



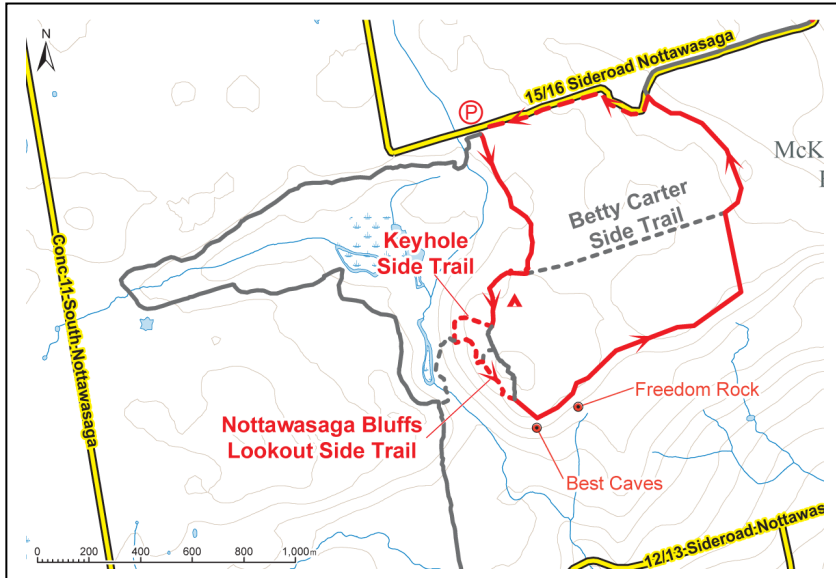
Close to nature.
Close to home.

THE BRUCE TRAIL
CONSERVANCY

Nottawasaga Bluffs Loop

Hike Length: 4.0 km

Section: Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club



Hike Length: 4.0 km

How to get there and Where to Park: From Singhampton on Simcoe Road 124 (between Shelburne and Collingwood), take Concession 11 south and the bridge over the Mad River; turn left (east) on 17-18 Sideroad, right (south) on Concession 10, and left (east) on 15-16 Sideroad. There is a signed gravel parking lot on the south side of the Sideroad.

Hike description: Just south of the parking lot, pick up the white blazes of the main Trail; they head south for 600 m and turn right (west) for 400 m to a camping area provided by the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority. Take the signed Keyhole Side Trail to the west (right) and be prepared to play among the rocks.

The Keyhole Side Trail is one that will delight children of all ages. It descends the Escarpment slope past huge, broken rocks, passing through small crevices and narrow openings. Ferns and mosses cover the walls as the crevice narrows to shoulder width. Finally the Trail leads you down to the Keyhole, where you have to take off your pack, set it on the other side, and then pop your body through the rock opening (if it is too difficult you can cross over the outcrop before descending into the final crevice).

The Trail then joins the Nottawasaga Bluffs Side Trail. Turn left, and follow the Trail uphill to rejoin the Escarpment plateau. Soon it meets the main Trail, and here is a short blue-blazed trail that goes out to the bluffs. Your view will be the talus slope below and the farms and green fields to the south. In the fall the coloured leaves can make it a spectacular vista. At the end of these lookouts are the Best Caves, named after a local landowner. About 30 to 40 caves honeycomb the area, and make another playground for the adventurous. The largest is The Well, 10 metres deep with four levels, the deepest of which is covered in ice even in summer.

After another 100 m, follow the blazes on the right for a short distance as they drop down to Freedom Rock, an outcrop that has separated from the Escarpment. What is so surprising is the collection of social aphorisms that have been lovingly inscribed in the rock. Many concern some aspect of freedom: access to the courts, the right to free education, and the need for land rationing. Returning to the top of the Escarpment, continue straight ahead to the east. You traverse pleasant woods as the Trail swings north (or left) on a ridge. After 1.5 km you reach the 15-16 Sideroad, at this point a seldom-used track, which leads you in a westerly direction (left) back to the parking area.