Run. The trail continues straight for 0.1 mile after the water haul road curves to cross the stream. If crossing Pond Lick Run using the water haul road, go left on Forest Road 1 for 0.1 mile to resume the trail.
- 9.1** Cross Pond Lick Run and then immediately cross Forest Road 1.
- 10.7** Cross Forest Road 2.
- 12.4** Emerge onto Forest Road 1. A wooden information kiosk is located here. Go right on FR 1 for 25 yards, cross a wooden bridge and then exit the road to the left. Cross Pond Run just ahead.
- 13.2** Emerge onto a service road/Grass Lick Bridle Trail. The side trail to Camp 5 is straight before you. A water hydrant is located a few yards ahead on the left. Travel the side trail for 0.2 mile to arrive at the camp. Facing the camp side trail, the main trail continues right on the service road.
- 14.1** Exit left from the service road.
- 16.4** Arrive at Camp 6. One campsite is located adjacent to the trail. Cross East Fork Creek to access additional campsites, a latrine and the wilderness side trail.
- 18.4** Cross Forest Road 2.
- 18.9** Arrive at a junction with the northern leg of the wilderness side trail. Go straight.
- 19.1** Emerge onto Mackletree Road (T 99). Walk the road right for 30 yards and then fork left, immediately crossing Plummer Fork and beginning an ascent.



**21.3** Arrive at the junction with the Camp 7 side trail. Go left to arrive at the camp in 0.15 mile. Go straight to stay on the main trail. The side trail to Camp 7 arrives at a T intersection just before camp, with camp located a few yards to the right and a latrine and water hydrant to the left. The water hydrant is located 0.25 mile past the T intersection.

**22.4** Cross a service road/Lampblack Run Bridle Trail.

**25.7** Emerge onto a service road. The trail goes right and then quickly left, heading toward a small beach area. At the beach, the trail goes left on a sidewalk, past a small bathroom, then crosses a wooden bridge. Past the bridge, the trail goes up several steps and emerges onto the main road serving the lodge. Go right on the road.

**26.0** Arrive at the trailhead parking area.

## Wilderness Side Trail

The wilderness side trail is a 9.5-mile trail linking the backpack trail and the 8000-acre Shawnee Wilderness Area. The wilderness area is bounded on the east by Upper Twin Creek, on the west by Lower Twin Creek and on the south by U.S. 52. Governor John Gilligan designated this rugged area as a state wilderness in 1972. This designation minimizes human influence by restricting mechanized activity. For example, by law, all trails in the wilderness area must be maintained using manual methods only. The area does not have federal wilderness area status.

The wilderness side trail spends less than half its distance in the actual wilderness area, and only visits a small portion of this large tract. The nearly 7.0-mile long Buckhorn Ridge forms the spine of the wilderness area. The wilderness side trail follows the crest of this ridge for 2.5 miles, with the balance of the trail's mileage within the wilderness area dedicated to ascending and descending the ridge. The section of trail on Buckhorn Ridge actually follows a long-ago abandoned old road and is also shared with the Buckhorn Ridge Bridle Trail. The Buckeye Trail shares the same path along the side trail's northern segment. The wilderness side trail is best hiked in fall through mid-spring, when the absence of foliage allows for open vistas from the ridgetops and seasonal undergrowth has died back. Poison ivy is very thick on Buckhorn Ridge, so long pants are recommended.

Camping is allowed in the wilderness area by permit only. A permit can be obtained by contacting the forest office. The portion of the wilderness area accessed by the trail is thick with greenbrier and other shrubby vegetation, making it very difficult to locate camping sites; however, a few flat areas near the mouth of Gum Hollow at the 6.2-mile mark were noted for camping suitability. A water hydrant is located on the trail just north of Forest Road 2, outside of the wilderness area.

The wilderness side trail intersects the backpack trail at two locations: Camp 6 and 2.5 miles to the north of Camp 6, or just south of Mackletree Road. If hiking the wilderness side trail during a trip on the south loop, add an extra day to your itinerary. The distance between Camp 6 and Camp 7 via the wilderness side trail is 11.9 miles. Camp 6 makes a logical base camp for completing the wilderness side trail as a day hike loop. You'll need to incorporate the 2.5-mile stretch of the main backpack trail between the north and south legs of the wilderness side trail into the hike, which brings the total distance of the loop to 12.0 miles. You'll sleep well in Camp 6 that night.

From Camp 6, the white-blazed wilderness side trail begins on the west side of East Fork Creek and soon ascends a ridge. At the crest of the ridge, the trail runs alongside the top edge of a clear-cut, which has opened up views into the valley of East Fork Creek.

At the 1.6-mile mark, having dropped from the ridge, the trail crosses Upper Twin Creek Road (CR 96). A small turnout for day hike access to the wilderness area is located here. The trail crosses the road then immediately crosses attractive Upper Twin Creek. To bypass the stream crossing, walk right on the road for a few yards over a bridge and then bring the opposite stream bank back to the trail. You are now in the Shawnee Wilderness Area. From here, a 1.0-mile gradual ascent takes you to the top of Buckhorn Ridge. On Buckhorn Ridge, the trail will make a sharp right turn onto an old roadbed. This is also an intersection with the Buckhorn Ridge Bridle Trail, which also goes left, offering additional opportunities for exploring the wilderness area.

The trail on Buckhorn Ridge stays on the old roadbed for the next 2.5 miles. The grades are easy and the trail wide. Solitude is easy to find. Seasonal undergrowth in summer, along with plenty of poison ivy, may not make this the most enjoyable hike in summer. In non-foliage seasons, vistas from the ridge are excellent, especially westerly into expansive Vastine Hollow, its side hollows and the hills beyond. At the 5.1-mile mark, the trail intersects the Buckeye Trail/North Country Trail and forks right, leaving the ridge and heading downhill toward Upper Twin Creek via Gum Hollow. From this intersection, the Buckeye Trail can be traveled north to Sunshine Ridge and the former site of the Twin Creek Lookout Tower in 1.3 miles. A bridle trail forking left just north of this intersection will take you to Ohio's most remote spot--a point farthest away from any active road.

The descent from Buckhorn Ridge travels on nicely constructed trail that even incorporates a couple of rare switchbacks. In approximately 1.0 mile, Upper Twin Creek Road and Upper Twin Creek are crossed again. The trail stays in the floodplain for the next 0.25 mile and crosses Forest Road 2 at the 6.7-mile mark. Just past FR 2, a short walk on a water haul road takes you by a water hydrant at the mouth of an unnamed narrow hollow. The same narrow hollow is traversed for the next 0.5 mile before the trail ascends a ridge, which peaks nearly 400 feet above



Upper Twin Creek

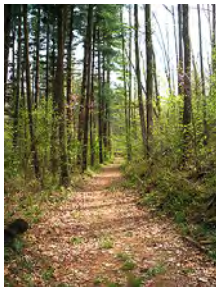
FR 2. This stretch of ridge walking—lasting 1.5 miles—is the final leg of the trail. Lastly, the trail descends the ridge and terminates at the backpack trail in an unnamed hollow just south of Mackletree Road.

### Wilderness Side Trail Notes and Mileage

- 0.0 Find the wilderness side trail on the west side of East Fork Creek at Camp 6.
- 1.6 Cross Upper Twin Creek Road (CR 96) and then Upper Twin Creek. To bypass the stream crossing, go right on the road, cross a bridge and bring the opposite stream bank back to the trail.
- 2.6 Arrive at a T intersection with the Buckhorn Bridle Trail. Go right.
- 5.1 Arrive at an intersection with the Buckeye Trail/North Country Trail. Go right.
- 6.4 Cross Upper Twin Creek Road and then Upper Twin Creek.
- 6.7 Cross Forest Road 2. 100 yards after crossing FR 2, follow a water haul road for a short distance.
- 6.8 Pass a water hydrant on the left.
- 9.5 Arrive at a T intersection with the backpack trail. Go right to head south toward Camp 6. Go left to head north toward Camp 7.

### Day Hikes

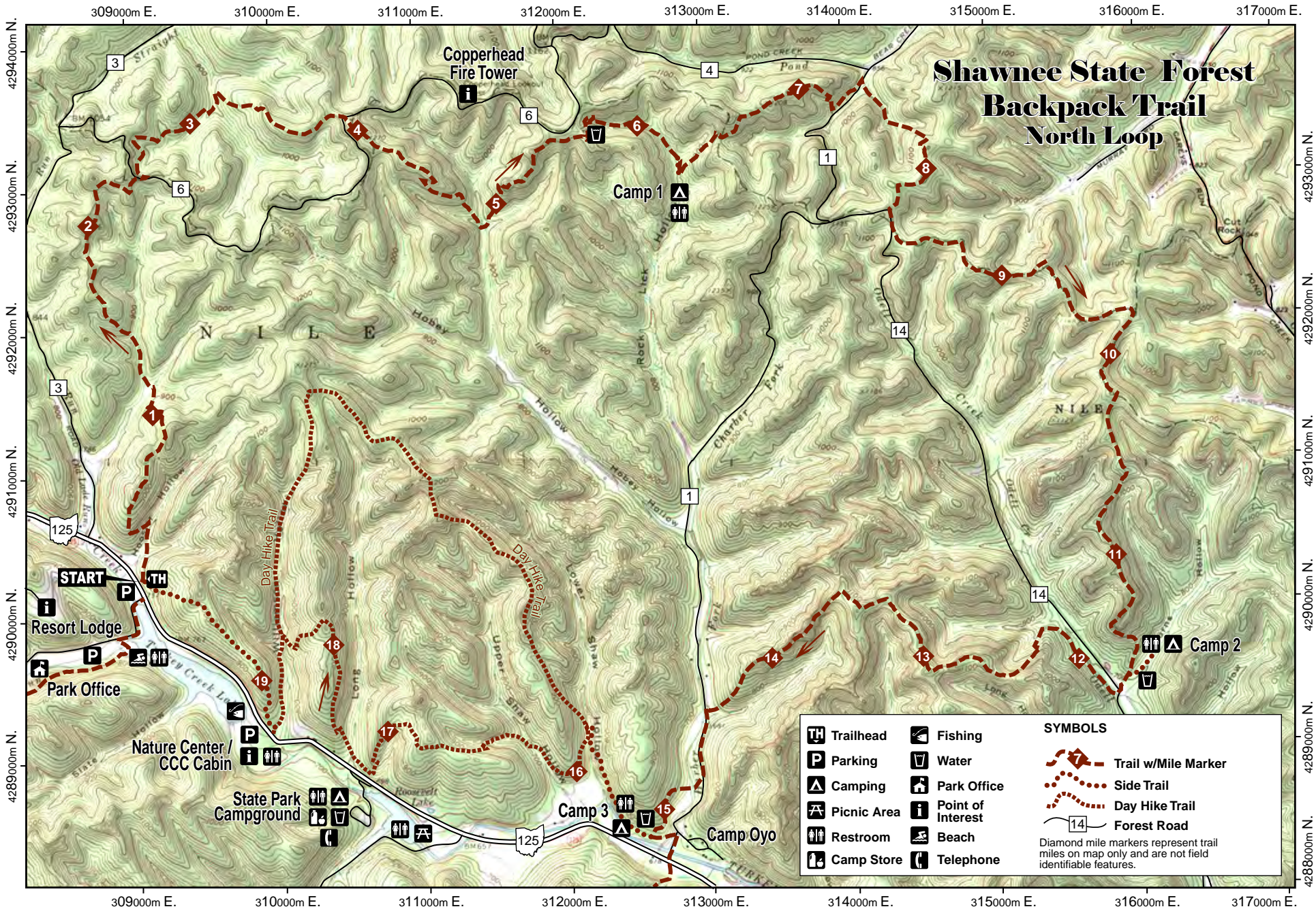
Shawnee State Forest has a dedicated day hike trail. The blue-blazed day hike trail is a 7.2-mile loop trail located within the confines of the much larger Shawnee Backpack Trail north loop. The day hike trail covers similar terrain as the backpack trail and offers the opportunity for day hikers to experience the same solitude backpackers experience on the backpack trail. Trailhead parking is located on south side State Route 125 in the state park on the south end of Turkey Creek Lake. This is also a parking area for a boat ramp and the location of the Turkey Creek Nature Center. The official trailhead is located on the north side of SR 125. The south one-third of the day hike trail is shared with the backpack trail's cutoff side trail.



Using a combination of forest roads and sections of the backpack trail, a myriad of day hike opportunities of varying length can be created with a little navigation and map reading skill. In general, it is safe to park along forest roads during daylight hours. A naturalist on staff at the state park regularly leads day hikes on segments of the backpack trail, typically the north loop between road intersections. Shuttles are provided. Check with the state park office for more information.

The most popular day hike in the forest away from the state park and the dedicated 7.2-mile day hike trail takes place in the Shawnee Wilderness Area using the wilderness side trail. Day hikers access the wilderness side trail from Upper Twin Creek Road (CR 96) at one of two locations where the trail crosses it. These intersections are separated by a distance of 1.3 miles. Small turnouts alongside the road at each intersection allow trail users to safely park their vehicles off the road. A nice loop hike of almost 6.0 miles into the wilderness area is created by the combination of road and trail.

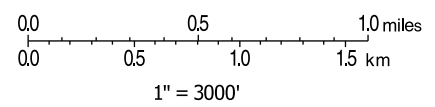
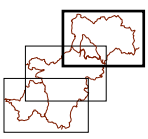
In the wilderness area, Vastine and Cabbage Patch Hollows offer other areas of interest to explore. They are not accessed using the wilderness side trail, but rather from Lower Twin Creek Road—the wilderness area's western boundary. These hollows harbor remains of extensive quarry operations conducted from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s. In Vastine Hollow, hikers can follow the remains of an old tram road that was used to haul giant blocks of sandstone to the Ohio River. Many of these stone monoliths were used for building construction in Cincinnati during the 1800s. Stones from Vastine Hollow were used in the construction of Cincinnati's landmark Roebling Suspension Bridge across the Ohio River in 1866.



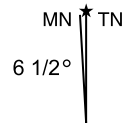
SYMBOLS			
		Diamond mile markers represent trail miles on map only and are not field identifiable features.	

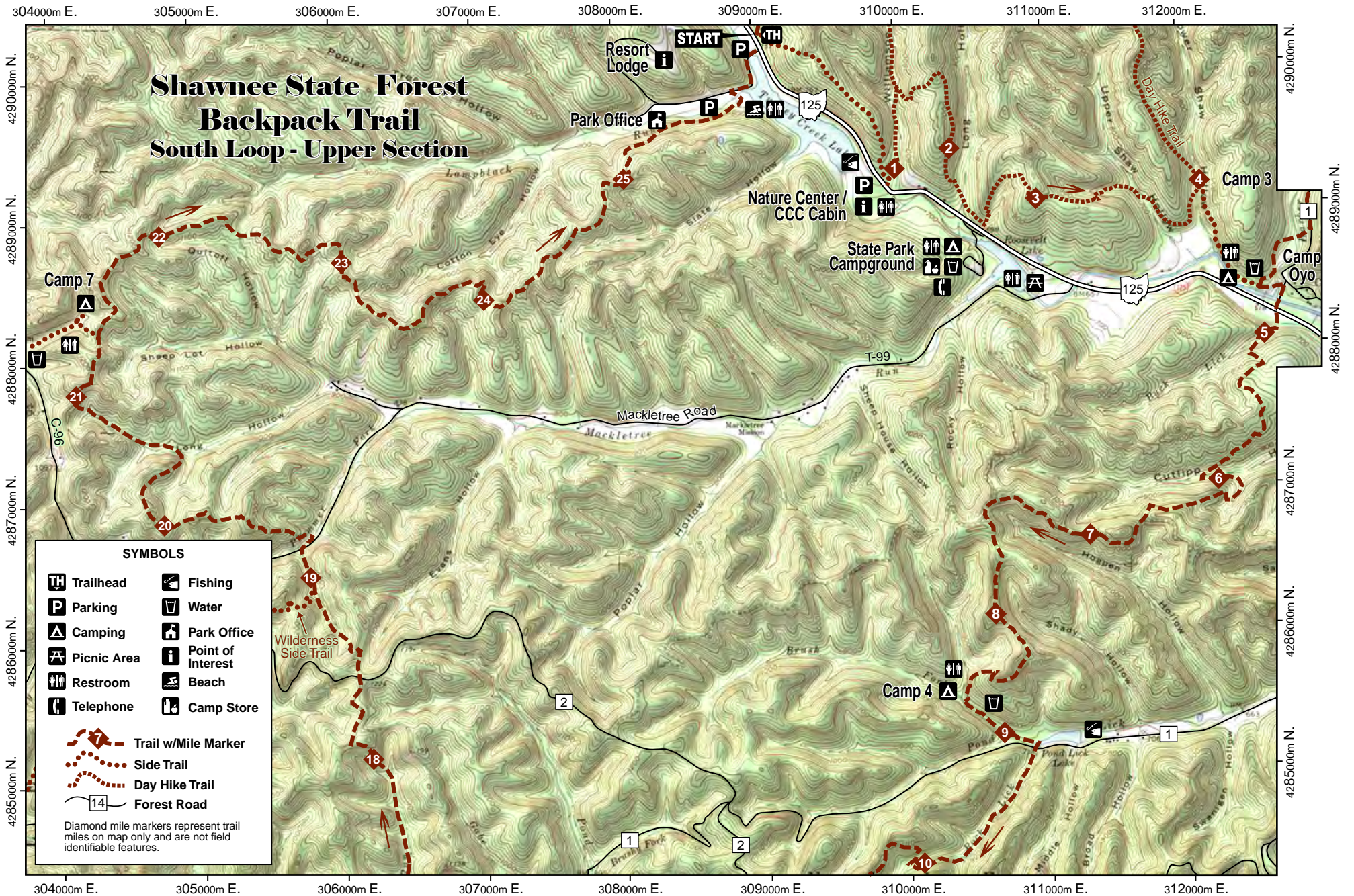


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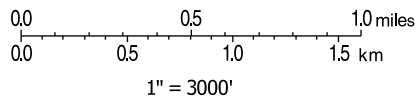
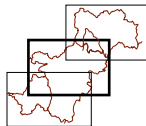


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contour interval 20'



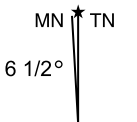


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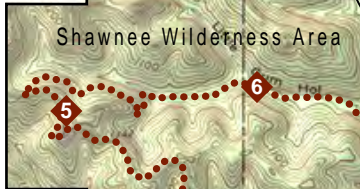


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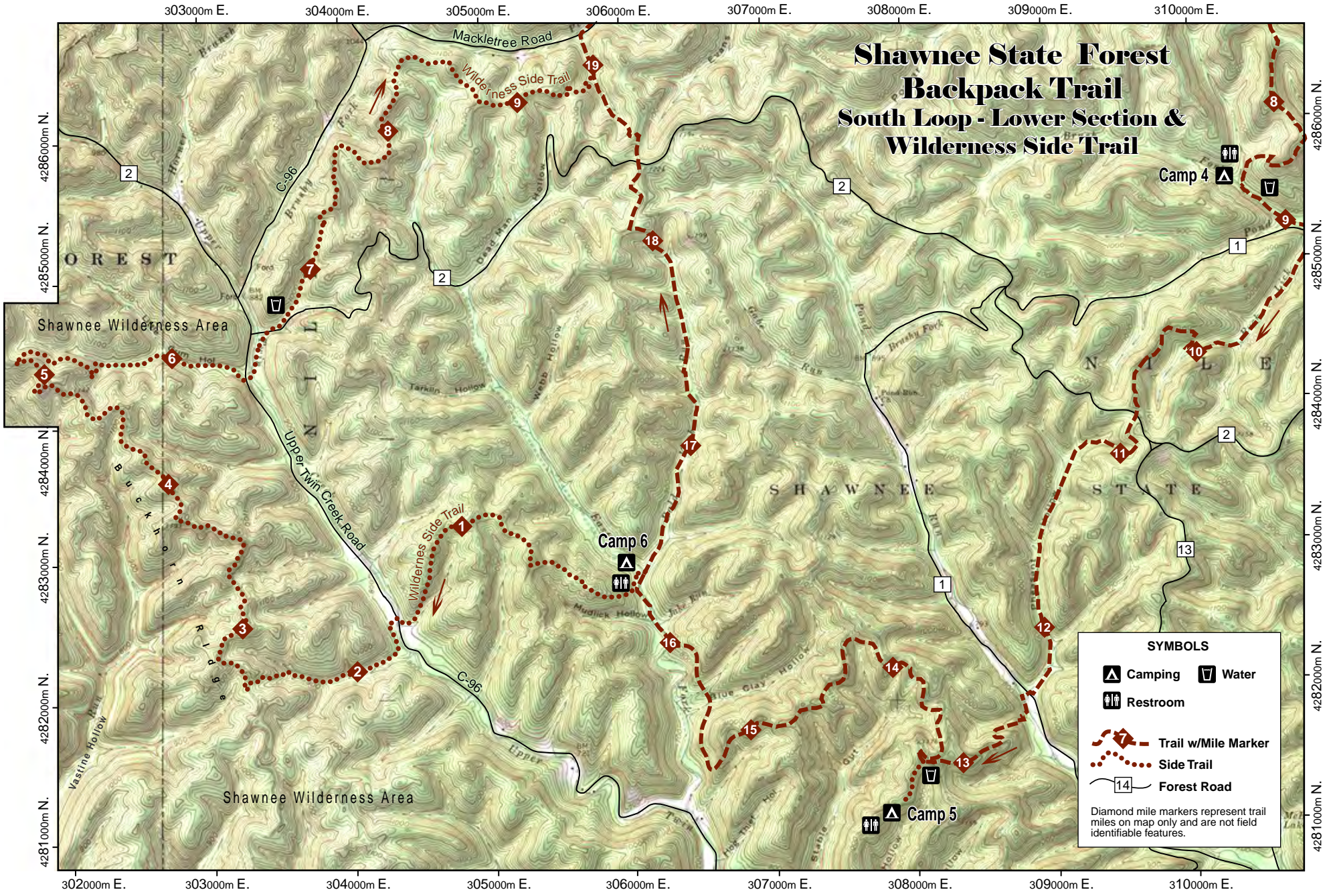
# Shawnee State Forest Backpack Trail South Loop - Lower Section & Wilderness Side Trail



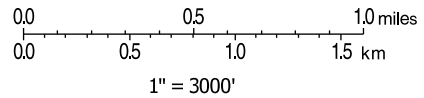
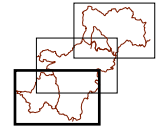
**SYMBOLS**

- Camping
- Water
- Restroom
- Trail w/Mile Marker
- Side Trail
- Forest Road

Diamond mile markers represent trail miles on map only and are not field identifiable features.



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

