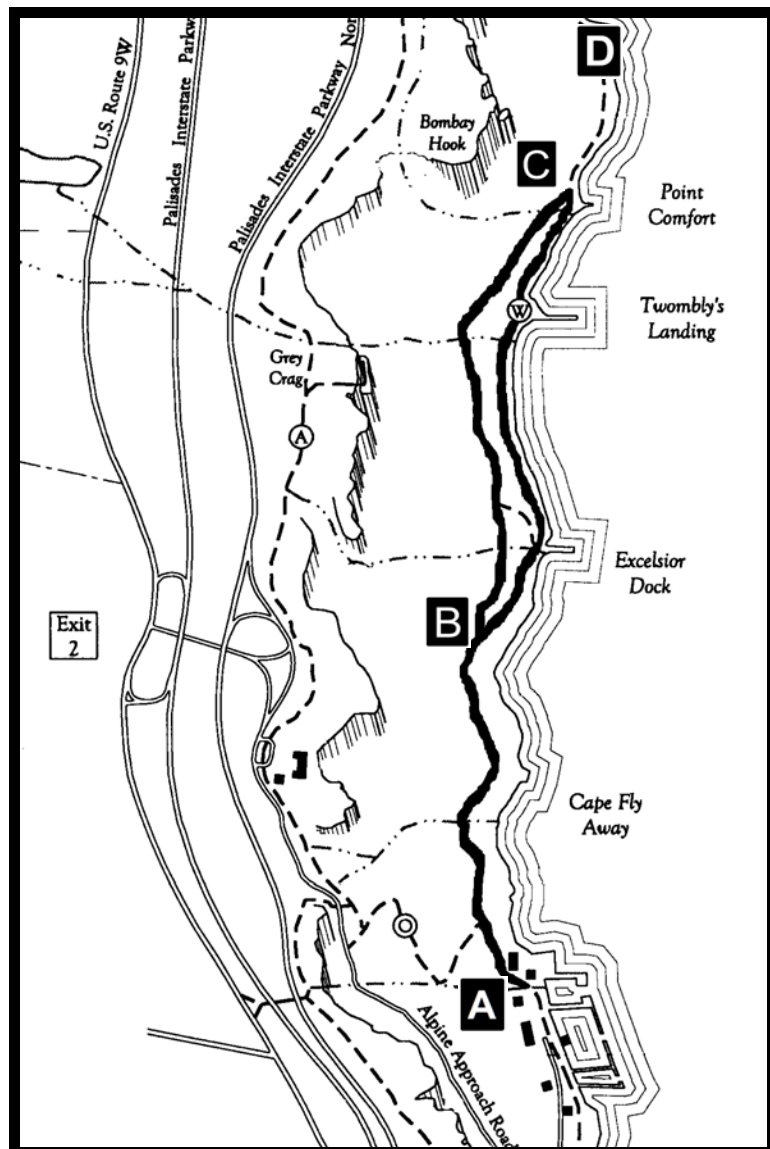


CAPE FLY AWAY

Palisades Interstate Park Commission, NJ Section



Area: Alpine
Length: 3.5 mi. (round-trip distance)
Time: 2 hrs.
Parking: Alpine Boat Basin & Picnic Area

Scale: 1 in. = 1/3 mi.

TIPS FOR HIKERS

- *Always tell someone where you're going and when you expect to be back.* This is just good hiking sense, no matter where you go.
- *Wear sturdy, comfortable shoes that are not brand new.* Ankle support is crucial, especially on the Giant Stairs. Shoes not broken in will likely cause blisters.
- *Take care of your body.* Bring plenty of water (and drink it up as you go). Some basic first aid supplies are always a good idea, too, as are some snacks.
- *Dress or pack for all possible weather conditions predicted for that day.* Layers are the wisest way to dress for the outdoors—you can add or subtract as you go. We also strongly recommend long-sleeved clothing, even in warmer weather. Poison ivy thrives on the Palisades; ticks are common. Long clothing with a spray of repellent at the cuffs is your best defense.
- *Look out for poisonous snakes.* The copperhead snake is relatively common here, if seldom seen. Snakes tend to be shy, so simply watch your step—and don't reach up into stones you cannot see...

CAPE FLY AWAY HIKE DESCRIPTION

This relatively short hike makes a great introduction to Palisades hiking for hikers of all ages.

Begin at the Kearney House at the north end of the Alpine Picnic Area [A]. Head north up the white-blazed Shore Trail behind the Alpine Pavilion. This is the steepest section of your trip, but it soon levels off at the intersection with the orange-blazed Closter Dock Trail. Keep north on the wide Shore Trail, which was originally laid out as a road in the 1840s, called the Cape Road. You will cross a stone-railed bridge by a pretty waterfall, and you may notice a set of stone steps going uphill nearby: these led to a storage bunker for dynamite during the 1930s. You will get to a relatively cleared area with lilies and other non-native growth. This was known as Cape Fly Away, a small fisherman's hamlet in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A pair of stone stairways to old docks on the river frames the Cape Fly Away area, and these are interesting to explore (but be aware of poison ivy growth along the stairways, especially in summer).

About 1 mi. in, the trail splits [B], and arrows painted on a rock will show that to the right, the Shore Trail goes downhill to the river; to the left, an unmarked but very wide and obvious trail is identified as the "Upper Trail," which continues on the same level you are at. Take the Upper Trail, realizing it will rejoin the Shore Trail in just under 1 mi. This is a pretty and easy section of trail, winding its way through a mature hardwood forest growing on the talus slope beneath the cliffs. You will pass through the Excelsior Flats picnic area along the way. (If you keep a sharp eye to the right, some distance after the picnic area you will find the foundation remains of a nineteenth-century "bone factory," where animal bones were ground into bone meal.) The Upper Trail will eventually descend to the river to rejoin the Shore Trail [C].

The more ambitious may want to follow the Shore Trail north about another 0.5 mi. to the cliff-face vistas that begin just beyond Bombay Hook [D], which will add close to an hour to this hike's round-trip time. Otherwise, begin your return south on the Shore Trail. You will in many instances be fewer than a hundred feet from your outbound route, but the change in habitat could not be more dramatic: the mature forest is replaced by a riot of sun-fueled growth along the shoreline (and beware of poison ivy, especially in summer). The trail is also much more narrow here and in places quite rocky. (At low tide, there is some good beach-combing south of the old jetty, called Twombly's Landing, you will pass not long after beginning your return trek.) Eventually, the trail will begin to climb uphill, to return to the split at the Upper Trail. At the base of this hill is a set of stairs leading out to the old Excelsior Dock; another set of stairs leads uphill to the Excelsior Flats picnic area (you can take this route if you'd like to, then return by heading south when you get to the Upper Trail).

Return on the Shore Trail to the Alpine Picnic Area.

Phone: (201) 768-1360

Fax: (201) 767-3842



In case of emergency call Park Police:

(201) 768-6001

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