

**# 1 Report by Kathryn King**

## **Chestnut Ridge Rockhounding Trip: A First-Time Experience Worth Every Step**

From the moment I attended my first club meeting, I knew I was all in. I started preparing immediately—gathering gear piece by piece after work and spending every free moment reading about rockhounding and how to do it right. Looking back, I probably overprepared and carried far more than I needed, but the process itself taught me a lot.

The morning of the trip came with one early lesson: never underestimate Saturday traffic. Getting there was more stressful than expected, but once I arrived and the trip officially began, everything shifted. The group was welcoming, friendly, and immediately put me at ease.



*Starting the day with an incredible group—welcoming, knowledgeable, and generous with their time and experience.*

I hiked in carrying a framed camping backpack loaded with about 25 pounds of tools, food, and water for both me and my dog, Marya. This was our first rockhounding trip—and it did not take long for both of us to catch the bug.



*Marya's first rockhounding trip—she handled the terrain like a pro and fully enjoyed the adventure.*

We had been warned about the climb, and those warnings were well-earned. The trail was steep, and the thick leaf litter made footing tricky, sometimes rising past my ankles. But once you got to the right areas and moved the leaves aside, the exposed pockets revealed what was underneath—crystals that sparkled in the light.

We pushed past the halfway point and continued all the way to the top. At one point along a ridgeline, Dave pointed me in the right direction and told me to go ahead and we would regroup further up. As I moved ahead and got closer to the top of the ridge, everything around me began to catch the light—small flashes and shimmer scattered across the surface. It was beautiful—almost surreal. I could have stayed there for hours.

While I would love to explore the area more, I'm not quite ready to go alone—between copperheads, hunters, and the general unknowns. That made the group experience even more valuable. The willingness of everyone to share knowledge, techniques, and encouragement made a lasting impression. Learning alongside experienced members was just as rewarding as the finds themselves.

Early on, I found myself picking up everything that caught my eye. Then Dave introduced me to the concept of a “leverite”—“leave it right there”—and that quickly

changed my approach. I realized I had been collecting quantity over quality and began to be much more selective.

Later, I spent time watching Tom work a rock face. He showed me what a pocket looks like, how to recognize it in the geology, and how to properly work it using the right tools. I also spent time talking with Dave at the top while he was digging, and I made a point to stop and talk with others throughout the day to learn from their experience. That exchange of knowledge became a big part of the trip for me.

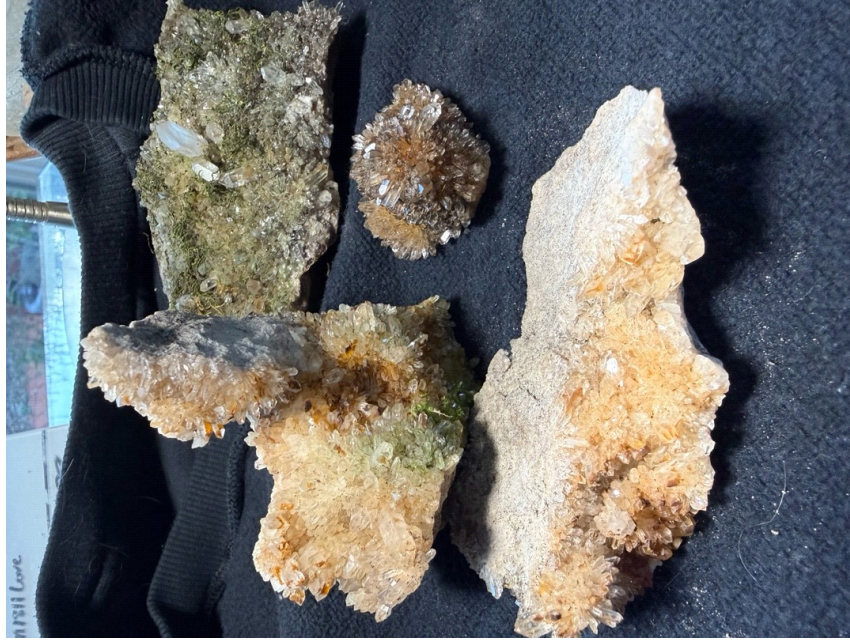
I stepped back, looked at the landscape differently, and within a few minutes, I found my first pocket.



*My first pocket find—the moment everything clicked. I was so excited I ran to share it with the group.*

Pulling crystals from it was one of the most exhilarating experiences I've had. I returned to the spot and continued working it, uncovering more as I went.

As the day went on, I noticed others digging deeper and uncovering larger pieces. Most of what I had found were smaller crystals, and it made me realize I want to come back and spend time working the ground more thoroughly. I could easily spend an entire weekend exploring and digging along that ridge.



*A few of my favorite finds from the day—each one a reminder of what's hidden just beneath the surface.*



*One of my more unique pieces—still has moss on it. I'm learning how to clean these properly and taking my time with it.*

When it was time to leave, I was the last one packing up—I simply wasn't ready for the day to end. Marya had just as much fun as I did, staying with the group, making friends, and even digging her own little spot for a while.

The hike down was no less challenging. My pack had grown to about 55 pounds, and my legs definitely felt it. There were a few slips on the leaves, but taking it slow and steady got me down safely. After getting down, I put my backpack in the car, then turned around and went about a quarter of the way back up to help carry Rich's bucket down. On the way down, we spent some time talking as I carried it.

After unloading at the car, we packed up efficiently, grabbed some food for energy, and got ready for the drive home.





*This piece started as what looked like a solid ball of mud when I chopped it out of the rock—but I knew it was all crystals. After cleaning, it revealed itself as what I now call my “crystal ball,” and it’s one of my favorite finds. I’m saving the rest of the cleaning to share that experience with my mom when she visits in a couple of weeks.*

One final surprise: driving straight home shaved about 40 minutes off my return trip.

This trip was, without question, one of the best experiences I’ve had in years. It left me feeling genuinely happy—fully present and alive. I’m incredibly grateful for the group and already looking forward to the next trip.

Kathryn King

#2 Report by John Wiegand

### **Chestnut Ridge Field Trip 28Mar26**

After last year’s field trip to Chestnut Ridge, I resolved to do it again, since it was so rewarding. However, I also resolved to prepare myself by working out to strengthen my legs for that arduous mile climb up basically broken points, promising more to find. Sure enough, as I followed the line of points, larger specimens emerged. I was rewarded with larger crystals clinging to base rocks. Here are my finds after washing with water. I included an objective piece to show what I hope to achieve using an acid bath. a 40% grade. Well, I tried, but it was more exhausting than my training allowed. Still, the rewards for making the journey were worth it.

The sunny day started brisk, but the climb overcame that by generating heat. At the halfway point, it was an assessment to determine to stop and look there or continue on. Despite reservations I had to do it, so up I went. Once there, I found my spot, and sure

enough, there were lots of good quartz crystals to be found, just as Dave Lines predicted there would be. Very gratifying. As I was digging into the loose dirt, I began seeing small



Unlike last year, when I hauled 50 pounds of finds back, this time I was more prudent with less weight for the trip back (and going back 2 hours early). BTW, going back on that steep grade still proved more challenging. What also made the trip worthwhile was the friendly company from Dave, Rich, Tom, Kathryn, and Joe. Their support is greatly appreciated