

BARRIE SECTION

Maps 21, 22, 23, 24

The Barrie section provides a variety of hiking experiences and goes through Simcoe County Forest, Copeland Forest, Springwater Provincial Park and Minesing Wetlands. There is some road walking, some rail trail walking, and lots of forest trails. Both novice and experienced hikers will find something to enjoy.

KM 0.0 (44.55548 / -79.61896)

The east end of the Barrie section starts at Line 6N in Oro-Medonte just south of Sugarbush Estates. Take Line 6N south from Horseshoe Valley Road and park on the roadside where Line 6N ends at the forest (there is a road to the left that looks like a continuation of Line 6 but it is a different street). Follow the trail about 200 meters south from this point to reach the start of the Barrie trail (this is actually a junction between the Barrie and Orillia trails). The Barrie trail heads west from this point along a multi-use path (give bikers the right of way). There is a wonderful display of trilliums in early May along this section of the trail.

KM 3.0 (44.55548 / -79.61896)

The trail exits the forest onto Line 5N and continues north. Continue across Horseshoe Valley Road (Line 5N is slightly off-set at Horseshoe Valley Road) and continue north until you come to the sign announcing the entrance to the Amos Tract of Simcoe County Forest. At this point, exit the road and head west onto the forest trail.

KM 5.0 (44.56990 / -79.65150)

Enter the Amos Tract of Simcoe County Forest. In about 500 metres the trail makes a sharp right turn down a narrow ravine and enters Copeland Forest. The route now follows wide bush trails used, depending on the season, by hikers, snowshoers, cross-country skiers and horse riding enthusiasts. The 1,650 hectare Copeland Forest property contains a part of the Oro Moraine. There are steep slopes and this area is the source of the Coldwater and Sturgeon Rivers. The Copeland Forest is owned by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and managed by the Copeland Forest Friends Association; a non-profit organization formed in October 2015. More information about Copeland Forest can be found at www.copelandfriends.ca.

KM 7.7 (44.57170 / -79.67765)

This is the northernmost point of the Barrie Ganaraska trail in Copeland Forest.

KM 8.5 (44.57124 / -79.67411)

The Side Trail to the Oro-Medonte section (previously Midland) branches off to the north (right). The trail comes back to the Horseshoe Valley Road. Just before reaching this location, there is a good rest spot with benches and a shelter. On the right is Settler's Ghost Golf Course.

KM 13.0 (44.54397 / -79.69258)

Cross the Horseshoe Valley Road with care, turn right and follow this long road section to Craighurst. The trail through this section is sometimes on the shoulder and sometimes beside the shoulder on the forest edge.

KM 16.0 (44.52966 / -79.72580)

Craighurst – A good place for breakfast, a coffee or ice cream. Cross over County Road 93 at lights and continue west on the south side of Horseshoe Valley Road. *Be very careful going over the Hwy #400 overpass. Due to the arrangements of the ramps it is suggested to go across the overpass on the north side. Consider the option of driving from Craighurst to the parking lot at Old Second South (see next paragraph) for safety reasons. Driving this section is acceptable for hikers looking for an end-to-end badge for the Barrie section.*

KM 18.4 (44.51770 / -79.74762)

You are now at Old 2nd North. Turn left (south) and after a short distance, make a right turn into a reforested area at 1020 Old Second South. The trail goes through an attractive area of mixed bush and fields, crosses some creeks and a beaver dam. This is a pretty area intersected by steep sided ravines with some wet and

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muddy patches. There are a number of bush roads on this part of the trail and it is important to keep an eye for blazed changes to the route. As you near Gill Road you will pass through a large section of Red Pine. This is Simcoe County Forest (Orrock Creek S.). Cross Gill Road and follow the blazes to the parking lot near the point where the railway tracks cross Gill Road.

KM 24.9 (44.47263 / -79.74556)

The parking lot at 1898 Gill Road provides access to the Simcoe County Forest Tiffin and Smith Tracts. The main trail follows Gill Road south from the parking lot and re-enters Simcoe County Forest to the west after walking along Gill Road for approximately 1.4 km. There is also a side trail heading west into Simcoe County Forest directly from the parking lot. The Bear Creek Loop side trail is 3.6 km long and goes over a picturesque stream crossing.

KM 27.5 (44.45861 / -79.74276)

At this point the main trail turns south towards the Midhurst Community Centre. Also, this is the start of the Heather Dalton Side Trail, a 1.3 km hilly loop where there are multiple memorials to local hiker Heather Dalton attached to the trees beside the trail.

KM 29.5 (44.45035 / -79.73195)

The trail comes to the parking lot of the Midhurst Community Centre. This parking lot is available to hikers but should not be used on Sundays as services are held in the Community Centre and the parking lot has limited capacity. From the Midhurst Community Centre, turn right onto Doran Road. and, at its intersection with Belmont Crescent the trail goes down a narrow gravel path into Willow Creek Valley (on left).

Follow the path down and cross the bridge over Willow Creek. Bear right after the bridge and continue up the hill and out to County Road 27. Look for the blaze on a telephone pole high on the opposite side of the road. **Cross with great care as this is a busy highway.** Climb the short steep hill and proceed to the trail. The trail stays on the north side of Hwy. 26 passing by the commuter parking lot at the intersection of Hwy 26 and Hwy 27, going down the hill to Willow Creek, and behind the Simcoe County Administrative and Education buildings. It exits the forest into the parking lot for the Simcoe County Education building. Continue through the parking lot to the exit to Hwy 26.

KM 32.0 (44.44428 / -79.74880)

Cross over and follow the trail into Simcoe County Museum Property. There is parking at the Museum, as well as across the road at the County of Simcoe Administration building. The route leads to the back of the museum parking lot and then turns right (west). Cross Anne Street and the railroad tracks (with caution) and enter the back of Springwater Provincial Park. Information about Springwater Provincial Park can be found at www.ontarioparks.com/parks/springwater. Please stay on the trail in this area This is a fairly flat, easy walking wide trail that ends up at Wilson Drive.

Turn left, cross over the railroad tracks and then turn right on Snow Valley Road. Follow the roadside trail on the north side of Snow Valley Road until you get close to Snow Valley Ski Hill at Vespra Valley Road. at which point you need to cross to the south side of Snow Valley Road and walk along the side of the road.

KM 37.5 (44.41438 / -79.79416)

Turn right (north) onto Vespra Valley Road. Continue north approximately 2 km until reaching the Simcoe County Rail Trail, turn left on the rail trail. Note that there is a small parking lot at the intersection of Vespra Valley Road and the rail trail.

KM 42.9 (44.39610 / -79.82283)

At this point on the rail trail there are stairs going up to Fort Willow. Strategically located as a supply depot during the War of 1812, the Fort Willow area was also actively used for centuries by First Nations, the fur trade and French explorers as part of a major transportation route known as the Nine Mile Portage. There are washroom facilities, picnic benches and historical displays. More information about Fort Willow can be found at www.nvca.on.ca/recreation/ConservationAreas/FortWillow.

Continue on the rail trail until it meets Pinegrove Road. When crossing Pinegrove Road veer to the right to the

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small parking lot on the west side of Pinegrove Road where the Ganaraska trail enters Simcoe County Forest Miller Tract. Most of the hiking in Simcoe County Forest Miller Tract is on high and dry trails, but about 1.7 km after entering the forest there is a low spot that can be quite wet, especially in spring and early summer. When you cross a stile you have exited Simcoe County Forest and entered private property. Continue to follow the trail through a forested area (with lots of hills) until reaching the next stile.

KM 47.5 (44.36700 / -79.83557)

The trail reaches a stile at this point at the end of Baldwick Lane (previously Conc. 13) which tapers out as it enters into the swamp on the right. Cross this stile and go across the concession road. The trail now enters property owned and managed by the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Follow the trail while keeping on high ground to the left. The trail here is narrow. Try to keep to the trail, as much of the ground can be quite boggy. The trail running south from this point goes through the Minesing Wetlands area. In spring and early summer this section can be very wet and difficult to hike.

The Minesing Wetlands is designated as a wetland of international significance and spans an area of more than 6,000 hectares (15,000 acres). It is home to a diverse array of habitats. The unique assemblage of fens, marshes, swamps and bogs supports a network of sensitive flora and fauna, some rare or endangered. Ramsar Site is home to a large variety of Flora and Fauna, including Ontario's 5th largest Great Blue Heronry. More information about Minesing Wetlands can be found at <https://www.nvca.on.ca/Pages/MinesingWetlands.aspx>

Cross another small creek. Directly south there is a tall stile crossing from one field to the next. After crossing this stile veer slight left through the cedar grove, crossing three small creeks after which the trail enters a large field. Go left beside the tree line to the top of a ridge providing great views to the west. Follow the ridge, go through a gully to another ridge, down through a field of high summer grass heading west, and you will arrive at another stile to get into the next field. Veer left (south) at this point and follow the blazes into the forest. From this point the trail heads south towards CR90. The low areas in this section can be quite muddy in the spring and summer so stay on the trail. The trail eventually exits the forest to a hydro line cut.

KM 50.6 (44.34056 / -79.84374)

Arrive at County Road #90. There is a large tunnel under the highway that can be used by hikers to link up with the east end of the Mad River trail section.