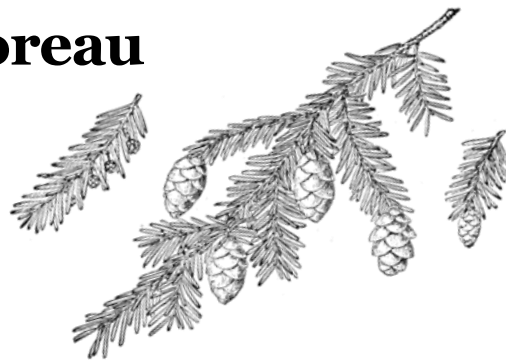


# Walk Around the Pond with Thoreau

## Walden Pond State Reservation

### SELF-GUIDED TOUR

#### Welcome



Walden Pond is forever linked with the writing and ideas of Henry David Thoreau who lived at Walden Pond from July 1845 to September 1847. At Walden, Thoreau was on a journey of self-discovery, believing that the natural world can teach us to better ourselves and, thus, better society. Thoreau's writings incorporated his talents as a philosopher, naturalist, abolitionist, and surveyor. Over 150 years later, Thoreau's ideas on life still resonate with millions of people.

Walden Pond State Reservation is now part of the Massachusetts State Park system and includes 335 acres of protected open space. Visitors may experience the pond that inspired Thoreau to write his 1854 classic *Walden; or Life in the Woods*, and enjoy hiking, swimming, fishing, and boating as Thoreau did.

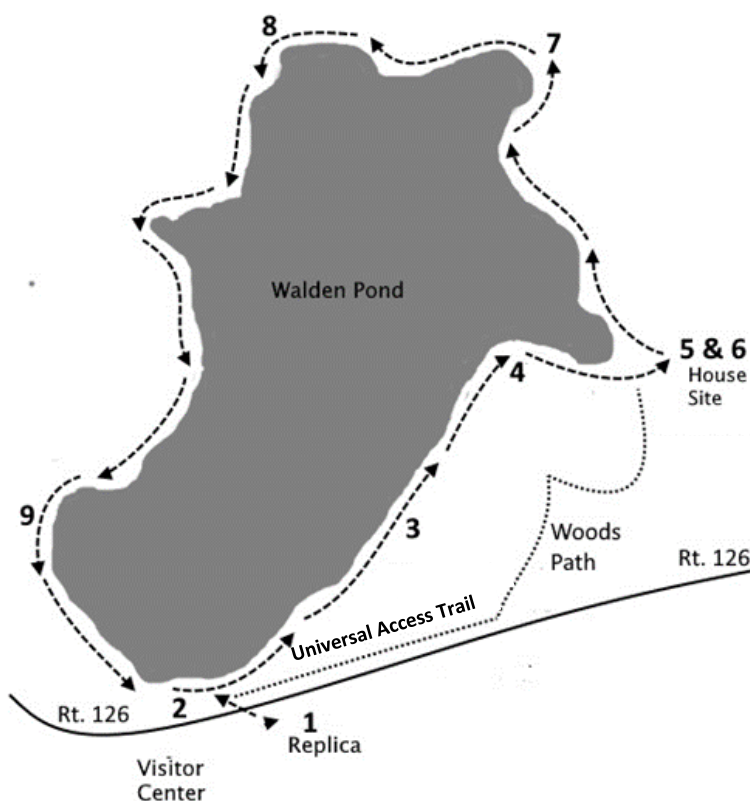
### About the Pond Path

This scenic route meanders past glacially formed coves with views of the clear water. The walk starts at the Thoreau House replica and continues past the original site of his modest dwelling.

This walk has two options, with both starting at the Thoreau House replica (#1) by the main parking lot. The dirt path is relatively easy hiking with gradual inclines on slightly uneven terrain. Great for families!

**OPTION 1**—The hike to the original house site (from #1-6) is 1/2 mile and takes about 20 minutes. Since the Pond Path is one way, you must return to the Parking Lot by taking Wyman to Woods Path. **Total Length = 1.0 mile. Total Hike Time = 40 minutes at a moderate pace.**

**OPTION 2**—Continue on the *Pond Path* (#7-9) around the perimeter of the pond. **Total Length = 1.7 miles. Total Hike Time = 60 minutes, at a moderate pace.**



## For Your Safety

- The Pond Path is one-way, counterclockwise. Stay on designated trails
- No running or bikes on this heavily used trail
- No pets in park year-round
- Leave only footprints, take only pictures
- Follow all COVID 19 safety protocols

*Begin your journey at the Thoreau House replica.*

### 1) Simplify, Simplify *Thoreau House Replica*

Peek inside this authentic reproduction of the house that 27-year-old Thoreau built in 1845 where he lived for two years, two months and two days.

Thoreau wanted a simple house with no distractions, saying:

**Many of the luxuries, and many of the so called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind.**

—*Walden*

Thoreau repurposed white pine boards and other parts from a workman's shanty to build his house. The total cost of materials for Thoreau's house was \$28.12 1/2, about two months wages.



*Simplicity inside Thoreau's house replica*

Pace the width and length outside of the building to get a sense of the size. Could you live in a house this size?

*Cross the highway (Route 126) at the flashing crosswalk signal. Turn right at bottom of the beach ramp to enter the woods at the start of the one-way Pond Path.*

### 2) Thoreau's Daily Meditation *Main Beach — Start of Pond Path*

While at Walden, Thoreau developed his life-long habit of taking daily meditative walks. He always carried a field notebook and pencil to write down his observations and inspirations. After his walks, he would rewrite his notes in his daily journal. Thoreau kept a journal from age 20 onwards.

**I think I cannot preserve my health and spirits unless I spend four hours a day at least—and it is commonly more than that—sauntering through the woods and fields absolutely free from all worldly engagements.**

—*Walking*

*Continue along the Pond Path.*

### 3) Thoreau's Fire-side *Red Cross Beach*

Thoreau called this area his “fire-side,” as it was the warmest part of the pond in winter due to its exposure to the sun. He spent time here enjoying the sun’s glow on winter days.

**...the sun reflected from the pitch-pine woods and the stony shore, made the fire-side of the pond; it is so much pleasanter and wholesome to be warmed by the sun while you can be, than by an artificial fire.**

—Walden

Re-enter the woods by the granite marker at the Pond Path entrance.

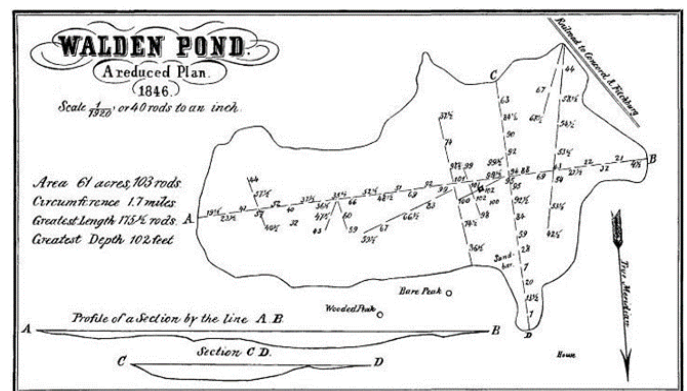


### 4) Exploring the Depth *Thoreau's Cove*

**A lake is the landscape's most expressive feature. It is the earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature.**

—Walden

Thoreau's Cove is where he spent most of his time at Walden. While living here, Thoreau honed his interests in science and surveying, reading many books, and taking scientific measurements of the lake with a rustic plumb bob to plot the first survey of Walden Pond's depths. The Visitor Center has the survey in larger detail.



Thoreau's survey of the pond—1846

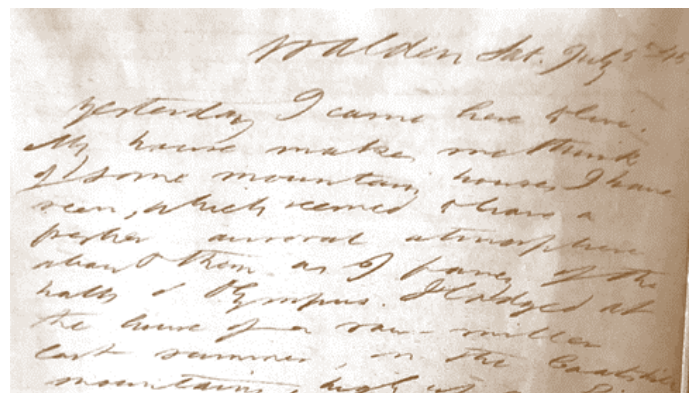
Though many locals thought Walden bottomless, Thoreau plumbed the deepest point at 102 feet and published his survey in *Walden*. It would later prove to be the deepest natural lake in Massachusetts.

Thoreau's measurements were accurate and later confirmed using modern methods.

Continue along the Pond Path.

### 5) Life in the Woods *Thoreau's Original House Site*

These granite pillars mark the footprint of Thoreau's original house and woodshed. Recall the replica house. Picture it here.



Excerpt from Thoreau's journal in his own hand

Thoreau loved solitude but he treasured sharing and exchanging ideas. Thoreau expressed his ideas in his writings, conversations, and public lectures. During his sojourn at Walden, Thoreau journaled daily at his little green desk. He was an aspiring writer and drafted his first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, about a boat trip he took with his brother to New Hampshire.

Family and friends visited from Concord quite often and Thoreau would go to town for errands and news. While residing at Walden, Thoreau protested slavery and the Mexican American War by not paying his taxes to the government. For this act, he was jailed for the night of July 23, 1846.

**I had three chairs in my house; one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society...It is surprising how many great men and women a small house will contain. I have had twenty-five or thirty souls, with their bodies, at once under my roof.**

—Walden

*Step over to the cairn of rocks.*

## 6) Pause and Reflect *The Cairn*

Henry David Thoreau died of tuberculosis in 1862 at age 44. This rock cairn was started ten years later as a natural memorial to Thoreau's ideas, by close friend Bronson Alcott and visiting suffragist Mary Newbury Adams. Admirers continue to add stones to honor Thoreau's legacy. Add a stone of your own but please leave stones placed by others.

*Continue along the Pond Path.*

## 7) Questioning Progress *Ice Fort Cove*

The Concord branch of the Fitchburg Railroad started running trains in 1844, the year before Thoreau built his house. In the winter of 1846-47, Thoreau observed teams of workers harvest and stack blocks of ice from Walden onto the shore to be transported by train to Boston Harbor for shipment to warmer climates. Thoreau referred to this stacked ice as "a vast blue fort." The railroad represented the Industrial Revolution and Thoreau questioned the changes this brought.



*"Henry David Thoreau Greets a Train"  
Tom Leamon watercolor (with permission)*

**Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end.**

—Walden

*Continue along the Pond Path.*

## 8) The Changing Forest *Along the wooded southern side of the pond*

Stop and observe the regenerating forest all around you. In Thoreau's time, much of the land around Walden was managed woodlot that provided fuel for homes and wood-burning train engines. Today, this land is conserved, and the forest ecosystem grows undisturbed, creating a rich habitat for wildlife.

**But since I left these shores the woodchoppers have still further laid them waste, and now for many a year there will be no more rambling through these aisles of wood...How can you expect the birds to sing when their groves are cut down?**

—Walden

*Continue along the Pond Path.*

## 9) On the Water *Boat Ramp to Main Beach*

Thoreau had a lifelong love of boats and waterways. For him, boating was an easy way to explore. Thoreau also fished. Today Walden fishermen enjoy angling for bass, yellow perch, sunfish, and annually stocked trout.

**In warm evenings I frequently sat in the boat playing the flute, and saw the perch, which I seemed to have charmed, hovering around me.**

—*Walden*

We hope you developed a sense of how Thoreau's time here helped him step back from the busy world and better connect with nature. Remember to take these thoughts with you as you journey further into the natural world beyond Walden Pond.

*This brings you the end of the Pond Path. Cross Route 126 to return to the Visitor Center and parking lot.*

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### WALDEN POND STATE RESERVATION

Department of Conservation and Recreation

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<https://www.mass.gov/locations/walden-pond-state-reservation>

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