

1.

The road you are traveling on is called the Milesburn Road. It, like most of the forest roads on this tour, was built or improved as government work projects by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930’s. Today, most of these roads are open to the public for recreation and as access for fire protection and timber management.

2.

You are now beside the Long Pine Run Reservoir, the largest reservoir in the Michaux State Forest. Covering 150 acres and containing 1.75 billion gallons of water, it was built as a water supply for the Borough of Chambersburg. Clean potable water is probably the most important by-product of the State Forests and is a primary concern of the PA Bureau of Forestry. This reservoir has been stocked by the PA Fish and Boat Commission and now provides some excellent warm water fishing.

3.

Open your window and feel how cool and humid the air has become. You are now in a cove area, exemplified by the abundance of water, rich organic soils and distinctive vegetation. Here you will generally find the largest trees, like tulip poplar, white pine and hemlock, the latter being the official State Tree of Pennsylvania. Rhododendron, with its beautiful pink flowers in the mid-summer, also prefers this area.

4.

Notice how the forest is changing as you gain elevation. This is a transition area between the rich bottomlands you just left and the poor ridge tops. The soil is becoming drier resulting in different types of vegetation. Oaks now make up the dominant tree species along with a scattering of pitch pine. The understory is huckleberry and mountain laurel. Visit the forest in June to enjoy the flowers of the mountain laurel, the Pennsylvania State Flower.

5.

This swath was cut through the forest to provide a path for the power lines above you. Each cable is 2-1/2 inches in diameter and carries 500,000 volts. In addition to supplying energy needs, these power lines have also created some very necessary wildlife openings. To further benefit wildlife, special grasses have been planted to feed game. This is a good location to catch a glimpse of the white tail deer, Pennsylvania’s State Animal.

The high fences on both sides of the road ahead of you are used as deer exclosures. The purpose of these fences is to keep deer out of an area so that vegetation inside has an opportunity to grow without being eaten by deer.

6.

The Dark Hollow Vista is one of several vistas in the Michaux State Forest constructed and maintained for public recreation. This vista derives its name from the valley or hollow between the ridges in the foreground. The steep rocky cliffs on both sides of the narrow entrance to the hollow plus the dense forest growth prevent the sun from penetrating its depth, hence the name, Dark Hollow.

7.

You are now on top of Big Pine Flat Ridge. As a result of very poor, dry soils and harsh weather conditions, the trees are short, gnarled and broken. Only the hardiest can survive the summer droughts and the winter wind, ice and snow. Watch for the many ant hills along the road as you go to the

8.

Notice the white rectangular blazes on the trees in this area. They mark the location of the Appalachian Trail. Beginning on Mt. Katahdin in Maine, the Appalachian Trail stretches southward for over 2,000 miles to Springer Mountain in Georgia. It is one of the longest and best hiking trails in the world. Approximately 40 miles of the trail are located in the Michaux State Forest.

9.

You are entering an area known as Flat Rock, noted for its extensive pine plantation. These pine trees were planted between 1917 and 1919 by the government work programs. These trees were planted to supply wood fiber for the paper industry and ultimately lumber for the construction industry. During the many years they are growing here they will provide wildlife habitat and a place for various recreational pursuits. Eventually these trees will be harvested and others planted in their place.

10.

This is the entrance to the Rocky Knob Trail. The trail is an interpretive loop trail that is approximately 4.23 miles in length. To fully enjoy this trail, it is recommended that a trail guide be obtained from the Michaux State Forest District Office. This is a pleasant hike marked by 12 points of interest and several magnificent vistas.

11.

Big Flat Tower – This Fire Tower is one of several in Michaux State Forest that were erected as an aid to early detection of forest fires. The tower was built in 1921, is 60 feet high and is located 1,060 feet above sea level. Please do not attempt to climb the tower.

12.

The area surrounding you was the scene of a severe forest fire in 1963. Careless people allowed their campfire to spread into the forest resulting in over 600 acres of the Michaux State Forest being laid to waste. Virtually all vegetation was destroyed. The larger, scraggly pitch pines still present were among the few survivors; their blackened trunks still bear mute testimony to the inferno. Immediately after the fire, this areas was planted in white pine but due to severe soil damage from high temperatures their growth will be hindered.

13.

Timber is a renewable resource that can be grown, harvested and regenerated. You are adjacent to an excellent example of a State Forest Timber Sale that was harvested in 2005. The area along Piney Mountain Ridge Road is being managed under the uneven-aged system, where only selected trees have been cut. The result will be that trees of various ages will exist here, from seedlings to mature trees. This provides a pleasing diversity and at the same time maintains a forested corridor along the road for the pleasure of the forest visitor. Directly behind this area is an example of even-aged management where most of the trees were removed. The future trees that grow here will be about the same age. *Stop is not accessible from mid December to Memorial Day.
- next station. They belong to the Alleghany Mound Building Ants. Some mounds have been known to reach 4 feet in height and 20 feet in diameter.
- Research has shown that the most commercially valuable trees, including oak species, require full sunlight and healthy competition from surrounding trees to produce the most valuable timber. The dense stand of small trees also provides excellent wildlife habitat.
14. The Birch Run Reservoir was the older and smaller of the two Chambersburg reservoirs in the Michaux State Forest. Construction was completed in 1934, and the reservoir contained 387 million gallons of water covering 53 acres. The dam was breached in 2005 because of required expensive repairs to the structures. The borough decided to abandon the reservoir rather than repair the dam. In the spring of 2006, the Borough of Chambersburg paid a contractor to plant 13,100 trees of varying species on the dam breast and the steep slopes of the perimeter of the reservoir. Bureau of Forestry personnel and volunteers planted 16,100 seedlings (aspen, red oak, white spruce, tulip poplar, sycamore, and speckled alder) in the reservoir bottom.
- Care for the Land
- State forests belong to all Pennsylvanians. Take time to enjoy them, but know the rules and regulations designed to protect the forests and you. Please be careful with fire, keep our forests litter free and don’t damage trees and other plants.
- Certified “Well Managed”
- Pennsylvania state forests are certified to FSC® standards. The Forest Stewardship Council® is an independent organization supporting environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.
-
- iConservePA
- To learn more about the state’s natural resources and what you can do to help protect and enjoy them, log onto iConservePA.org.
-
- For more information
- Michaux State Forest
Forest District #1
- 10099 Lincoln Way East
Fayetteville, PA 17222
(717) 352-2211
-
- pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES
- Self-Guided Automobile Tour
Michaux State Forest
-
- A Self-Guided Automobile Tour
- Welcome to the Michaux State Forest. This self-guided automobile trail was built by the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) to provide an informative overview of the various programs and points of interest in this State Forest. The forest roads you will be traveling are in good condition but will be slightly rough in places. Drivers should exercise caution during the winter season as the roads are neither plowed nor cindered. So, slow down and enjoy a leisurely 22 mile trip through a small portion of the 86,000 acre Michaux State Forest.
-
- pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

