

Cranberry Lake CL50, NY Backpacking Trip

This backpacking trip occurred between the dates of October 14-17, 2019 (for me, at least) . Paul Kaercher led this one. Gary Porter also participated.

I was having severe trepidations about this trip. I wasn't in shape. And I was concerned about the weather. Both of these factors would affect the outcome.

Day 0, 10/14/2019- Made the long trek up to NY and met Paul and Gary at Basil & Wicks Restaurant in North Creek, NY. The food was very good! We then went to a cabin that Gary co-owns in Newcomb, NY. It was in the middle of nowhere. The leaves on the trees, which were about 2 weeks past their peak, were still better than anything that I have seen in VA so far this year. We talked about various aspects of the hike at the cabin, then went to sleep.

Day 1, 10/15/2019- We had breakfast at the Long Lake Diner in Long Lake, NY. Again, it was very good. We then set out on the 47 mile drive to Cranberry Lake, NY. We dropped Paul's vehicle off at a CL50 parking area just east of Cranberry Lake, then drove my vehicle around to another CL50 parking area in Wanakena, NY. We got on the CL 50 by around 9:30 that morning. The goal would be to do the 50 mile loop around Cranberry Lake. We did 9.3 miles the first day. The trail was mostly flat and along an old logging road. It was very easy except when the trail went around one of many ponds in the area. They always took you right up to the edge of the pond. The problem was



*Mike, Gary & Paul @ Long Lake Diner.
By Mike Calabrese*



*CL50 Trail Marker.
By Mike Calabrese*



*New York State Trail Marker.
By Mike Calabrese*

that most of these ponds had expanded during the years and now one was forced to walk on the berm of the pond. One wrong move and you could fall in. Temperatures that day were high 30's in the morning, high 50's in the afternoon and low 40's that evening. We got to the High Falls camping area around 4:00 PM. We had to scramble to put up our tents, filter water and then eat as it was getting cold and dark very quick. I was in my tent by 7:00 PM.

Day 2, 10/16/2019- I had a tough time keeping up with Paul and Gary yesterday. They were in fantastic shape. I wasn't. I also had numerous equipment issues. My jacket zipper broke, My water filter only worked intermittently, my 21 year old backpack straps kept slipping, which caused the pack to ride directly on my shoulders and the small LED light that I bought would not stay on for more than a minute. This, coupled with the forecast of heavy rain for the next 24 hours starting in the afternoon had me rethink doing this entire loop. So I talked to Paul and Gary and explained that since they had about 40 miles to do over the next 4 to 5 days in uncertain conditions, that it was best if I hiked back out and let them continue. They understood and agreed. So Paul and Gary were going to do 10 or 15 miles to shelters at one of those locations. I did not want to backtrack and go over those ponds again. So I hiked about 6 miles more on the CL 50 and stayed at the Janacks Landing Shelter. I would stay at the shelter that night, then do 3 miles back to Wanakena and my vehicle the next day. The CL50 was more trail like today and less road walk like. But it was still enjoyable. Temps were in the low 40's in the morning and would climb into the 50's. I got to the shelter around 1ish. Even though it is improper shelter



*New York State Campsite Marker.
By Mike Calabrese*



*Looking back after first five miles.
By Mike Calabrese*



*One of many ponds along the CL50.
By Mike Calabrese*



*Night 1 campsite near High Falls
Shelter. By Mike Calabrese*

etiquette, I pitched my tent in the shelter. I figured that if it was going to rain for 24 hours, at least my gear and I would stay dry. I did not expect any other visitors. As I was about to eat dinner I was startled by the presence of a large black dog and her owner. I believe that they hiked in from Wanakena, were going to rest at the shelter and then walk back. When they saw me in the shelter, the lady said hello and asked if I had canoed here (This shelter was about 250 feet away from an area on Cranberry Lake called Dead Creek Flow). I said no, I had backpacked in. She then said goodbye and kept walking her dog. This encouraged me in that Wanakena must not be that far away. The rain started around 4:00 PM. It got really heavy at times. But I was high and dry in the shelter. I ate, then crawled into the tent by about 7:00 PM. I had no Internet, my NOAA weather radio could not pick up anything. No FM radio so I scanned AM. I got a lot of New York City stations. I went to sleep shortly after.

Day 3, 10/17/2019- Since I had my earplugs in I couldn't hear the rain that night. But it did rain all night long. I started thinking things like: What if the access trail is flooded? What if the bridge going out of Wanakena is closed? I had enough food for 4 days so I figured that if I got stranded, that I could survive for at least 4 days. After being in my tent for 10 hours I got up at 5:00 AM and went to the privy. All went well. Then, I could not find my way back to the shelter. It was very dark out and I could see no landmarks. So I just walked around. After about 5 minutes I saw the depression of the trail that went to the shelter. So I made it back. They need some fluorescent markers between the privy and the shelter so people can find their way back in the dark. I started out towards



Night 2 campsite within Janacks Landing Shelter. By Mike Calabrese

Wanakena, NY and my vehicle at around 8:00 AM. I had a poncho, a jacket (that the zipper was broken on) and a blaze orange pack cover. I was hoping that would keep me and my gear dry on the 3 mile trek back to Wanakena. Again, the trail was very good most of the way there. It was mainly along an old logging or jeep road. Some sections were very muddy. And I had to navigate around a few more pond edges and a blowdown. But all went well. During the last mile or so my gloved hands and my feet were getting very wet and cold. The temperature was dropping. I started hearing the sound of sleet. When I got to the end of the Janacks/Wanakena Trail I still had to turn left and road walk another half mile back to my vehicle. It was 39 degrees and sleeting when I got back to my vehicle around 11:00 AM. I immediately started the vehicle, cranked the heat up all the way and started the 8.5 hour trek back home. So I ended up hiking the 17 plus mile High Falls Loop which encompasses about 9 miles of the CL50.

As I write this trip log Paul and Gary are still on the trail. I'm not sure when the rain stopped along the CL50 but the temps were scheduled to go below freezing that night. Depending how fast they hike, they should be out of the woods by October 19th or 20th. I hope that they are OK.

Yes, I know that I will have to exercise more. However, I know what my limitations are and plan to have bailout options available for all future backpacking trips. I just love being in the woods.

The Cranberry Lakes Region, NY is a beautiful place that deserves to be explored. There are

camping, fishing, boating, hiking, running, hunting and snowmobiling opportunities available here. And the state of New York as well as the CL50 sponsoring organization called the Five Ponds Partners has done a good job of maintaining and promoting this trail.

Mike C

[Cranberry Lake CL50, NY Trail Map and Brochure](#)

Edit- It turns out that this trail, though called the CL50, is really about 63 miles long. Paul and Gary stayed on this trail for 2 more days and got off on 10/19/2019 after doing 43 miles.