

Hiking Guide for Mansfield, Connecticut

By Henry Frye, 2020

Hiking Safety 101:

Even if you are planning to stay close to campus, here are some basic hiking rules:

- It is always a good idea to let someone else know you are going hiking and the area where you will be hiking.
- Wear sensible shoes—you never know when you'll have to find your way around a downed tree or a flooded section.
- Carry water.
- Consider applying tick repellant to your shoes/pants, especially in the spring and fall; insect repellant helps deter mosquitoes and black flies.
- Wear sunscreen and/or take a hat.

What is a trail blaze?

A trail blaze is any type of marking that helps one navigate a trail. In New England these are especially helpful during the fall and winter seasons where the trail can be obscured by snow or leaves. In our local area, blazes most often are painted rectangles on trees, but can also appear as nailed-on plastic or wooden signs.

What do the different colors suggest in the local area?

White Blaze/White Sign with Black Arrow

A white blaze trail denotes a trail on property owned by the **Town of Mansfield**. Newly blazed trails now favor the white plastic sign over the painted blazes.



Yellow Blaze

A yellow blazed trail usually denotes a trail on land owned by the local land conservation trust, **Joshua's Trust**. A land trust is a non-profit group that seeks to preserve land through ownership and stewardship. Note that in the Mansfield State Hollow, one of the main trail loops is colored yellow as well but is not owned/maintained by Joshua's trust.



Blue Blaze

Within the town, the blue blaze trail denotes that you are on the **Nipmuck trail**, one of many **long-distance trails** maintained by the **Connecticut Forest and Park Association** (there are over 800 miles of long-distance trails in Connecticut!). This trail has two southern forks, one starting west in Sawmill Brook Park and one starting east in Mansfield Hollow. These forks meet at Fifty Foot Cliff Park and then the trail snakes all the way north to the Massachusetts border.



The Nipmuck trail is named after the Nipmuc people. The word Nipmuc translates in English as "Fresh water people". Their homeland once extended over northeastern Connecticut, northwestern Rhode Island, and much of the interior Massachusetts. Parts of the trail cover old routes the tribe people once used centuries ago.



Red on top of White

This actually isn't a trail, it's the **property boundary** mark used by the **Army Corps of Engineers** to denote the boundaries of Mansfield Hollow. You'll only see these in the southern part of town by the hollow.



Other colors

The above are **only rules of thumbs** for Mansfield and there are plenty of exceptions. Other trail colors are often used to denote smaller crossover trails or alternative trail outlets.

How to read blazes?

One Blaze



This means keep going **straight ahead**.

Two Blaze



This means that there is a **bend left** or **right** for the trail.

Three Blaze



This means either a **fork** in the trail (i.e., you can turn left or right), or the **start/end** of a trail.

How to tell if you are off trail and what to do if you are lost.

Occasionally, trees fall down and the blazes they had are now obscured. This can make it hard tell if you are on the trail particularly after a strong windstorm. A “well-marked trail” paints blazes on different trees going different directions for this reason. If the blazed tree ahead of you falls, then you can look behind you for the other direction’s trail blaze to make sure you are on the right path.

If you end up not being able to find any blazes, keep calm. Almost all of the parks in Mansfield are within a mile of major road, making it easy to get out of the forest if you head towards the sound of cars. It is usually a good idea to carry a flashlight/headlamp, water, and a jacket while hiking in case night falls and you are still lost.