

Rockwood Hall

Sleepy Hollow • 3.1 miles, 88 acres



Rockwood Hall is small enough that with a special friend and a picnic lunch, you can find a spot in the shade of a sycamore, maple, or weeping beech tree and hide from other visitors. Yet it is so large you can visit many times and still find other interesting spots among the many nooks and crannies. Exotic trees, wide paths, and sweeping views make it an enjoyable place to spend the day.

TRAILS

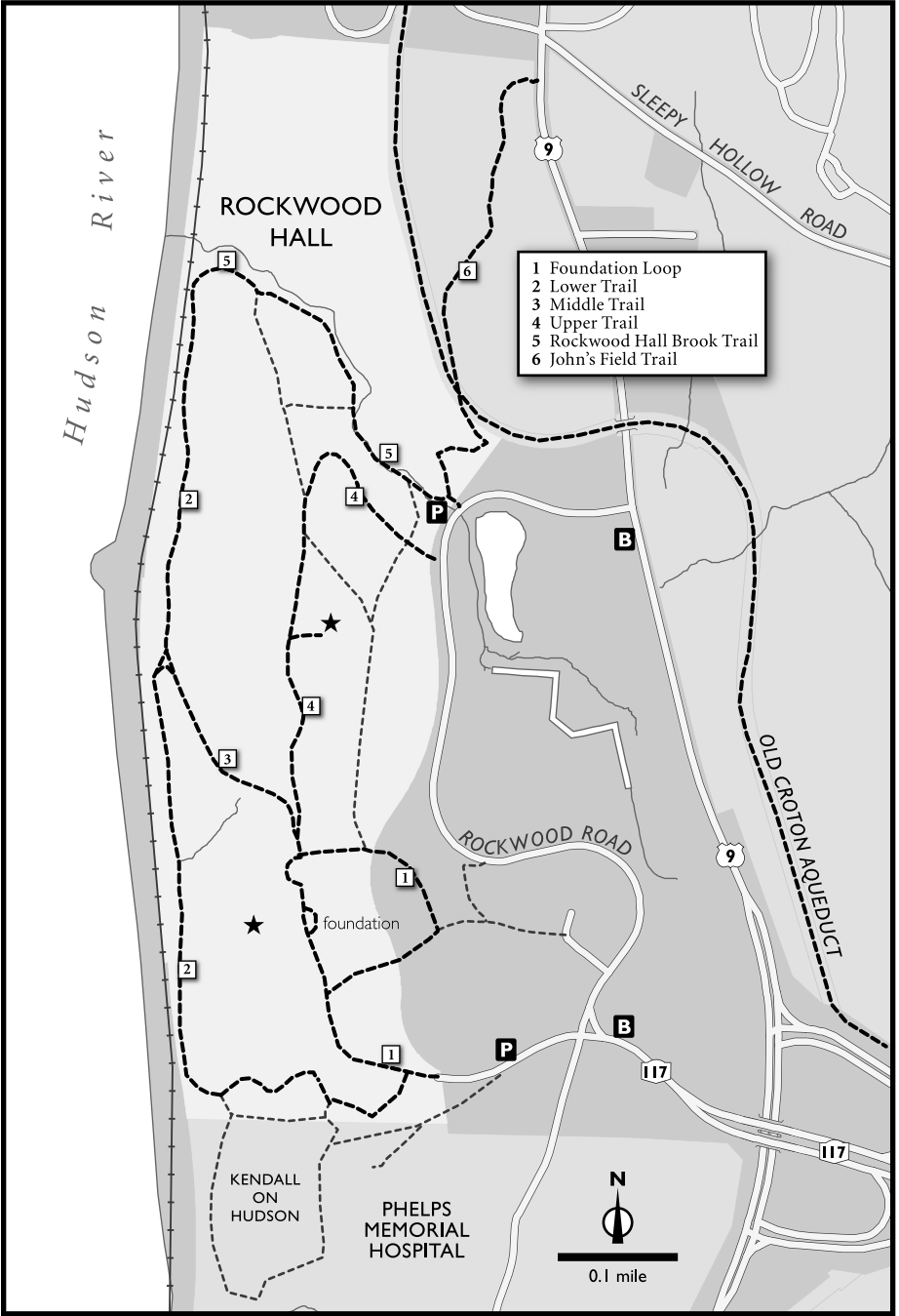
Carriage roads of this former estate circle the property, providing a path which overlooks the Hudson River to the Palisades. Although none of the paths are blazed, navigation is easy and there is something interesting around every corner.



HISTORY OF ROCKWOOD HALL

In 1886, William Rockefeller (1841-1922), brother of John D. Rockefeller, purchased Rockwood, a 200-acre estate overlooking the Hudson, intending it to be his summer home. Accounts vary as to whether he made extensive renovations to the original castle or demolished it to build Rockwood Hall, a 204-room mansion. Frederick Law Olmstead designed the landscape, which includes many unusual ornamental trees. Rockefeller had a carriage road system built. After his death in 1922, his heirs unsuccessfully tried to sell the property to an individual buyer. Eventually, a group purchased the estate and converted it to a country club, which went bankrupt in 1936. A year later, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. bought the estate, leasing the property to a country club, which also was short-lived.

Having no real use for the buildings, Rockefeller had them razed in 1941-1942 and dumped into the Hudson. In 1946, he deeded the property to his son Laurance. IBM purchased 80 acres in 1970 for its world trade center. In the early 1970s, New York State leased the property as a public park for one dollar a year. Laurance Rockefeller underwrote the cost of maintenance. In 1999, he donated the land to the state as part of Rockefeller State Park Preserve. Only the foundation of the mansion and a gatehouse along Route 9 remain of the estate buildings. For more information about Rockwood Hall, click on "properties" at <http://archive.rockefeller.edu/faqs>.





A perfect picnic spot

Thirteen numbered posts are located on Rockwood Hall trails. By calling 914-517-5570 on a cell phone and keying in the number of the post, visitors can learn about the history and landscape of Rockwood Hall.

Foundation Loop

Length: 0.6 mile

Beginning at the end of the parking lot, the Foundation Loop heads uphill. It goes right at a junction where the Lower Trail goes left. Continuing uphill on a surface of paving stones, it passes a massive weeping beech tree to the right at 0.2 mile. Just past the tree, a road which is the return portion of the loop, heads downhill. Straight ahead are the stone walls that once surrounded William Rockefeller's mansion. There are sweeping views over the river. On the opposite side of the mansion's foundation, the Foundation Loop turns right and goes downhill along the paved road. It curves past copper beeches with an expansive lawn behind them. After passing through stonework that once surrounded buildings, the paved path turns to head uphill. Although the mansion is gone, a sense of grandeur that once existed is still present. The Foundation Loop reaches the road near the weeping beech to close the loop.

Lower Trail

Length: 1.0 mile

Beginning near the parking lot at the junction with the Foundation Loop, the Lower Trail heads through a rockcut and passes an entrance to Kendall-on-Hudson. At the bottom of the hill at 0.2 mile, it goes by another entrance and then turns right to parallel the Hudson River with limited views to the Palisades. At 0.6 mile, the Lower Trail passes a junction with the Middle Trail which heads uphill to connect with the Upper Trail. The Lower Trail ends at the Rockwood Hall Brook Trail.

Rockwood Hall Brook Trail

Length: 0.3 mile

At the north end of the park, the Rockwood Hall Brook Trail goes along a gravel road at the edge of the field. It passes the mowed path leading to the Upper Trail and then enters woods. Heading uphill, it parallels Rockwood Hall Brook and goes through several small rhododendron groves. In quick succession, the trail crosses five bridges. It then passes a gravel road to the left which leads 0.1 mile to the Old Croton Aqueduct. The Rockwood Hall Brook Trail ends on a paved road. It is 300 feet farther uphill to parking and the Upper Trail.

Upper Trail

Length: 0.5 mile

From the far side of the foundation of the mansion and off the Foundation Loop, the Upper Trail heads north, almost immediately passing the Middle Trail to the left. Heading uphill on paving stones, it goes through a wooded area which obscures the view. The path becomes gravel when it reaches an open field. It descends with views out over the Hudson River.

The Upper Trail passes a large flat rock outcropping to the right at 0.3 mile. This solid rock platform is just before a mowed path which leads 0.3 mile over the hill and back to the Foundation Loop. To the left 150 feet farther, another mowed path heads downhill for 0.2 mile toward the Rockwood Hall Brook Trail. Both mowed paths offer sweeping views across the Hudson River. The Upper Trail curves to the right, enters the woods, and continues downhill. It ends at a gate on the access road that runs along the border of the property.

CONNECTING TRAIL & NEARBY PARK: Old Croton Aqueduct, Rockefeller State Park Preserve

DRIVING: From the Taconic State Parkway or Route 9A, take Route 117 west to Rockwood Road, where it ends at the parking area. Alternately, from Route 9 just north of Tarrytown and south of the junction with Route 117, take the entrance road to Phelps Memorial Hospital and follow it to the right all the way through the hospital facility and its parking areas, to Rockwood Road. Turn left to park.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION: Take the Metro-North Hudson Line to Scarborough Station. Walk south for 0.3 mile on River Road to Creighton Lane. Turn right and rejoin River Road briefly at the intersection with the Old Croton Aqueduct just before reaching Route 9. Turn right again and head south on the Old Croton Aqueduct for 0.6 mile to Rockwood Hall. Beeline Bus #13 goes to Rockwood Road, just past the parking areas of Phelps Memorial Hospital.

For contact information, see Appendix, Rockefeller State Park Preserve.