

MIDLAND SECTION

Map 32, 33

The 13.6 km long Midland section of the Ganaraska Hiking Trail is entirely off-road. Starting just north of Vasey Road, the southern half of the Midland section generally follows a fence line over private land. The northern half follows a snowmobile trail and the Tay Shore Trail, or its off-road twinning trail. The Midland section currently ends at the Wye River, adjacent to Sainte Marie Among the Hurons and the Martyrs' Shrine, on the outskirts of Midland.

The entire section is an easy walk, on mostly flat terrain. Enjoy!

KM	DESCRIPTION
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0.0	44.677269, -79.741829
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The southern end of the Midland section starts at Vasey Road and Reeves Road in Tay Township. There is limited parking on the shoulder of Reeves Road. From Vasey Road, go north on Reeves Road for about 300 m.

Cross a small creek on the east side of the road onto a dyke. **Dogs are not allowed on this section** at the request of the landowner who owns sheep. Please respect the landowner's wishes. Follow the dyke until it drops down into a maple forest with a display of trilliums in the spring. Note that this area can be wet in the spring.

After a short distance, the trail comes out into a farmer's field. Follow the field between a ditch on the west side and the farmer's field on the east side. The trail turns east along an old rock fence line. Cross the rock fence line and proceed north along the edge of the maple forest. The trail continues to change from pasture to bush trails and the terrain is slightly undulating. You will have to skirt around a man-made pond on the east side. The trail returns into the bush and then opens up into cattle pasture. As you continue through an old apple orchard and approach Hogg Valley Road, there is lots of poison ivy, especially in the ditch as you approach the road.

4.1	44.7050012, -79.751999
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Hogg Valley Road has road side parking. Please do not block the gate.

The trail continues beside the gate and turns east and then north on private trails. Look out for the blazes where the trail leaves the private trails. After passing an old rock fence, you will notice that the trail veers to the west. You will approach a wetland area, with an ephemeral pond, frequented by waterfowl. The trail continues over pasture and bushland with gently rolling slopes.

The trail stays on the west side of a private pond, where – if you are lucky - you may notice a couple of trumpeter swans.

Continue along a bush trail to open fields and follow the edge of the field. Just before the old CNR railway line you will encounter an active beaver pond, so this area may be flooded.

At the abandoned railway line, veer to the left 90 degrees (going west). This old railway line is now owned by the Georgian Bay Snowriders club. (If coming from the west, look for a stile to cross the fence on the south side of the trail, approx. 500 m before you get to Newton Road.)

8.4 44.7220689, -79.781342

Follow the old railway line to Reeves Road. There is limited parking here on the shoulder. Please do not block the entrances to the snowmobile trail.

The trail crosses Reeves Road, but if you go north on Reeves Road, this is a good location to consider some of the local history of the area. At the intersection of Reeves Road and Granny White Road is the Newtonville School, named after the Eastern Ontario community where the original settlers had previously lived. To the left, is another plaque commemorating the site of a former Anglican Church. There is also a small park located a short distance to the east on Granny White Sideroad, which is the site of the Saint Louis Mission National Historic Site (<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/on/saintlouis>). The Huron village of Saint Louis was believed to have been located here. The village was burned in 1649, and Fathers Jean de Brébeuf and Gabriel Lalemant were captured while on a mission at the village. These Jesuit missionaries were then taken to St. Ignace (northwest of Waubesaushene), where they were later martyred by enemy Iroquois. The gate to the park is frequently open during the summer months and a short path leads to a plaque commemorating the village and its history.

- 10.6 Just south of Hwy. 12, follow the trail on the east side of the old overpass down to Hwy. 12. On your left, you will see the old underpass through which the highway used to run.

- 10.6 **Take care crossing busy Hwy. 12.** On the north side of the highway, step across a row of limestone rocks and go left (west) on the paved Tay Shore Trail.

The Tay Shore Trail is considered the “Cadillac of Trails” in Simcoe County, and is especially enjoyed by cyclists, rollerbladers and walkers as it follows the gorgeous shoreline of Georgian Bay. The Tay Shore Trail extends for 16 km between Waubesaushene (where it connects with the Uhthoff Trail to Coldwater and Orillia) and the Midland Rotary Waterfront Trail. Note: there is excellent parking at Trestle Park, just east of where the Ganaraska Hiking Trail crosses Hwy.12, with access to the Tay Shore Trail. The MTO also operates a washroom during the summer months.

- 10.7 Once on the Tay Shore Trail, notice remnants of old Hogg's Bay Trestle bridge, spanning the waters of Hogg Bay.

(<https://huroniamuseum.com/2008/02/09/hog-bay-trestle-bridge-1908-1978/>).

The wooden trestle bridge was built in 1908 to carry the Canadian Pacific Railway from grain elevators at Port McNicoll. 2141 feet long and 50 feet high, it was one of the longest wooden structures on the continent. The pine timbers were 8” by 16” and pilings of B.C. fir were 65 feet long. The builder was Mike McPeake of Port McNicoll. Patrolled by armed guards in both World Wars, this unique and handsome bridge was last used in 1971 and demolished in 1978. Also, enjoy a beautiful view of Georgian Bay. The village of Port McNicoll is to your northwest, and Victoria Harbour to the east.

- 11.0 At the junction with the Port McNicoll Spur of the Tay Shore Trail, you will see a parkette with a large trail map. Stay to the left (south side) of the parkette. The spur to the right goes to Port McNicoll, the home of the S.S. Keewatin, a 106 year old Canadian Pacific Great Lakes steamship that was brought back from the USA in 2012. <https://sskeewatin.com>

- 11.5 Cross Tripple Bay Road.

At the junction with an old undeveloped CNR railway spur, you will see an antique piece of railway equipment and a beaver pond. The Ganaraska Hiking Trail leaves the paved Tay Shore Trail and follows the “twin” trail on the south side of the Tay Shore Trail to the tunnel under Hwy.12. This is a natural surface trail that is easier to hike on than the paved Tay Shore Trail. However, the weeds may be tall. This trail is used by snowmobiles in the winter.

Just west of the tunnel, the Ganaraska Hiking Trail comes off the paved trail again and follows the “twin” trail on the north side of the paved trail by going uphill and providing views over a tree plantation. This trail is also a natural surface trail which rejoins the paved trail as it descends again just before the Old Fort Road overpass.

The trail goes under Old Fort Road.

Cross the access road to the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre and Ste. Marie Among the Hurons and continue to the Wye River. If, however, you were to turn left (south) on the access road, you can enjoy a visit to the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre or visit Ste. Marie Among the Hurons.

The Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre (www.wyemarsh.com) is located on 3,000 acres of wetlands, fen and forest. The Centre is open year round and offers displays of birds of prey, amphibians and reptiles as well as hiking, biking and skiing trails, canoeing and kayaking routes, an observation tower and boardwalks, and a gift shop. The Wye Marsh is also well known for the trumpeter swan reintroduction program that the wildlife centre has been operating since the 1980s. Currently, there are 55 to 60 adult trumpeter swans that nest within the marsh. The Centre is a non-profit organization whose mission is to spark a commitment to conserving wetlands, woodlands and wildlife by creating exciting learning opportunities in a natural setting. There is an admission fee to use the Visitor Centre.

Sainte Marie Among the Hurons

(<http://www.saintemarieamongthehurons.on.ca/sm/en/Home/index.htm>) is open to the public between Victoria Day weekend and Thanksgiving. This site is a reconstruction of a Jesuit mission similar to how it would have appeared between 1639 and 1649 when French priests came to convert the native people to Christianity. Costumed interpreters will guide you through a 17th century journey. If you have a couple of leisurely hours, you may find this an interesting attraction.

- 13.6 Across Hwy. 12, you will also see the Martyrs' Shrine (<https://martyrs-shrine.com>) in commemoration of the missionaries who were martyred in the 1600's. It's also well worth a visit, as are the grounds around the Shrine.

Lots of parking at Sainte Marie Parking (not to be confused with Sainte Marie Among the Hurons). This parking lot is off Wye Valley Road. From the trail, cross the Wye River via the foot bridge, turn right and follow the path under Hwy. 12 to the parking lot. Note: the wooden trestle bridge over the Wye River provides access to the Midland Rotary Waterfront Trail.

- 13.6 44.735649, -79.845779

The Midland section of the Ganaraska Hiking Trail currently ends at the Wye River bridge.