

Pittsburgh Steps Walking Tours

Squirrel Hill South

Beating the Traffic and Intuitively Exploring

Squirrel Hill's history began in the southern part of the neighborhood in 1760, in a settlement along the Monongahela River known as Summerset. That's where Colonel James Burd built the neighborhood's first home. Reflecting the trajectory of Pittsburgh's history, the site is today a modern housing development, reclaimed from a United States Steel slag heap.

Because the area was thickly forested and very hilly, even by Pittsburgh's standards, it was slow to develop. As a result, the neighborhood is enriched by Pittsburgh's two largest parks, Schenley Park and Frick Park.

For additional information about Squirrel Hill, click here <https://www.pittsburghbeautiful.com/2020/02/01/squirrel-hill/> and here. <https://squirrelhillhistory.org/squirrel-hill-history/>

This walking tour has two looks to it. The first part of the walk is typified by large apartment buildings, while the second part seems more like an early Twentieth Century suburban neighborhood. There are seven sets of steps on the walk, although three are no longer passable. You'll be able to navigate 60 steps. Please see the accompanying map for the locations of the staircases.

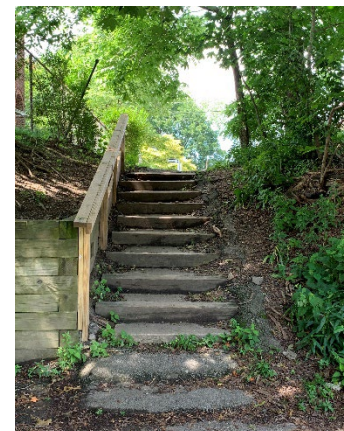
The walk is 3.9 miles long and takes about an hour and a half. This tour is current as of June 2023.

Start your tour near the intersection of Murdoch Street and Hobart Street. I found street parking on the small strip of Murdoch Street that leads to the Murdoch Street steps.



Impressive Apartment Building

The 10 Murdoch Street steps connect two parts of Murdoch Street between Hobart Street and Guarino Road. Go up and down these steps, returning to Hobart Street, where you will turn left and proceed to Wightman Street. On your way to Wightman Street you will pass a grand seven-story apartment building, with a beautifully landscaped walkway leading up to its impressive front door.



Murdoch Street Steps

Turn right on Wightman Street and take the first right onto Covode Street. After passing Yeshiva Way, and just after you pass 5533 Covode Street, you will see steps leading up to your right. These 23 steps constitute Wendover Place, which leads back up to Hobart Street, although



Wendover Place Steps

at the top the stairway ends at a private driveway. These steps are not included in the Pittsburgh Citywide Steps Assessment.

After walking up and down the Wendover Place steps, turn left on Covode Street to return to Wightman Street, where you will turn right. Turn left when you reach Pocusset Street and then turn right on Murray Avenue, being careful while you navigate the busy intersection of Pocusset Street, Murray Avenue, Forward Avenue, and the entrance ramp to the Parkway East. This is one busy, complicated intersection!

Head up Murray Avenue and turn left when you reach Morrowfield Avenue. Once on Morrowfield Avenue, take your first left onto Maeburn Road. About half a block down Maeburn Road you will see, on your right, two steps with a “No Trespassing” sign on a wood gate. This is all that

remains of a set of steps that connected Maeburn Road to Sunapee Way. At one time there were 30 steps here, construction date unknown.

Return to Morrowfield Avenue and turn left. When you reach the top of the hill turn around to see a view of the tops of Pittsburgh’s skyscrapers, one of many stunning vistas of our beloved skyline you enjoy on these walks. Also know that when you are walking along Morrowfield Avenue you are directly atop, and proceeding in the same line as, the tubes of the Squirrel Hill Tunnel far below you. How many of us have inched in bumper-to-bumper traffic through the tunnel not realizing that pedestrians high above us were walking faster than we were driving?

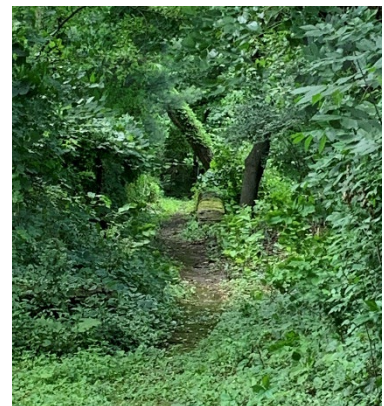
Remember the long-gone steps along Maeburn Road? Turn left on Shady Avenue to find more evidence of their former existence. About one-half block along Shady Avenue you’ll find an alley, Sunapee Way, on your left. At its end you’ll be rewarded with a view of the path that led from Sunapee Way to those steps. A good find resulting from some intuitive exploration.

Return to Shady Avenue and turn right. Turn right again on Lilac Street when Shady Avenue ends. As you are walking along Lilac Street you pass the John Minadeo Elementary School. “Who was John Minadeo?” I wondered. A 15- year-old hero, as it turns out. Read about this young man’s heroic act here. <https://www.carnegiehero.org/1513-teen-safety-patrol/>

Turn left on Saline Street. Federal Hill Street joins Saline Street on the right. Federal Hill Street used to continue up the hill to your left as a set of steps. Peering as I might into the vegetation between two yards, I could not find any trace of the eight steps that were once part of a path between Saline and Ludwick Streets. So I went back down Saline Street, turned right on Landview Road, and then intuitively turned right



Sunapee Place Steps



Path Leading to Old Federal Street Steps

on Ludwick Street. Sometimes we need to do some real sleuthing to find our steps! Sure enough, across from Ventner Way and between two yards I saw a path that had been the route of the Federal Hill Street steps. A Federal Hill Street sign still looks over its long-gone charge.



Steps from Lilac to Rosemoor

Head back up Ludwick Street and turn right on Lilac Street. At the end of Lilac Street you will see steps going up to your right and down to your left. Their construction date is unknown. The 32 steps to your right are closed. I suspect the upper part of these steps, which once went to Rosemoor Street, have been subsumed into the yards between two houses. Proceed down the 23 steps to your left to Caton Street, where you turn left.

Head down Caton Street and turn right on Shady Avenue. Along the way, where Ebdy Street enters from the right, I found a well-stocked Little Free Library. I have also come across these in South Side Slopes and Fineview. Apparently, this is one of over 150,000 Little Free

Libraries around the world! <https://littlefreelibrary.org/>

Continue along Shady Avenue until it intersects with Forward Avenue. As you turn left onto Forward Avenue from Shady Avenue, you will see the stately Allderdice High School, both an academic and athletic powerhouse, to your right. Learn more about the school's namesake,



Taylor Allderdice High School

Taylor Allderdice, here. <https://theforeword.org/876/features/who-was-taylor-allerdice-a-look-at-our-schools-namesake/>

As you walk along Forward Avenue don't forget to claim the two steps on the right-hand side of the street that connect Eldridge Street and Forward Avenue.

While you are waiting at the light to cross Murray Avenue, take note of the brick building on the far-right corner. Above the front entrance, enduring long past

corporate mergers and breakups, are the engraved words: Bell Telephone. Looking farther up the face of the building, you will see a bright, modern Verizon sign, and leap a century, from bygone days of rotary phones to today's cell phones with internet access, instant messages, and video calls.

Here, too, take care at this busy and complicated intersection, cross Murray Avenue and turn right. After a hike as long as this you might be ready for a refreshment. Opportunities abound along Murray Avenue. I was happy to discover 61C Café, at the corner of Murray Avenue and Bartlett Street, just a couple blocks



Steps from Lilac to Caton



Steps from Forward to Eldridge

from my starting point. A pear, mango, and banana smoothie hit the spot. I enjoyed it with great satisfaction in having discovered steps that are not in the Pittsburgh Citywide Steps Assessment, sniffing out the paths of some long-gone steps, and discovering what sits high above you when you drive, or more often, crawl through the Squirrel Hill Tunnel.

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