Hiking

Hiking trails on the Ottawa National Forest offers adventure for every skill level. More than 196 miles of hiking and backpacking trails vary widely in character. Some provide short easy walks to places of interest, such as waterfalls and historic sites while others provide more of a challenge to higher vistas. This list is only a snapshot of opportunity. Visit the Forest Webpage to learn more!

Black River Corridor - Some of the Forest's most popular trails are near Black River Harbor along the river corridor; approximately 15 miles north of Bessemer and Ironwood in Gogebic County. These trails provide access to Conglomerate, Gorge, Potawatomi, Sandstone, and Rainbow Falls and range in length from 1/4 to 1-1/2 miles. All trails descend rather steeply from the rim of the Black River Gorge to overlook points. **To ensure your safety, stay on designated trails and observe all regulations.**

Because of its unique character, the trail that serves Potawatomi and Gorge Falls was designated a National Recreation Trail in 1978. Developments along it includes stairways and observation platforms that overlook the Black River and the two waterfalls. **Barrier-free access leading from Gorge Falls parking lot to Potawatomi Falls provides a unique viewing opportunity for people with disabilities.** Large, old growth hemlock, white pine, and hardwood timber add to the area's beauty. There is also a picnic area.

North Country National Scenic Trail - The longer trail in the National Trail System, stretching 4,800 miles from Vermont to North Dakota. There are 116 miles of this National Scenic Trail that crosses the Ottawa NF in an east-west direction. It traverses areas of very rugged topography and is often several miles from the nearest motor vehicle access point. Most stream crossings are without bridges. There are no developed campsites outside of Black River Harbor Campground. However, trailside camping is permitted.

Gogebic Ridge Trail - An interesting side trip from the Bergland portion of the North Country Trail is the Gogebic Ridge Trail. It begins from a point along Forest Road 250, one mile north of M-28 at Merriweather, or on M-64, 3 miles north of Bergland. The trail leads east from Forest Road 250 along the north and east shore of Weary Lake to a ledge overlooking Lake Gogebic, and then northward where it intersects M-64. The trail crosses M-64 and continues east over Cookout Mountain to Old M-64. After crossing Old M-64, the trail leads to Sandhill Creek and finally ends at its junction with the North Country Trail.

Cascade Falls Trail - This one-mile trail offers two alternative routes to reach a small waterfall on Cascade Creek. To reach the trailhead parking lot, go 7 miles northeast of Bergland on Forest Road 400 to the junction with Forest Road 468. Two routes depart from the parking lot. The scenic Bluff Trail route climbs a bluff overlooking the West Branch of the Ontonagon River and the Trap Hills. The Valley route avoids the steep path of the higher route but reaches the same destination.

Sylvania Wilderness - In addition to its canoeing and water access camping opportunities, the Sylvania Wilderness near Watersmeet contains nearly 30 miles of hiking trails. These trails traverse old growth forests and the shores of several lakes. They are well suited for both day hiking and overnight trips. Overnight campers must stay at one of the area's designated wilderness campsites or the Clark Lake Campground. A permit for camping is required. See the Sylvania Wilderness trip-planning guide for details.

Interpretive Trails - The Ottawa National Forest contains four trails that feature interpretive signs explaining the sights and sounds along the way. All are 1 to 2-1/2 miles in length and are easy walking. They are located at the Ottawa Visitor Center in Watersmeet, the Beaver Lodge Trail at the Bob Lake Campground, the Deer Marsh Interpretive Trail at Lake Ste. Kathryn and a trail at the Norway Lake Campground.

Scenic Trails - Short trails to waterfalls and scenic vistas are located at Sturgeon Falls and Silver Mountain, north of Sidnaw; Wolf Mountain, east of Wakefield; Yondota Falls, north of Marenisco; and Kakabika Falls between Marenisco and Watersmeet. The Norway Lake, Perch Lake, and Lake Ste. Kathryn campgrounds feature short lakeshore trails where loons may be heard, and raptors fly overhead. A 1/2-mile trail at Brule Lake features the Stateline Historic Treaty Tree Site. Nearby, and the Ge-Che Trail doubles as a winter cross-country ski route.

Research your destinations before heading out and practice *Leave No Trace* ethics on the trail!

Questions? Visit the webpage or call our office.

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