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What's New in Princeton & Central New Jersey?

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Take a Hike! It's Good For Mind, Body, and Soul

by Dan Aubrey

"You get so cocooned in your house. If you just get over the hurdle of getting out, you'll feel better," says Princeton resident Sophie Glover, author of the "Walk the Trails In and Around Princeton" and a central New Jersey resource for getting people on their feet and out the door.

"The reason that I really started the book is that I got a puppy five years ago. He was filled with energy so I had to start walking every day. I don't like to jump in the car and wanted to go to places nearby. Then I started taking friends. After we would go on these long great walks, they would say that they would like to do it again, but they would never go without me because they may get lost. So there was a need for the guide."

The result is a pocket fitting, spiral-bound publication that in its current edition covers 16 nearby walks.

"I try to keep the walks a 10-minute drive from Princeton and keep them to about to 40 minutes to an hour loop. That way you can weave a walk into your day, after you drop the kids off at school or running an errand," says the mother of three.

Since walking promotes weight loss, relieves stress, improves thinking, and is linked to warding off some forms of diabetes and heart problems, "Walk the Trails" is also a way to put people on a path to health.

The first section is "Princeton's 'Central Park,'" focusing on the 280-acre area that includes Mountain Lakes Preserve, John Witherspoon Woods, and Community Park North. The area is roughly situated between Great Road north and north Route 206. Here the walker has a choice of three walks, ranging from the 60-minute, 2.6-mile walk to one 35-minute, 1.2-mile walk.

Glover recommends Mountain Lake Reserve for getting started with walking and losing weight. "I like boardwalk at Mountain Lake because it's a nice length and you don't feel like you get lost. The boardwalk at the lake is easy to navigate and fairly flat.

The second section is "In and Around the Woodfield Reservation," with the main entrance located off the old Great Road across from Tenacre Foundation; another is at the south side of Drakes Corner Road. The longest walk here is the one-hour, 2.8-mile loop with the lily pond, which Glover says is beautiful location to visit in the spring. Shorter walks are also listed.

Since this particular area of the township suffered some serious damage from Hurricane Sandy, Glover recommends waiting until trees and debris are cleared.

The book's next section is "The Institute Woods." That is the 528-acre area around the Institute for Advanced Study, including Princeton Battlefield. Glover calls the 2.5-mile trail another great place for people to start getting into shape. "The paths are open and flat, making for an easy walk with a jog stroller," she writes to encourage parents who want to get out and move but have infants and toddlers. To entice a would-be walker further, the book promises a beautiful pond and the "chance to cross over a very unusual and picturesque swinging bridge."

"Through Greenway Meadow Park," writes Glover, is a great place to take children. "Greenway Meadows is really nice for that. There are actually two playgrounds there and bathrooms." Located on Rosedale Road, the site also includes the Johnson Education Center, where the D&R



Sophie Glover with her trail guide

Greenway Land Trust is headquartered, and the Johnson Park School. Glover warns that the trail is closed when the school is in session. But other trails are generally open.

The fifth section, "Along the Stony Brook," invites walkers to Kate's Trail. Says Glover, "This is a great walk to take with children and has lots of water wildlife to see, and, at 1.1 miles, it is just enough of a hike for little ones." She says that the spot, located off Elm Ridge Road, is a good place to walk and cool off on a hot summer's day.

As the book ends it also opens out beyond Princeton and into neighboring communities. The section includes three walks in Hopewell, one in Montgomery, and one on the portion of the D&R Canal that runs from Kingston to Rocky Hill. There are also two in Lawrenceville, including the county-run Pole Farm that has the longest trail and is good for individuals wanting to get their hearts pumping.

When asked about which hike offers the most beauty, Glover is impartial. "I pick walks by what kind of day it is, what time of day, what season, because they all have their pleasures. The lily pond in spring is beautiful. The Mountain Lake area is stunning when you are at the top of the lake and looking down at Princeton. They're all so pretty. It just depends what mood you're in."

But she is partial when it comes to preparation. "If you want to enjoy the walk in the cold, try to wear an extra layer of clothes and always take a hat and gloves. And I do think that if you are going to take a long walk by yourself, you should take your cell phone, just in case you fall." A phone can also come handy if a person gets lost, she says, recounting the time when friends testing the directions for one of the trails in the book got lost and were relieved to find her as she reviewed the walk too. She also warns people to watch for ticks and advises walkers to tuck pant legs into socks.

While such advice makes one think that Glover grew up in the country, she is actually from one of the largest cities in the nation. "I am from Philadelphia, Chestnut Hill. But I also grew up walking with my parents and grandparents in Maine and the Adirondacks."

Daughter of first-grade teacher mother and a Rohm and Haas scientist father, Glover came to Princeton to attend the university. There she met her future husband, Curtis, and her future landscape. "I had a friend whose parent lived on a farm in Ringoes, and we would drive down the Great Road to visit them. It was so pretty," she says.

In 1987 she and her husband moved to New York City, where he worked in finance and she in advertising. Their first child brought them back to Princeton in 1995.

It was not, she says, the same Princeton from which they had moved, and she was shocked by how much development had occurred during the few years that they were away.

"I saw what development had done to where I lived in Philadelphia and did not want to see it happen here," she says. Since then she has been involved with D&R Greenway, Friends of Princeton Open Space, the Stony Brook Millstone Watershed Association, and other organizations involved with land use and preservation.

She also began writing and helping to create publications that call attention to the outdoors and natural resources, including "Plant Local," a book on using native plants.

With all proceeds of her trail book going to further the Greenway's preservation efforts, Glover is busy preparing a new edition for this spring. It will include two new places connected to the D&R Greenway.

One new location is the St. Michaels Preserve in Hopewell, "where one can take a nice long walk through fields and you can look back into Hopewell and see the white steeple of the church."

The other location is the Scott and Hella McVay Poetry Trail at Greenway Meadows. Of the loop with poetry stations and natural views, she says, "It's a wonderful experience to go along with all these poems."

While Glover has top billing on the book's cover, she credits Bentley Drezner as her photographer and fellow park explorer. "I have two boys and a girl. Bentley has three boys. We are living testaments to say that this book was a joy to do with our kids."

Echoing the advice that people just get up and move out, she says, "And even if you do the same walk every day, you get sensitized to seeing new things, the seasons change."

"Walk the Trails In and around Princeton" was created by Glover, photographer Drezner, and designer Maria Lindenfelder. Enviroprint of Bound Brook is the publisher. The book costs \$20 — with all profits benefiting the D&R Greenway's trail construction and maintenance — and can be purchased by visiting the D&R Greenway Trust, Johnson Education Center, 1 Preservation Place, Princeton, or linking on to www.drgreenway.org/giving.html.

It is also for sale at Stony Brook Millstone Watershed Association, Blue Ridge Mountain Sports, Chicklet Books, Jordan's, Labyrinth Books, Salon Pure, and Small World Cafe. For special orders or information, write to walkthetrails@gmail.com.

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