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# Tar Hollow State Forest - Logan Trail

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# Tar Hollow State Forest - Logan Trail

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**County:** Ross, Hocking, Vinton

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**Nearest town:** Adelphi/Laurelville

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**Total distance:** 8.9-mile north loop, 8.4-mile south loop with optional 1.0-mile out-and-back side trail to Camp Dulen

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**Hiking time:** Approximately 4 to 6 hours for each loop, or 2 days for overnight

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**Trail conditions:** Well established and blazed (except through recent timber harvests)

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**Blazes:** Red

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**Water:** Available in Tar Hollow State Park; numerous streams throughout forest

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**Highlights:** Seclusion, spring wildflowers and morel mushrooms, Brush Ridge Fire Tower

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**Maps:** USGS 7.5': Hallsville, Laurelville, Londonderry & Ratclifburg; ODNR Div. of Forestry Tar Hollow State Forest map; BackpackOhio.com eTrailsOhio

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**Contact info:** Tar Hollow State Forest, phone: 740-663-2538; Tar Hollow State Park, 16396 Tar Hollow Road, Laurelville, Ohio 43135, phone: 740-887-4818

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**Internet:** [www.ohiodnr.com](http://www.ohiodnr.com) & [www.bright.net/~thollow](http://www.bright.net/~thollow)

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**Getting there:** Take State Route 327 south from Adelphi, Ohio for 7.5 miles to the park entrance on the right side of the road. The parking lot for the trailhead is located about 1.3 miles inside the park on the left, below Pine Lake. If starting or camping at the Brush Ridge Fire Tower, continue past Pine Lake and follow signs to the fire tower, which is located on Forest Road 3.

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**Trailhead coordinates:** Pine Lake Dam - 39.3842°N, 82.7476°W (WGS84); UTM 17 349474E, 4360652N (NAD27); UTM 17 349488E, 4360868N (NAD83)

## Background

Tar Hollow State Forest is Ohio's third largest state forest, encompassing just over 16,000 acres where Ross, Hocking and Vinton counties meet. It is the closest backpacking destination to the Columbus area. Like many other state forests, a state park lies in the middle of it. Tar Hollow State Park is not as developed as some of Ohio's other state parks, but does offer camping, picnic shelters, a 15-acre lake for fishing and swimming and a general store. Often overlooked by vacationers in favor of the nearby popular Hocking Hills, Tar Hollow State Park and Forest are a real treat for those seeking a destination small in crowds and big on nature.

The region's name is derived from pine tar extracted by hill folks from native pine trees and processed into ointments, elixirs and lubricants for wagon wheels and farm equipment. In the 1930s, residents of the Tar Hollow region were relocated to more fertile lands in the surrounding countryside under a program called the Ross-Hocking Land Utilization Project. This Roosevelt New Deal program allowed for the government purchase of Tar Hollow's worked over and denuded hills for conservation and recreation opportunities. In the same decade, the Civilian Conservation Corps created Pine Lake, planted trees and constructed many miles of roads.

Tar Hollow's wooded ridges rise from the fertile and flatter glaciated plateau, literally a distance of two miles north of the forest's northern boundary. The obvious demarcation in the landscape indicates where the glaciers ended their southerly advance. A few of Tar Hollow's highest points reach elevations 500 feet higher than the farms to the north of the glacial boundary, but on average, elevation relief in the forest is in the 300 to 400-foot range. Brush Ridge forms the picturesque spine of the northern section of the forest and is traversed by a forest road with several scenic picnic locations and a refurbished fire tower along the way.

Oak and hickory trees dominate the dry, sandy ridgetops of the area, while sycamore, willow, maple and even buckeye trees reside in stream valleys. The forest not only supports a variety of impressive hardwoods but also contains a myriad of fern, moss, mushroom and wildflower species. The forest is a popular hunting ground for the prized morel mushroom in April. Tar Hollow's undisturbed forests harbor a wide variety of reptiles and amphibians,

game birds, songbirds and mammals. The timber rattlesnake is holding its own in the forest. Bobcats are known to frequent the area and wild boars have been spotted as well.

In April 2010, a 355-acre forest fire burned a scenic section of forest along a popular section of the Logan Trail's north loop between Pine Lake and the Brush Ridge Fire Tower. Fuel for the fire came mostly from leaf and branch litter lying on the ground. Most ground and low level vegetation was completely burned, but is already beginning to reestablish the area. Trees suffered burned and blackened trunks, with a few not surviving the intense flames. Effects of the fire will be noticeable for years to come.

## The Trail

The Logan Trail, named for the famous Chief Logan of the Mingo Indian Tribe, is laid out in a distorted figure eight pattern with its north and south loops meeting at the Brush Ridge Fire Tower, plus a short side trail to a backpack camp for Boy Scouts named Camp Dulen. Two main points for starting a hike on the Logan Trail include what is considered the main trailhead beginning at the parking lot below the dam at Pine Lake in the state park or the Brush Ridge Fire Tower on Forest Road 3. The point you decide to start your hike from will depend on whether or not you are day hiking, which loop you are hiking and where you are camping.

The Logan Trail was originally designed and constructed in 1965 by Boy Scout Troop 195 in Columbus, Ohio, and is still maintained by them today. The trail is divided into several named sections. It is not always obvious when you cross a boundary from one section to the next, and, quite frankly, it is irrelevant as the trail is continuous and characteristically unchanged from one section to the next. The Buckeye Trail intersects the Logan Trail and even runs coincident with it for a short distance between the fire tower and Pine Lake.

The Logan Trail stays almost entirely under the canopy of the forest. The trail visits sections of forest ranging from freshly harvested to mature growth. Many large oak, beech and tuliptree are passed along the way; pitch and shortleaf pine are encountered on drier ridgetops. The size of the forest and comparatively little use away from the state park means solitude is easy to find. Hike the trail during the week in the off-season and you will find out what it feels like to have 16,000 acres all to yourself.

The Logan Trail's profile can be characterized as a series of long, flat sections alternating between ridgetops and hollows, with steep ascents or descents in between. Almost no switchbacks were utilized in trail construction, so expect eroded, slippery and rocky sections of trail on the slopes. Six major ascents with elevation gains of nearly 300 feet or more will be encountered along the trail's length, plus an additional one if you visit Camp Dulen. Stream crossings are frequent in the hollows but are typically small and easy to cross without getting wet. Most streams go dry during extended periods of low rainfall. Ridgetops offer pleasant walking, and in winter provide nice vistas of the surrounding hills--through the trees of course.

The entire trail is adequately blazed with red paint, and in some spots marked with wooden or metal signs. You should see a blaze about every 100 to 150 feet with only a couple of exceptions (see the Trail Notes and Mileage section for each loop). Generally speaking, the Logan Trail is easy to follow, but you can still find yourself astray on an unofficial path, game trail or old logging track, so always keep looking ahead for the next blaze. Along the trail you will see paint markings of other colors indicating forest boundaries (yellow), boundaries of timber harvest areas (blue) and closed trails (black). You may also encounter darker red, cracked paint blazes marking old sections of the Logan Trail. Although not frequent, they can cause confusion. These old blazes usually disappear after a few hundred yards.

The Logan Trail is marked for hiking in a counterclockwise direction only. Although you will notice some blazes marking the trail in the opposite direction, their presence is sporadic and infrequent. The main trail crosses several paved forest roads, as well as old roads and logging roads. These intersections generally do not pose navigational problems. Points of possible confusion are documented in the Trail Notes and Mileage section for each loop.



Entrance to the backpack camp

Backpack camping in Tar Hollow State Forest is restricted to a five-site camping area at the Brush Ridge Fire Tower. Although in a remote part of the forest the camp is located near Forest Road 3, but the area is generally peaceful. The campsites are managed by the state park so registration and payment is required before use. Both can be completed at the general store on the north side of Pine Lake in the state park, even in the off-season. As of this writing, the camping fee is \$4 per night. The backpack campsites are located about 400 feet south of the fire tower on a separate side trail. Campsites are numbered 120–124. Site 124 is the most desirable. Sites 120 and 121 are not level. Each site contains a picnic table and fire ring. Pit latrines are located nearby at the base of the fire tower. Water can be collected in the state park, cached in advance or collected at the Sheep Pasture picnic shelter 1.5 miles north of the

backpack camp on Forest Road 3. Water in the state park is kept on through deer gun season, but shut off after that, and kept off until April 1<sup>st</sup>. In the off-season, water can be collected at the state park office located on the main park entrance road (Forest Road 10). Overnight parking is permitted at the fire tower.

The configuration of the Logan Trail and its proximity to roads, along with the location of the backpack camp near FR 3, presents the option of base camping or car camping at the fire tower backpack camp, thus avoiding the extra weight of a full pack along the trail. Your true backpacking experience is restricted at Tar Hollow by policy, forcing you to camp near a road, and even your car if you choose. For many, this will be reason—or temptation--to leave the heavy backpack at home in favor of making this trip a primitive car camping experience. By vehicle, water and supplies (in-season availability) are just a few minutes away in Tar Hollow State Park. A true test of your devotion to backpacking will be based on your decision to either lug your weighted pack from the Pine Lake trailhead to the fire tower camp or to throw your gear in your vehicle's trunk and conveniently drive there.

### **North Loop**

The Pine Lake trailhead provides the closest access to the north loop from the park entrance. Park your vehicle here if you are day hiking the loop or backpacking to the fire tower camp. Fire tower car campers can park here if hiking the loop before driving up to camp. Water can be collected at the state park campground or the Sheep Pasture picnic shelter, or supplies at the seasonal general store on the drive up to the fire tower after your hike. You'll pass these locations on your way. Backpackers and day hikers can also collect water at the state park before hitting the trail or as they pass the campground around the 1.5-mile point on the trail.

The distance of the north loop measures just less than 9 miles. Many other references you may read state a mileage closer to 12 miles. This discrepancy in miles makes a big difference in planning, plus its actual length brings this loop into the range of a reasonable day hike for many.

The north loop starts at the southeast corner of the parking lot below the dam holding back Pine Lake. The trail starts out on a gravel path for approximately the first 50 feet before turning left at a tree with a red arrow on it. This is also the start of the multi-use Homestead Trail. A sign for that trail may be noted. After 400 feet, the Logan Trail crosses the main park entrance road (Forest Road 10) and goes uphill. Watch for a trail sign as you cross the road. After 0.25 mile, you'll begin your first of four major uphill climbs on this loop.

Near the 1.2-mile mark, the trail will descend and you'll walk within close proximity to Tar Hollow State Park and its facilities for approximately the next 0.75 mile. At the north end of the state park you'll head up a hollow and into the state forest. The trail crosses Forest Road 4 in 0.75 mile past the last signs of the park, and Forest Road 16 farther down the trail.

At the 4.5-mile mark, the trail enters a 2007 timber harvest. The trail continues through this area for nearly the next 1.0 mile. Although the trail has been reestablished through the harvest area, the absence of a dense forest canopy has allowed for thick undergrowth to flourish. The going could be tough here at the peak of seasonal growth.

After passing through the harvest area, the trail descends into Slickaway Hollow, losing approximately 300 feet in elevation in 0.25 mile. The trail stays in Slickaway Hollow for only a short time before following a wide, flat unnamed hollow branching in a southeasterly direction from Slickaway Hollow. The trail stays in these two hollows for over 1.0 mile and is perhaps the nicest section of the north loop. Fall colors are spectacular here.

At 7.0 miles, you will enter a section of trail shared with the south loop. A sign will point you left for the north loop and right for the south. You'll go left and walk this shared section of trail for just under 0.5 mile to the Brush Ridge Fire Tower. If you are backpacking and plan on camping at the fire tower, your day's hike will end at the fire tower. Day hikers and car campers parked at the Pine Lake trailhead will have another 1.4 miles remaining to complete the hike.

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

**0.0** The trail starts at the southeast corner of a parking area below the dam and follows a gravel path for approximately 50 feet before turning left at a tree with a red arrow on it. A blue sign marking the multi-use Homestead Trail, which begins here as well, may be noted. After 400 feet, the Logan Trail crosses the main park entrance road.

**1.1** Enjoy this section of walking along a narrow ridge through large oaks. In winter, this is a nice perch for surveying the surrounding hills.

**1.3** The trail crosses a stream, first traveling in the streambed for approximately 20 yards. Trail markers are sparse here.

**1.5** This section of trail is on a hill just above Tar Hollow State Park's campground and picnic areas.

**1.7** The trail descends a hill near a small number of campsites then makes a sharp right turn. In a few yards, the trail makes a left turn and crosses a stream. An unofficial trail intersects the main trail from the left.

**1.9** Leave the last signs of the state park and reenter the forest. Just past a stream crossing, a state park trail joins from the left. The Logan Trail continues to the right.

**2.1** Just past another stream crossing, a state park trail will again join from the left. The Logan Trail continues to the right.



Parking area below Pine Lake Dam

**2.8** Cross Forest Road 4 (North Ridge Road). The trail continues across the road, offset to the left about 30 feet.

Watch for a metal arrow on a tree and a sign approximately 20 yards down the trail with yellow lettering reading "Logan Trail" and the number "3", indicating you are entering the third named section of trail.

**2.9** The trail emerges onto a logging road. Turn to the left.

**3.0** Pass a small pond on the left. At 300 feet past the pond, the trail will fork left from the logging road and start to descend.

**3.5** Notice how young trees are reclaiming a 2001 clear-cut on the right.

**3.9** Watch for a large red arrow on beech tree pointing to the left and uphill. A faint trail going straight is noticeable but should not be followed. A horse pasture on private land can be seen in the valley straight ahead.

**4.0** Take note of the large beech and oak trees.

**4.1** Forest Road 16 comes into view downslope to the right.

**4.25** Cross Forest Road 16. Cross a wide stream just a few paces past the road. Several large trees have been blown down across the trail and stream here. Arrows painted on trees will help guide you.

**4.3** Encounter a sharp left turn in the trail, avoid going straight on an unofficial trail.

**4.4** Turn left and ascend steeply to a ridgeline. A vista to the north in winter reveals farms in the flatter glaciated plateau.

**4.5** Enter a 2007 timber harvest. The trail may be overgrown for the next 1.0 mile.

**5.2** The trail exits a logging road to the right between two trees, watch for a 4 x 4 post reading "Logan".

**5.7** Exit the timber harvest area. After several hundred yards the trail descends into Slickaway Hollow.

**7.0** Arrive at a sign indicating an intersection of the north and south loops. The north loop continues to the left. Watch for blazes as the trail crosses an old road just past the sign.

**7.4** Arrive at the Brush Ridge Fire Tower and backpack campground. The north loop trail continues just past the fire tower, watch for signs. The first 0.7 mile of trail past the fire tower is coincident with the Buckeye Trail and the North Country Trail. This last remaining section of the north loop is also named the Brush Ridge Trail. Much of the forest between the fire tower and Pine Lake was burned in a 2010 forest fire.

**7.9** A trail to a resident camp area forks to the left.

**8.1** The Buckeye Trail forks to the right.

**8.8** The trail enters a utility right-of-way and follows it to the left for 20 yards. It then forks right and crosses a waterline swath.

**8.9** Arrive at the Pine Lake Dam spillway. A bridge will carry you across the spillway and onto an earthen dam within sight of the parking lot.

## South Loop



**Brush Ridge Fire Tower**

The 8.4-mile south loop of the Logan Trail winds through hollows and over ridges in the more secluded central section of Tar Hollow State Forest, away from the state park and most signs of human impact, other than three road crossings and a power line. Unfortunately, timber harvesting activities have increased along many sections of the south loop in recent years and have negatively impacted the scenic qualities of this loop. In 2010, many sections of the south loop not already following logging roads were bulldozed. The dozing occurs at several year intervals and has been adopted as the Division of Forestry's method of trail maintenance.

The most logical start/end point for this loop is at the Brush Ridge Fire Tower. Starting at the Pine Lake Dam trailhead would add a 1.4-mile uphill hike, with an elevation gain of 350 feet, just to reach the south loop, plus another 1.4 miles back down after completing it, for a total distance of just over 11 miles.

Like the north loop, the south loop is also blazed in a counterclockwise direction. A sign just across Forest Road 3 from the fire tower will start you on your way. The first 0.4 mile of the trail are shared with the north loop. At 0.15 mile, the trail will make a sharp right turn down a short but steep slope to the bottom of a ravine. A sign is hanging about eight feet high in a tree downslope.

If you are not careful here, you can easily miss this right turn and continue straight, going downhill and into a hollow on a section of old, non-maintained

trail also blazed in red. In 0.8 mile, this old trail will pass an iron gate and emerge onto Forest Road 1. If you find yourself here, turn right on FR 1 and walk 0.4 mile, watching for an old 4 x 4 post marking the trail, which takes off to the left and immediately crosses a stream.

If you are successful in staying on the main trail during the first few tenths, at 0.4 mile you'll arrive at a fork where the north and south loops separate. A sign marking the breakaway point is better positioned for hikers coming down the north loop and is somewhat difficult to see from the south loop. An old logging road also passes right through this intersection and is used by the south loop to the west of this split. From here, special attention is needed for next 0.75 mile as the trail follows a series of logging roads in the middle of a network of logging roads seemingly

on every ridgeline. In fact, along the balance of the south loop, your attentiveness to the trail's course should not be allowed to wane as abrupt turns and sections of questionable trail location persist. All possible points of misdirection are covered in the South Loop Trail Notes and Mileage section below.

At the 4.5-mile point, a marked side trail heading downhill to Camp Dulen takes off to the right. Should you choose to visit Dulen, this 1.0-mile out-and-back side trail will add two miles—plus an additional 300-foot elevation gain--to your trip. An east leg of the Dulen side trail eliminated the need to backtrack in the past, but is now closed.

Camp Dulen is a secluded camping area, including a latrine, reserved for Boy Scout backpack outings and is not available for use by the general backpacking public. It is, however, open to day hikers and provides a convenient stopping point for lunch or a snack. In late 2007, clear-cutting of a hill immediately south of camp, and along the side trail before camp and in the hollow past camp, has negatively impacted the scenic and natural qualities of this once pleasant destination. It is a true shame that the Division of Forestry does not consider how the user experience will be impacted when planning and conducting timber harvesting activities.

The 1.5-mile long section of path from the Camp Dulen side trail to Forest Road 2 offers some nice ridge walking, despite an encounter with an overhead power line. The largest stream crossing along the entire length of the Logan Trail system occurs at the 6.1-mile mark, adjacent to Forest Road 2 in Clark Hollow. Although the stream is only a few feet wide, during periods of high runoff the current can be swift and difficult to ford without getting wet boots. To avoid an upcoming section of trail impacted, and then poorly reestablished, by yet another timber harvest, consider taking a left on Forest Road 2 for 0.15 mile to a gravel road on the right. Walk up the gravel road and in approximately 0.4 mile the official trail will join this road from the right. From here, 1.6 miles and a nasty 350-foot climb separate you from the end of the loop at the fire tower.

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

**0.0** The trail starts due west of the Brush Ridge Fire Tower, just across Forest Road 3. Watch for a sign.

**0.15** The official trail makes a sharp right turn and drops steeply into a ravine. Watch for a sign several feet up in a tree. An old, non-maintained connector trail, also blazed red, goes straight and drops into a hollow. In 0.8 mile, the old connector trail will emerge onto Forest Road 1. If you find yourself here, go right on this road for 0.4 mile and rejoin the main trail off to the left side of the road by an old 4 x 4 post marking the trail.

**0.4** The south and north loop trails separate. A sign marks the split but is difficult to see for south loop hikers. The south loop continues westerly on a portion of an old logging road passing through the vicinity of the split.

**0.8** The trail forks right from a logging road. Watch for a red blaze on a tree 30 feet ahead. In 100 yards, the trail will fork sharply to the left onto another logging road. Seasonal growth in summer can make route finding difficult here.

**1.1** The trail forks sharply to the left from a logging road. Watch for blazes to the left.

**1.9** In Butcher Hollow, the trail forks left from an old logging road and crosses a stream. Watch for arrows on a tree.

**2.2** The trail crosses a logging road and travels just below a timber harvest to the left. The trail can be difficult to follow in places

**2.5** The trail emerges onto Forest Road 1, walk left on the road for 100 yards and watch on the right for an old 4 x 4 post marking the trail. Immediately cross a stream after exiting the road.

**2.7** Take a left at three wooden red arrows in front of you.

**3.25** Come to a T intersection at a downed tree. Make a right turn.

**3.3** Arrive at an intersection with a horse trail and turn left. For the next two miles the backpack trail and horse trail share the same path, except for a short upcoming section. Note the white blazes marking the horse trail.

**3.75** Arrive at a wide intersection with an old logging road. Look for a red blaze on a tree at the opposite side of the intersection marking the continuation of the Logan Trail and a separation from the horse trail. From this point, the trail parallels Forest Road 3 for approximately 0.1 mile before crossing it. This short section of trail is rough and overgrown. Optionally, you can stay left at the logging road intersection and continue on the horse trail. The horse trail will cross FR 3 just 100 yards ahead. In approximately 50 yards past FR 3, the horse trail will intersect with the Buckeye Trail. Turn right. You will be walking a section of trail shared by the horse trail and the Buckeye Trail.

**3.9** Cross Forest Road 3. A sign on the opposite side of the road will guide you.

**4.0** Merge into a section of trail shared by a horse trail and the Buckeye Trail.

**4.1** Emerge onto Forest Road 3 again. Walk to the left on an old road uphill past an iron gate. The Buckeye Trail forks to the right, taking a more southerly route parallel to the road.

**4.5** Arrive at a junction with a side trail leading steeply downhill to Camp Dulen.

**4.7** Pass the now closed east leg of the Camp Dulen side trail.

**5.1** Pass by an overhead power line and cleared right-of-way.

**5.2** The Logan Trail makes a sharp downhill left turn just before traveling under the overhead power line. Watch for a "No Horses" sign with a red blaze painted on its metal post. The horse trail continues straight from this point, traveling under the power line.

**5.6** Take a left at a large red arrow painted on a dead tree. Do not continue straight under the power line.

**6.1** Arrive at a stream crossing and Forest Road 2 in Clark Hollow. The trail continues straight across the road. Watch for a red Logan Trail sign mounted 10 feet high in tree.

**6.4** Enter an area of a selective timber harvest. The trail can be hard to follow in places, but generally stays on the hillside just above the bottom of the hollow.

**6.75** Reach an old road in a branch of Clark Hollow.

**7.25** The trail leaves the old road and continues straight. Just past this point the trail crosses the confluence of two streams and continues on a peninsula of land between the streams before heading steeply uphill to the fire tower.

**8.3** The trail intersects the section of the north loop leading to Pine Lake. Go left.

**8.4** Arrive at the Brush Ridge Fire Tower.

## Day Hikes

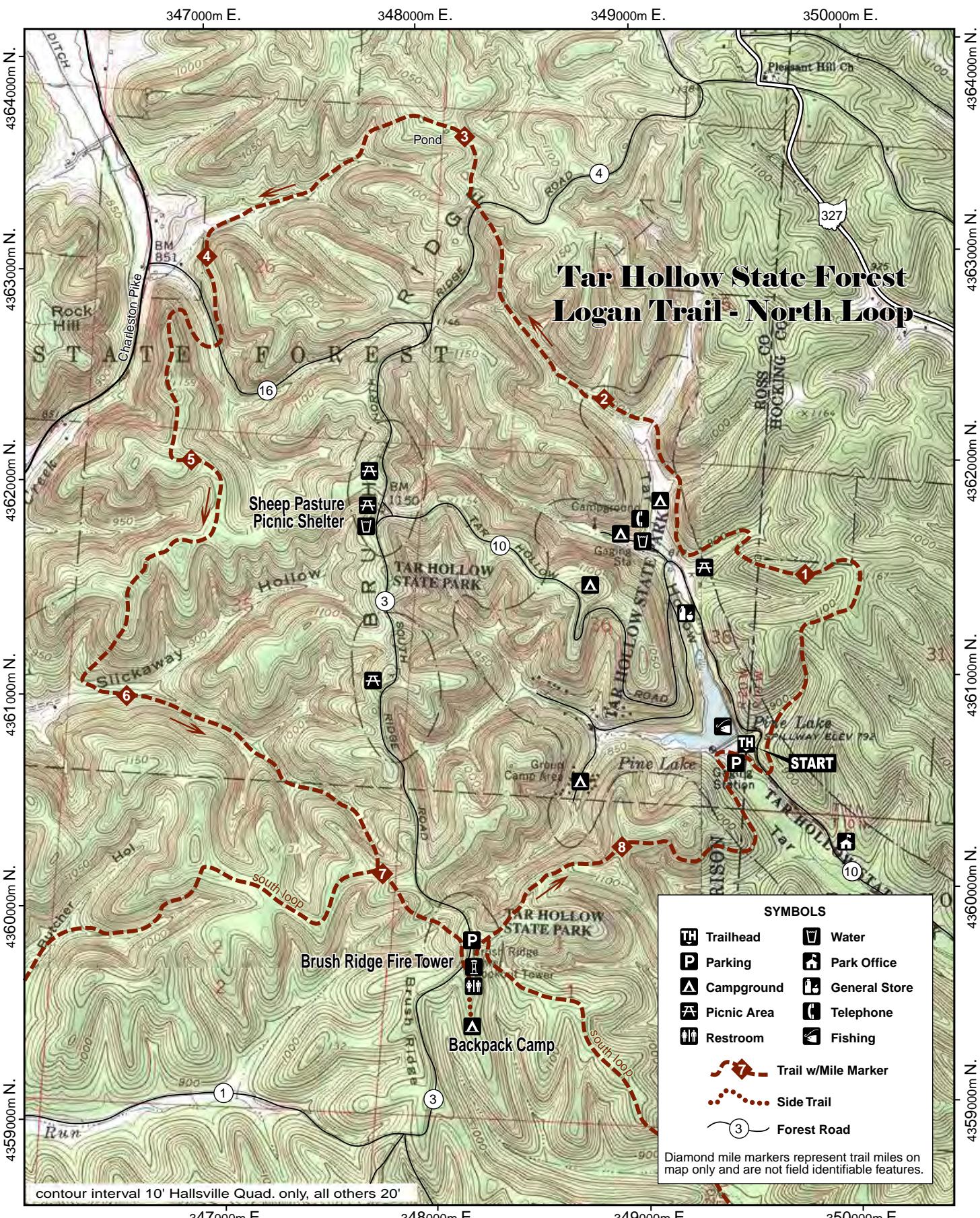
For the fit hiker, either the north or south loop is an attainable day hike. In combination with forest roads, which are crossed by the Logan Trail not less than one-half dozen times, a variety of day hikes of variable length and difficulty can be created out of the network of path and pavement. One of the most popular shorter hikes in Tar Hollow is the 3.0-mile round-trip walk between Pine Lake and the Brush Ridge Fire Tower, also known as the Brush Ridge Trail. This is a scenic hike but contains an elevation change of over 350 feet, which you'll climb either sooner or later depending on your starting point.

The quickest trip to Camp Dulen can be made by parking at a pullout near an iron gate on Forest Road 3, approximately 1.6 miles south of the fire tower, or at the 4.1-mile point on the south loop (see South Loop Trail Notes and Mileage and map). Be mindful of not blocking the gate. The round-trip distance to Dulen is just less than 3.0 miles from this point.

Parking along forest roads is permitted as long as access to service roads and trails is not blocked. This freedom provides day hikers the flexibility to choose a start/end point other than the trailhead at Pine Lake or the fire tower. In general, your vehicle will be safe during daylight hours.



South loop vista



Base map created with TOPO!  
© National Geographic Maps

0.0 0.5 1.0 miles  
0.0 0.5 1.0 km  
1" = 2000'

1000-Meter UTM 17 Grid  
NAD 27

MN TN  
7°

