

Great Easy Hiking/Walking in Princeton

We all know that Princeton has some great trails. But many of the trails are rocky or steep, and not easy for everyone to navigate. This document lists some of the 'easy walking' areas in town. These have been selected based on three factors:

- Footing: Good surface and lack of rocks in the trail
- Grades: Easy to "easy-moderate" steepness
- Distance

In some cases, we have listed public roads as good walking places, and for roads, traffic volume is also a factor.

Here are our recommendations, both for Princeton and for surrounding towns.

Princeton Walks

1. [Wachusett Meadow Hemlock to Pasture trail \(Easy\)](#): Wachusett Meadow has several easy trails on both the north and south sides. Leaving from the parking lot, the Beaver Brook Trail to the Hemlock Seep Trail and out to the Pasture Trail provides a lot of walking with fairly even grades and few rocks.
2. [Wachusett Meadow Wheelchair-accessible trails \(Easy\)](#): Wachusett Mountain has some short wheelchair accessible trails on the North side of the road through the Crocker House to the Nagle Pavilion.
3. [PLT Peabody Metcalf trails \(Easy-Moderate\)](#): Heading down Rte 62 just past Mirick Road there is a Princeton Land Trust sign and parking lot on the right. Within this area there is a nice 1.5 mile trail loop down to a beaver pond. The grades are easy-moderate and the walking is easy. A spur at the end will take you down to the water's edge.
4. [PLT Bullock and McEvoy Trails \(Easy-Moderate\)](#): Park at the field on the left of Bullock Lane and walk down through the field to a Kiosk. Several trails are marked through the forest. A few on the East side of this area involve steeper sections but the ones near the field and to the left are fairly flat.
5. **Old Colony Road and Bridge (Easy or Easy-Moderate)**: Drive to the end of Old Colony Road (from Gates) and park near the bridge. Walking is nice, on a quiet street on either side of the bridge. For a bit more challenge, take the Midstate trail up through for corners and return on the road (about 2.5 miles)
6. **Westminster Road north of Harrington Farm (Easy)**: Park at Harrington Farm and take a right onto Westminster Road. This shortly turns into a dirt road and passes just to the West of Wachusett Mountain. This is a pretty tree-shaded walk, and side trips can be made up North or West Roads. And out and back to North Road is about two miles in length.
7. [WMSR West Road \(Easy-Moderate\)](#): There are few flat trails in Wachusett Mountain State Reservation. One of the best is the West Road, which starts on West Princeton Road in Westminster and ends up on the mountain Admin Road. This trail has a few low-grade hills but is fairly rock-free and a pleasant walk. An in-and-out walk would be about 2 miles. A 3.5 mile loop can be made by proceeding down Admin road and back around Westminster Road.
8. [WMSR North Road to Balance Rock Road \(Easy-Moderate\)](#): Another great easy walking route on Mt Wachusett North Road, which starts on West Princeton Road in Westminster (.3 miles past West Road) and ends up on the mountain Admin Road. This trail heads up slightly to Balance Rock Road (to the left) which is a lovely gradual downhill back to the ski area. This is a beautiful trail in the fall. For an extra challenge and nice view, go past Balance Rock Road on North Road to get to the lookout. The grade is steeper past Balance Rock Road but the view is spectacular!

9. **WMSR Summit (Easy-Moderate):** A drive to the summit area of Mt Wachusett provides a nice area for walking around with moderate grades. The Summit tower has a wrap-around climb. The grades are a bit steep for some.
10. **Rocky Pond Rd in LSF (Easy-Moderate):** Park at the Rocky Pond Road parking area off Rte 31. There are several trails in Leominster State Forest (you can get a map) but the main gravel roads are pretty easy walking and can provide many miles of fairly level trails. Several nice roads/trails branch off from Rocky Pond Road. Try Paradise Alley when the Laurels are in bloom or King Tut's Highway any time of year.
11. **Thomas Prince School Nature Trails (Easy-Moderate):** Several trails leave from the fields surrounding Thomas Prince School. These are fairly short and flat. In some cases there are rocks to navigate.
12. **Calamint Hill and Boylston Park (Easy-Moderate):** Park at a small parking lot to the left on Calamint Hill Rd .3 miles from Rte 62. Calamint Hill Rd is a lovely dirt road with an easy-moderate grade. Walk up and over the hill. There is a trail to the right, just past the top of the hill, which leads down to South Wachusett Brook for about 0.4 miles. The trail is a little rocky in places. Trails are being planned for the area behind the parking lot (Smith, or Fieldstone Farm)

Surrounding Town Walks

1. **Central Mass Rail Trail (CMRT - Easy):** This trail is smooth and flat and offers many miles of easy walking as well as wheelchair access. Trailheads exist in several places:
 - Heading south on Rte 140, just past Oakdale (large parking lot on the right)
 - Sterling, in the Cider Mill Parking area or off Gates Road.
 - River Road in Holden
 - Glenwood Road, Whitehall Road, or Rte 122 about a half mile past the junction with 122A heading to Barre, in Rutland
2. **Ware River Trail (Easy):** Another flat and easy trail heading from Barre (Coldbrook) to Baldwinville. The best access for Princeton is off of Rte 62, about 1.5 miles from the Barre Falls Dam crossing. The trailhead and a kiosk is on the right.
3. **Wachusett Reservoir:** Besides the CMRT, there is some great walking along the Wachusett Reservoir in West Boylston. This can best be accessed from parking lots on the East or West side of the Reservoir Causeway (Rte 12). The West side of the reservoir contains 2 miles of trails. Mostly flat with one or two hills. The East side has many more miles of trails mostly flat or easy-moderate grades. The roads are gravel.
4. **Heywood Reservoir / Sholan Farms:** Loops around reservoirs in Sterling and Leominster, and connections to Leominster State Forest. The Heywood Reservoir Trail traverses a portion of Wekepeke Watershed lands owned by the Town of Clinton in both Sterling and Leominster. The Hapgood trailhead is located at the north side of Upper North Row Road, about 0.8 miles west of the intersection with Heywood Road. Trails extend from there around Fall Brook Reservoir, to Sholan Farms, and to the Monoosnoc and Leominster State Forest hiking areas.
5. **Lynde Basin/Wekepeke Reservoir:** This 2.7 mile loop trail offers several interesting man-made and natural features. The trail passes by dams, gate houses and spillways, part of the former Clinton Water Works. In terms of natural scenery, it offers views to lakes and basins, crosses wetland areas and passes by the Wekepeke Brook with beaver activity. The trailhead is located at a yellow gate on the east side of Heywood Road, between the intersection of Upper North Row Road and Rowley Hill Road.

6. **Quinapoxit Rail and Bike Trails:** Located near the corner of Route 31 and Quinapoxit streets, there are several trails including 3-4 mile loops which connect over to Maple Springs Pond near Jefferson. Great for biking and XX Skiing. A small parking area can be found on Quinapoxit Street just past Mill St. on the right.