

PETROLEUM CENTRE LOOP HIKING TRAIL

Oil Creek State Park is one of five state parks established through the efforts of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. The 7,096 acre park preserves 12.0 miles of the winding gorge created some 10,000 years ago by the draining of an ice dammed glacial lake. The discovery of oil here on August 27, 1859, marked the birth of the world's oil industry. Throughout the park, expect to see remnants of abandoned oil wells, reminders of the region's rich oil history.

This hike covers 6.0 miles of the 36.0 mile Gerard Hiking Trail completed in 1986 by Conservancy member Ray Gerard. The complete trail loops through the park along both sides of Oil Creek. The loop described here begins and ends at Petroleum Centre, one of the oil boomtowns of the 1860's. The trail climbs and descends the valley slopes moderately, with short (5-10 foot) steep climbs interspersed. The most strenuous section of the trail climbs steadily at 25- 45 degree slope for nearly 0.25 mile.

Distance: 6.0 miles

Topographic Map: Oil City South

DIRECTIONS:

- At the rear of the park office, a sign clearly marks the beginning of the hiking trail. Follow the rectangular white blazes.
- At the trail intersection of Gerard Loop, go north following yellow blazes. This is a slightly steep incline with many large geological rock formations.
- At top of hill- stop and sign in on the trail guest sheet in the green metal box!
- Trail intersects with red ski trail- continue to follow yellow blazes.
- At shelter site- trail intersects—turn left following the *Gerard Hiking Trail* sign and yellow blazes.
- Cross the dirt road and re-enter woods.
- At trail intersection—leave yellow blazed trail and follow the white blazed trail towards Petroleum Centre to the left.
- The trail drops into the floodplain of Hemlock Run to cross near its mouth, then ascends the opposite slope about 20 feet looking downstream. A RR bridge arches over the mouth of Hemlock Run where it meets Oil Creek.
- The trail descends to a paved bicycle path and bridge across Oil Creek. Cross the bridge and turn left following the white blazes.
- The connector trail joins the main trail which is the yellow blazed trail. Continue straight ahead past the stairway following the yellow blazes.
- After crossing a small unnamed tributary, *Geological site # 7*, the trail switches back and begins to ascend the opposite slope. Along the way, you will see abandoned foundations and structures from the oil boom days on this side.
- The final section of the Petroleum Centre Loop trail is on the paved road. Turn left on this road to continue to the parking lot.