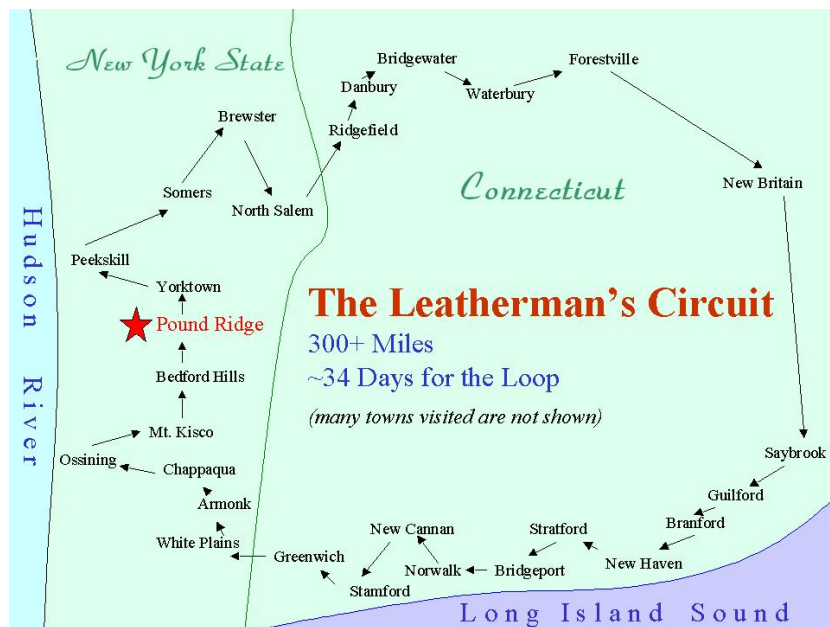


Each month we will feature a fun Hike of the Month

## Hike of the Month — The Leatherman Loop Trail at Ward Pound Ridge

Share the Legend of the Leatherman and take a hike to one of his caves

One of the most interesting pieces of Westchester and Connecticut folklore is the living legend of the Leatherman.



The Leatherman is a 19th Century vagabond whose strange life has led to many local legends in Connecticut and New York. While countless people saw him, little is known about this man the New York Times once called “uncouth, repulsive and wholly inexplicable,” but who was liked and respected by many people along his long, circular route.

When the Leatherman would arrive in some villages, “it was like the circus coming to town,” said Dan W. DeLuca, author of “The Old Leather Man: Historical Accounts of a Connecticut and New York Legend” (Wesleyan University Press, 2008). “The teachers would dismiss school. All the children would go outside, stand by the fences, and watch him go by.”

Just who was this mysterious character who has inspired at least one book, a television documentary, innumerable articles in newspapers and magazines, and even a song by Pearl Jam?

This much is known:

- From the 1860s until 1889, the Leatherman walked a 365-mile route every 34 days through western Connecticut and southeastern New York.
- He spent the nights in natural shelters such as caves — often today called “Leatherman caves” — along his route.
- His shirt, trousers, coat, and hat were all made of pieces of leather,

sewn together with rawhide. In some ways it looked like a suit of medieval armor. The Connecticut Historical Society reports his outfit weighed 60 pounds. He also carried a leather bag and a cane. “They say that one could hear the leather creak as he walked by, and there were some that also said you could smell the Leatherman coming!” says one account.

- He received food and other basic supplies from many people along his route, but did not beg for these; in fact, he often paid cash.
- He was so regular in his routine that people along his route would have meals ready for him in advance, knowing he would show up. The New Haven Daily Palladium reported in 1886: “The Leather Man passed westward Tuesday, an hour and one half later than usual time.”
- The Leatherman did not speak much. Unable to speak English, he would utter an unintelligible sounds and motion to his mouth.

The Leatherman was found dead in his cave on a farm in Briarcliff, Westchester County, in March 1889.

Source: **The Legend of The Leatherman**

<http://leathermansloop.org/2009/02/the-legend-of-the-leatherman/>

### The Leatherman Cave Hike

at Ward Pound Ridge Route 35 and 121 South, Cross River, NY 10576

The Leatherman cave at Ward Pound Ridge makes for a fun hike for Scouts.

The 4,315-acre park makes Ward Pound Ridge Reservation Westchester county’s largest park. With its varied terrain and landscapes and miles of wooded trails, the park provides a variety of activities in all seasons. There are areas for picnicking, lean-to camping, fishing and cross-country skiing.

<https://parks.westchestergov.com/ward-pound-ridge-reservation>

Click on the story map from the link above for a fun day hike with numerous sights including the Leatherman Cave.

Leatherman’s Cave hike is a 5 mile heavily trafficked loop trail that offers the chance to see wildlife and is rated as moderate. Estimated at 2 h 24 m, Trail Map and more information at: <https://www.alltrails.com/trail/us/new-york/leathermans-cave-via-ward-pound-ridge>.

There are other hikes at <https://www.alltrails.com/parks/us/new-york/ward-pound-ridge-reservation> that may be better for younger Cub Scouts.