

TAKE A HIKE



Lace up your boots and join the adventure!

We hope you enjoy all these wondrous spots that make our backyard such a special place to play!

ABOUT OUR RATING SYSTEM:

We developed a “boot” rating system to help you decide which hike is right for you.

The easiest hikes get one “boot” .. the toughest get five.

Keep in mind that the rankings are relative to the other hikes in this guide .. not hikes in Baxter State Park, New Hampshire’s Whites Mountains or the Himalayas!

So a Five Boot Trail here might be a Four Boot Trail in Colorado .. but it is the toughest trail in our guide.

The easiest “one boot” trails are the first ones listed in the guide. The hardest are the last. If you’re a beginning hiker, you can work your way up the tough ones.

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TAKE A HIKE

Hiked and Written

By The Carrabassett Valley Outdoor Association

**Do you want to know an easy hike to a great waterfall?
How about a trek that allows you to bag THREE 4,000-
foot peaks in a single day? Or maybe the best spot to
picnic, surrounded by awesome vistas?**

**Want to get to know your own backyard just a little bit
better?**

**The Carrabassett Valley Outdoor Association can help!!
Members of the "active outdoor club" put boot to
boulder during the summer of 2012, hiking the mountains
in our very own playground.**

**We made notes about the views, the wildlife and the
terrain over the miles upon miles of trails that criss-cross
our Valley and its neighboring towns.**

**The result is this hiking guide, an insider's look at our
mountains, waterfalls, lakes and trails .. all the places
that make Carrabassett Valley such a special place.**

**We'll tell you what the trail is like, how long it will take
you to get to the top, where to stop for a swim or a
picnic .. and how tough a hike you are getting yourself
into!**

This book is filled with personal observations and hard facts. It is crammed with some of our favorite hikes .. including all the 4,000-footers in our valley, five waterfall walks and some nice loop treks.

Our region has much to boast about: There are just 14 peaks in Maine that tower to the 4,000-foot level .. and 10 of them are in our backyard: Avery Peak, Mount Abraham, North & South Crocker, Redington, Saddleback, Saddleback Horn, Spaulding, Sugarloaf and West Peak

Yet, look in most hiking guides and the town of “Carrabassett Valley” gets none of the kudos. Instead, our mountains get lumped into the “Rangeley/Stratton Region.”

We thought it was time to set the record straight!

Not only do we have the highest concentration of 4,000-footers in Maine, but the Appalachian Trail runs right through our town.



Our trails are some of the toughest climbs the thru-hikers make on their way to the summit of Katahdin and the terminus of the 2,174 mile Appalachian Trail.

CVOA members maintain several sections of the AT, trimming back brush, clearing blow downs, building bog bridges and marking trails.

Paul and Andy Trueworthy maintain the section of the AT running up Sugarloaf; Tom Spring and Helen Poulin maintain the section of the AT that runs up South Crocker; Al and Lisa Sleight maintain the trail over at Flagstaff Lake and Jim and Sandy Osterrider take care of the campground at the Crocker Cirque.

And all our members are on constant litter patrol, picking up trash left behind by other less considerate hikers.

We are also the home base to the Maine Huts & Trail system, which has undertaken the ambitious project of building a 180-mile trail network stretching from the Mahoosuc Range to Moosehead Lake which will eventually be supported by 12 backcountry lodges. These lodges will provide shelter, food and a hot shower to hikers. No tent platforms in this network!

The trails are free to use and the “huts” .. lodges really .. offer fresh water, flush toilets and food to day trippers. Today, there are 45 miles of trails in the network.

You can hike or mountain bike these trails in the summer, ski or snowshoe them in the winter and canoe or fish in the rivers and lakes along the way.



A WORD ABOUT OUR GUIDE

Our guide is not just for the hard-core hiker: There are easy hikes to waterfalls, swimming holes and fishing ponds. There are “slack pack” hikes you can finish in half a day. There are special hikes to scenic vistas that give you a lot of view for not much exertion!

We tried to be as accurate as we could with distances, referencing several sources. Our estimated hiking “times” were what it took our hikers to get to the summit and back .. with some leeway to account for the twinkle toes who skip to the peak and the foot-draggers who slog their way up and limp back down.

As a rule of thumb, figure on hiking 2 miles every hour .. and then add an extra half hour for every 1000 feet of elevation gained.

HIKING IN CARRABASSETT VALLEY

We enjoy these special lands we call “home” .. and we want future generations to do so as well. That is why we are committed to preserving and protecting our natural resources .. and to keeping them pristine and “open” for those who hike behind us.

For anyone who enjoys recreating in the outdoors, whether it be hiking, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, biking, hiking, fishing, bird watching or any other activity you might enjoy out in the woods, no one likes to see “No Trespassing “ signs.

Unfortunately as we travel around the State of Maine, these signs are becoming more common, with thousands of acres being posted.

It is frustrating to us outdoor enthusiasts to see these signs. But when we talk to the landowners, we understand their reasons: The stories they tell of the inconsiderate acts people do on other’s private property are infuriating.

Here in our Valley, the landowners generously allow us to use their property. In return we should all respect their land as if it is our own. Carry-In, Carry-Out is always the rule.

And please pick up any trash left behind by others who are less considerate. It’s the right thing to do.

The hikes listed in the book traverse property owned by a mix of private landowners .. the Sugarloaf and Saddleback ski areas, Plum Creek Corporation, The State of Maine (Bigelow Preserve), The Town of Carrabassett, the Penobscot Indian Tribe and others.

Please join us in thanking these generous neighbors for giving the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors by respecting their lands. Without them allowing us to recreate on their land, there would be no need for this book!

A WORD OF CAUTION

The Carrabassett Valley is a popular area for hunting in the fall. If you go hiking during October, November and early December, remember to wear florescent orange and do not wear any white clothing. In Maine, there is no hunting on Sundays, but during the rest of the week you do need to dress appropriately.

These are big woods around here. When going for a hike, we recommend always taking a compass, a map of the area where you will be hiking, plenty of water, extra clothing, a flashlight that works, matches, and a first aid kit. And, always let someone know what your plans are.

A WORD OF RECOGNITION

We want to thank the hikers/writers who laced up their boots and spent summer days taking notes on the trails: Peggy Bickford, Duff Doherty, Don Fowler, Paul Houlares, Sandy Jamison, John Marden, Jane Marden, John McCatherin, John Morey, Nancy Perry, Tom Spring, Linda Trueworthy, Paul Trueworthy, Judy Weston, Pete Weston and Rick Young.

We also want to thank the photographers who shared their pictures of these special vistas with us: Peggy Bickford, Vicki Foster, Nancy Fowler, Sandy Jamison, Nancy Perry, Linda Trueworthy, Judy Weston and Pete Weston.

We want to thank our editorial “staff” for pulling this guide together .. reading, researching, writing, editing, laying out the pages, working with the photos: Nancy Perry and Sandy Jamison.

And we want to thank our eagle-eyed proofreaders Linda Treworthy, Helen Poulin, Peter Weston and Judy Weston, who diligently rooted out typos and double-checked directions so you wouldn't get you lost!

A WORD ABOUT US

The Carrabassett Valley Outdoor Association started over a decade ago with a small band of outdoor enthusiasts .. and grew. And grew. And grew.

Today there are more than 700 members in CVOA. Our mission is simple: to protect our natural resources and promote recreational opportunities in our area.

Every year we travel around Maine, Canada and the western ski resorts .. skiing, hiking, biking, canoeing, fishing, snowshoeing and just having fun!

If you want to join us .. it's easy .. and it's cheap. For about the price of a pair of smart wool socks or a good water bottle you get a year's worth of adventures! You can get an application online at:www.cvoutdoors.com

JOIN THE ADVENTURE!!

DAGGETT ROCK

A short walk in the woods to a unique geological formation .. the largest glacial erratic in Maine.



DISTANCE: 2/3 mile roundtrip

TIME: 30 minutes

DIRECTIONS: Take Route 142 from Kingfield towards Salem and Phillips. Before reaching Phillips center, look on your left for the Wheeler Hill Road. There's a small sign tacked to a tree that says Daggett Rock .. although it's easier to see heading away from Phillips Center than it is heading to Phillips Center. Turn here and drive about 2.3 miles. Look for another sign tacked to a tree on your left. Park here.

THE TRAIL: An easy uphill climb of 1/3 mile takes you to a huge boulder, sliced into three parts with a narrow passage way running through the center. This giant erratic, formed when the rock got carted off by glacial ice and dumped in new surroundings, has been a tourist attraction for more than 200 years. It's a fun family walk .. with something interesting to view at the end: a rock standing roughly 25 feet high and measuring 80 feet in length and 30 feet in width. You can actually squeeze through the crevice that runs from one side to the other .. or climb up the side of the boulder. Kids love it!



Daggett Rock is generally considered to be the largest erratic in Maine .. although not as famous as the “hanging boulder” in Acadia National Park. Local lore never proven .. suggests that the rock was split on a dare with God that backfired: A local woodsman, upset by a raging thunderstorm, climbed up the rock and boasted that he would never be struck down. A bolt of lightning killed him and left the rock in three pieces .. a good a story .. true or not!



Hiked by Nancy Perry

WEST MOUNTAIN FALLS

A great place for a summer swim .. or a picnic lunch on the rocks with the cool waters from several small falls rushing over your feet!



DISTANCE: 6/10 miles roundtrip

TIME: 30 minutes

DIRECTIONS: Take the Sugarloaf Access Road to the West Mountain Road, which is on the right after the condo check-in area. Turn right and drive up the paved road until the turn-off for the Sugarloaf Golf Club. Turn right, heading towards the golf course. You'll see a small parking area off to the right before you reach the clubhouse. Park here, cross the road and head towards the sign for West Mountain Falls.

THE TRAIL: The trail descends steeply for a brief period along loose rocks before leveling off. The narrow path is marked by roots and several "turnoffs" that lead you down to the swimming holes and fishing pools that dot the South Branch of the Carrabassett.





The trail ends in 3/10 of a mile at the falls.

Actually there are several small “step falls” along the river that cascade into clear cool water.

Wade over to a nice flat boulder with your lunch and a book, dangle your feet in the water and while away a pleasant summer afternoon. Locals have been known to pull trout from these pools!

Along the path you'll find a sign that bears remembering when hiking any trail: Leave nothing but footsteps. Take nothing but pictures!



Hiked by Nancy Perry

SUGARLOAF OUTDOOR CENTER LOOP TO SNOWBROOK

This pleasant walk follows the Sugarloaf Outdoor Center trails around Moose Bog, heading westerly towards the Snowbrook Village and Snubber Trail areas. A great fall hike, a nice walk with children and one of our many "Holiday Hikes." Please note that access is limited to 'off season' periods at the Sugarloaf Outdoor Center, as foot traffic is not allowed while trails are in use for Nordic skiing. Check opening and closing dates for the Sugarloaf Outdoor Center.



DISTANCE: 4 miles round-trip.

TIME: 1 ½ -2 hours

DIRECTIONS: The Outdoor Center is 1 mile south of the Sugarloaf access road on Rte 27. Follow the gravel drive to the large parking area. The trail starts to the right of the Outdoor Center Lodge. Look for Trail 7 signs.

THE TRAIL: A wide, gravel/grassy pathway, with generally gentle hills, and one or two short, steep ascents. Follow Trail 7 to its intersection with Trail 1 at the 'overpass' log bridge. Turn right onto Trail 1 West. Continue on trail, with occasional views of Sugarloaf. Some sections can be a little muddy or wet depending on recent rains, and snow melt if hiking in the spring.

The trail meanders through a mix of hardwood and spruce forest, with sunny and shady sections. A side trail to the Twinbrook neighborhood is apparent near a house along the trail. After crossing a logging road, and two

bridges, you will see the Snowbrook Pool building. The Trail then intersects with the Snubber Ski Trail.

On the return route, stay on 1 East, to 'loop' around Moose Bog to the Outdoor Center Lodge (follow 'Lodge' signs). There are great views of Sugarloaf behind the lodge building.

The deck makes a great spot for a picnic .. as does the large rock looking over to the pond.

The trail intersects with Routes 23 and 24, and the Dog Trail along the way, providing options for heading north towards the Burnt Mountain trailhead. Trail maps from the Outdoor Center should be consulted if you choose to explore other routes. You can download maps from the Sugarloaf Outdoor Center web site.

Hiked by Peggy Bickford



REED FALLS

An easy hike with a spectacular view. Bring a picnic, a camera, a fishing pole & a bathing suit! It's a favorite CVOA springtime hike.



DISTANCE: 2 miles (round trip)

TIME: 1 hour

DIRECTIONS: The trailhead is off the southbound side Route 27 in Kingfield, 1/10 of a mile south of the veterinary clinic .. or 2 ½ miles north of the Tufts Pond Road. There's a small turnoff in the northbound lane where you can park.

Cross the street from the parking area and enter the woods on a narrow trail just south of the culvert, keeping Reed Brook on your right.

THE TRAIL: This is a nice stroll through the woods with a short climb near the falls. The unmarked woods trail tracks Reed Brook up to the falls. It is mostly flat, with a slight uphill that grows gradually steeper as you approach the falls. There is blow down along the trail at several locations where you'll have to cross small streams or brooks, depending on the water levels. Always keep Reed Brook to your right.

The hike along the brook is a pretty one, with the stream forming several smaller "step" falls as well as creating small pools for cooling off .. or maybe catching a trout.

There are large rocks in the stream for sunning or picnicking.



The falls are spectacular, stretching wide across a rock ledge and tumbling down expansively into the brook. They are especially dramatic in the spring after snow melt or heavy rains.

You can climb up a steep path alongside of the falls to a deep pool on top. But beware: The rocks are slippery and a misstep can plunge you, feet first, into a chin-deep pool of icy spring runoff! You'll be chilled to the bone .. and your camera will not be happy!

Hiked by Nancy Perry

JULIE POND

A steady hike up an old tote road to a quiet fishing hole. Bring a bucket if you're hiking in late summer .. and keep an eye out for the blackberries that grow with abandon along the side trails.



DISTANCE: 3.8 miles round trip

TIME: 2 -3 hours

DIRECTIONS: On Route 27, directly opposite the south entrance to Spring Farm, on the right coming from Sugarloaf and on the left coming from Kingfield, is a rough tote road. Turn here and park

THE TRAIL: A rough tote road, passable only by 4-wheel drive, and an established ATV trail. The road runs uphill at a fairly moderate pace. At 1.9 miles, on a curve to the left, is a gravel bank. Turn right at the top of the gravel bank and Julie Pond is located about 100 feet from the road. Julie Pond supports a natural trout population (fly fishing only) and hosts a family of beavers.

If you approach quietly, you might even spook a moose grazing in the pond .. sending them thrashing through the woods.

Hiked by Don Fowler

HUSTON BROOK FALLS

An easy hike, perfect in the spring to see the cascading falls or to cast a fly .. or in the summer for a refreshing dip in what's known locally as the coldest swimming hole in the valley!



DISTANCE: 3 miles roundtrip

TIME: 1 ½ hours

DIRECTIONS: Take Route 27 north to the Carrabassett Inn, just north of Ayotte's. Turn right down a dirt road to the right of the Inn marked by a Maine Huts & Trails sign. This will take you to a parking lot next to the airport runway. There's a new outhouse here for pit stops.



THE TRAIL: Follow the pole markers across the field to the new bridge crossing the Carrabassett River. Take a left onto the dirt road for a very short distance to a fork in the road, the gate to the Narrow Gauge Pathway and Huston Brook Road. Bear right onto Huston Brook Road.

The road gradually climbs up. There are sections of the river next to the road .. good pools for fishing or cooling off. Shortly after the road levels off, look for a well worn path on your left which leads into the woods in a very short distance, then down a short but steep trail to the falls and a gentle moving river. There's plenty of flat shoreline to relax, swim or fish.



LONGER OPTION: If you're feeling really energetic, you can follow the logging road all the way to Stratton .. a full day, 8-mile hike through the Bigelow Preserve that exits on Rte. 27. Position a car on the other end near Stoneybrook so you don't have to walk back!

Hiked by Linda Trueworthy

BALD MOUNTAIN OQUOSSOC (Elevation: 2,443 Feet)

An easy hike with a big reward .. 360 degree views of the Rangeley lakes from the summit. The north slope of Bald Mountain was once a ski trail but it has long been abandoned and the trails are overgrown. The views from the lookout tower at the summit are amazing .. and there are picnic tables to enjoy lunch in this scenic setting!



DISTANCE: 2 miles roundtrip

TIME: 1 ½-2 hours

DIFFICULTY: TWO BOOTS

DIRECTIONS: Head south on Route 4 from Oquossoc towards Haines Landing. Turn left on Bald Mountain Road. At about one mile look for a parking lot on the left.

THE TRAIL: Begin hiking up the blue-blazed trail, ascending gradually up easy grades. At the fork, bear right and continue hiking through hardwood forests, following an old stream bed that can be muddy in the spring. Pack a lunch to enjoy at the top .. but bring a wind-breaker .. there's often a stiff breeze up top .. nature's own air conditioning on a hot day!

Hiked by Nancy Perry

ANGEL FALLS OQUOSSOC

Gorgeous falls with a 90-foot drop that puts it in contention with Moxie Falls as the largest falls in Maine. To some early visitors, this waterfall looked like an angel's wing, the origin of its name. It remains a heavenly place for a picnic and a swim!



DISTANCE: 1.25 miles

TIME: 1 hour

DIRECTIONS: From the junction of Routes 4 & 17 in Oquossoc, go south on Route 17, a total of 18.2 miles and turn right across a bridge onto Houghton Road. Follow the road around a curve where it becomes the Bemis Track to the right for a total of 3.7 miles to the Angel Falls trail.

THE TRAIL: Angel Falls is a moderate hike of one hour or less round trip .. and well worth the effort required. It is a great family hike to a spectacularly scenic hanging falls, with what some claim is the largest single drop in Maine.

From the start of the trail, the road circles left into a gravel pit where you start looking for red blazes. Cross Berdeen Stream and continue following red blazes to Mountain Brook, about 15 minutes from the gravel pit. The trail crosses the stream four times.

During periods of high water, the crossings can be dangerous.

As you approach the base, spray from the falls can make the trail slick. Be prepared to hop some rocks on this one!



The trail follows the stream through an area of old and impressive hardwoods. After another 15 minutes working upstream and rounding a final turn, you'll reach the base of the falls. You'll know you're approaching the falls when you feel the spray and cool dampness from the falls. To the left of the falls is a 70-foot high wall of rock down from which streams and sprays of water fall to the dark pool below.

The base of the falls is a great spot for a picnic or a swim in the cold mountain water.

Hiked by John McCatherin

CROMMETT OVERLOOK

This scenic vista offers a panoramic view of Sugarloaf, Burnt Mountain and the Crocker Cirque .. one of the only views where you can see all the trails of Sugarloaf from West Mountain to King Pine. It's a great fall hike during foliage season .. and a fun place to snowshoe or ski in the winter.



It is one of CVOA's very favorite hikes .. in all seasons! The overlook was named after the late Dick Crommett, an avid skier, hiker and outdoorsman who "discovered" the site on one of his many hikes. Dick was one of the founders of CVOA. CVOA built a picnic table on site in Dick's memory. It's a great spot for lunch. First-timers should be prepared to feel their jaw drop when they round the last bend and look out over the vista.



DISTANCE: 4.8 miles.

TIME: 2-2 1/2 hours.

DIRECTIONS: Follow Rte. 27 southbound from the Sugarloaf Access Road to Hug's Restaurant (on your right). Across from Hug's, turn left on Campbell Field Road and follow it almost to the end. Take the last left before Campbell Field rejoins Rte.27 and enter the parking lot.

Alternately, if travelling northbound on Rte. 27, turn right into Campbell Field and park.

THE TRAIL: This is an easy walk along the Narrow Gauge Pathway for 1.7 miles, followed by a gradual ascent along a grassy, rocky woods trail for the remaining .7 miles.

Follow the Narrow Gauge pathway across the bridge that crosses the Carrabassett River. At 2/10 mile turn right. (There is a sign here indicating that it is 5 miles along the pathway to the town office/park). The path is well-maintained for bikers and hikers and is groomed for cross country skiing in the winter. Motorized vehicles are prohibited.





There is a picnic table with a nice view of the river and Sugarloaf Mountain at 1.5 miles. It is one of eight picnic tables built by CVOA for the pathway. At 1.7 miles, there is a second picnic table. Take the first left after the second picnic table. The turn is marked by a cairn.



You'll cross a boggy area that is muddy in spring but a log helps you across the water. The trail continues steadily uphill at a gentle rise. Watch for a large rock on your right, topped with a cairn. Turn left here and proceed uphill.

The trail, a mix of rocks and grass, climbs gradually but steadily through a wooded area dotted with wildflowers and wild strawberries. At 2.4 miles, the trail crests into an open area. Look out to your left for a spectacular view of Sugarloaf. There is a picnic table at the overlook. Return the same way.

PAPPY’S SCENIC SIDE TRIP

After crossing the bridge and turning right on the Narrow Gauge, keep an eye out on your left for a small sign reading “Pappy’s Scenic Sight Snowshoes.” It marks a path that is the handwork of CVOA members Pam & Pappy Labbe.

Hike up just a short way and look back for some spectacular views of Sugarloaf!

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: THE RIVER LOOP TAIL.

After leaving the trailhead parking lot and crossing the bridge, take the first right turn into the woods. Follow the path as it meanders through the woods and along the river. There are several spots along the river for swimming and picnicking. The trail ends back on the Gauge Pathway at the Trail Narrows sign in about one-half mile.

Hiked by Nancy Perry



JONES POND

This hike takes you to Jones Pond, a large, shallow pond offering spectacular views of the Bigelows. In the winter, you can snowshoe across the pond and along the perimeter, which rewards you with views of Sugarloaf. This is one of CVOA's favorite "Holiday Hikes."



DISTANCE: 4-5 miles round trip

TIME: 2-2 1/2 hours.

DIRECTIONS: Follow Rte. 27 north 2.7 miles past the Sugarloaf Access Road, the Carrabassett Transfer Station, the Carrabassett Sanitary District and the CVOA Shooting Range (at 1.8 miles). Watch for the AT sign. Turn left into the AT parking lot. Park here.

THE TRAIL: Cross the road to the AT trailhead and proceed into the woods. Follow the white-blazed forest trail, which dips and rises as it winds through the trees and across streams and rivers. Logs are in place on three of the streams, making for an easy crossing. The last stream is more difficult to cross as several logs must be traversed. Bring a hiking stick for balance!

Mid-way through the hike, the trail climbs to a clearing, where the first views of the Bigelows are visible. There's a log bench here for resting.

At .9 miles, the trail crosses the Stratton Brook Road. You can turn left here and proceed along the level road

until you reach a clearing area, marked by the Zone 6 Rescue Area sign.

Take a right onto a tote road and continue past Cranberry Peak Road. Turn right and walk across a gated bridge that crosses Stratton Brook.



OR, instead of turning left on the Stratton Brook Road, continue along the wooded AT trail, across a low ridge and up a set of nice log stairs. The trail ends in about 15 minutes on the Cranberry Peak Road. Turn left and proceed a short distance. When you reach a clearing area marked by the Zone 6 Rescue Sign, turn right and walk across the gated bridge that crosses Stratton Brook.

The trail is mostly flat and narrows as you get into the woods. Look for an old safe and a burned-out camp on your right. At the fork in the trail after the camp, turn right.

The trail is rougher here, and quite muddy before the ground freezes. Shortly after making the right turn, you'll see the pond. There is a spectacular view of the Bigelow Range from the shore.

If the pond is frozen, walk around the perimeters, adding another half hour or so to the hike. You'll see Sugarloaf from the opposite side of the pond. Return the same way you hiked in.

SHORTER, ALTERNATIVE HIKE:



Directions: Follow Rte. 27 north past the Sugarloaf Access Road, the Carrabasset Transfer Station, Sanitary District and CVOA Shooting Range into Wyman. Drive past the AT crossing, watching for the sign for the Bigelow Preserve on the right. Turn right onto the Stratton Brook Road immediately after the sign.

Follow the dirt road in until it intersects with the Loop Road. You can park off to the side of the road here. Turn right and begin walking along a hard-packed, flat dirt road for about 15 minutes.

Turn left onto a tote road, walking past the Cranberry Peak Road on the right.

You'll reach a junction with a small parking lot. Look for the sign for Rescue Zone 6. You can also park here. Turn right and cross the gated bridge over Stratton Brook. Proceed as described above.

Hiked by Nancy Perry

HEDGEHOG HILL (Elevation 2,087 Feet)

A hike along old access roads or ATV trails running under a power line and offering some nice views to the north and east, including The Bigelow Range, Eustis Ridge & Kibby Mountain. Hedgehog Hill is a favorite with locals looking for exercise and a great view without great distance.



DISTANCE: 2 ½ to 3 miles

TIME: 1 ½ hours.

DIRECTIONS: Heading North on Route 27, it's 6.8 miles from the Sugarloaf Access road. Turn left just before the Stratton Town Line onto Porcupine Trail, next to the Hedgehog Village sign. From the Stratton Town Office, it's .7 miles south to the Porcupine Trail road. Follow the road for .3 miles and turn right onto Hedgehog Trail. Park there.

THE TRAIL: The trail proceeds straight ahead for about a hundred yards on an old road to the intersection of a road cutting across the hillside. Turn right and follow the road into the woods, crossing a small stream twice in the first couple of hundred feet. At the top of the first knoll, follow the road to the right until it intersects a well-used gravel road. Turn left slightly uphill until it crosses under the power line. At the far right hand side of the power line, an old access road now used by ATVs winds back and forth across the power line until it reaches Pole #65, about 200 feet below where the power line veers left.

Go straight across the right of way and into the woods on the right of the power line where a well-worn path will take you up and then slightly downward and to the left where it will rejoin the power line.

While the Hedgehog Hill summit is actually above this point, the locals say there's no view from there. From where the woods trail rejoins the powerline, you'll find a nice open picnic spot and have wonderful views of the Bigelow Range to the east, including Cranberry Peak, the Horns, West and Avery Peaks, and to the northwest overlooking the town of Stratton, the west end of Flagstaff Lake, Eustis Ridge, the Kibby Range and Snow Mountain in the distance.

Return by the same route back through the woods trail. The next set of poles is only about 200 feet further down the power line .. but don't be tempted.

It's bushwhacking all the way down steep rocky ledges with little opportunity to see where you're stepping.

Hiked by John McCatherin





MAINE HUTS AND TRAILS

The grand dream of 12 backcountry huts spread over 180 miles of nature .. stretching from the Mahoosuc Range in Bethel to Moosehead Lake in Rockwood .. started right here in our own backyard.

To date, four huts and connecting trail systems have been built. All spin out from the core in the Carrabassett Valley region .. stretching out to the Forks and Flagstaff Lake from the Route 27 corridor.

Since the first hut opened at Poplar Stream in 2008, hikers, mountain bikers, paddlers, nordic skiers and snowshoers have been beating a path to “the huts” .. often for a day hike and lunch, sometimes for a 2-day trek and an overnight stay in the “green” lodges that now dot our back country .. or the ultimate trek .. a 4-5 day, 3-4 night marathoner to all the huts.

Many of the trails allow hikers to connect to the sections of the Appalachian Trail that run through our neighborhood .. or to hike some of our mighty 4,000-foot peaks in The Bigelow Preserve.

Most of the hut to hut hikes are a nice walk in the woods .. nothing too strenuous .. except the distance! There is very little elevation gain. But the huts are spaced 11-14 miles apart .. giving hikers a good day hike .. and a hot meal and bed to sleep in at night.

There are shorter hikes into the huts from trailheads you can drive to, which reduces the length of the hike to a few manageable miles .. perfect if you're toting kids and want some outdoor activity and a place for a hot chocolate half way through!

The trails are groomed for cross-country skiing .. classic and skate .. and in the winter they make for a nice snowshoe or cross-country ski. In the summer, they provide an off-road place to mountain bike or hike as well as opportunities to paddle our beautiful lakes (Flagstaff Hut) or fish our waterways (Grand Falls Hut).

There is no charge for using the trails. You can refill your water bottle, use an indoor flush or picnic on the porch at no charge. Or you can splurge and buy yourself an overnight package with breakfast and dinner ..and a picnic lunch for the next day's hikes.

You can get maps to any of these hikes by visiting the website at mainehuts.org. Or you can call the office at 207-265-2400 to have printed maps mailed to you.



THE POPLAR FALLS HUT

This is a gentle day hike great for families of all ages and abilities. It's great for trail running and skiing. Waterfalls are the highlight here!



DISTANCE: 4.6 miles roundtrip

TIME: 2 ½ hours

DIRECTIONS: Follow Route 27 northbound to Valley Crossing and the Carrabassett Town Office complex. Turn right onto the Carriage Road. Then turn right onto the Gauge Road Trail Head. Park here.



THE TRAIL:

The Loop Trail follows Poplar Stream, leading gradually uphill to the Poplar Stream Falls Hut. The hut is an off-the-grid public facility, with fresh water, indoor bathrooms and, during full service season, home baked breads, sweets and soups. In warm months take a dip at the falls. This is a beautiful snowshoe hike in the winter.

From the parking lot, turn left on the Maine Huts trail. At the T intersection, turn left on Larry's Loop and walk 1.1 miles to one of the waterfalls, which you reach after crossing a bridge.

After a nice break at the falls, ascend a beautiful set of rock steps .. the steepest section of the entire trail. Head towards the hut. Or, turn left and hike back out to the Carriage Road, passing the second set of falls, where there is a deep pool for swimming. Turn left on the Carriage Road and hike back to your car.

OPTIONS: From the Poplar Hut you can hike another 11.4 miles to the Flagstaff Hut, 23.2 miles to the Grand Falls Hut or 37.4 miles to the trailhead at West Forks. You can also extend this hike by starting your trek at the Sugarloaf Outdoor Center and following the Narrow Gauge trail until it connects with the Maine Huts trail .. adding 8.5 miles to this trek.

Hiked by Nancy Perry & Maine Huts Staff



THE FLAGSTAFF HUT

Canoeing or kayaking in Flagstaff Lake après hike .. or just lounging lakeside and enjoying the views .. is the big draw here!



DISTANCE: 3.6 miles roundtrip

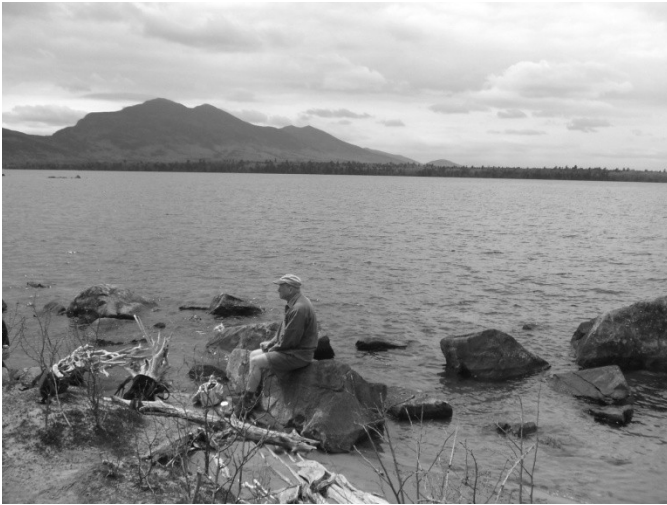
TIME: 2 hours

DIRECTIONS: Follow Route 27 north to Valley Crossing and the Carrabassett Town Offices. Turn right onto the Carriage Road and follow it to the end.

Turn right on East Flagstaff Road. Then turn left on the Long Falls Dam Road and drive 4.5 miles to the parking lot on your left.

The Carriage Road is closed in the winter. You will have to follow Route 16 in New Portland to the Long Falls Dam Road .. a 22 mile trip.





THE TRAIL: From the parking lot head down the gentle path to the Southeastern shore of Maine's fourth largest lake. This flat trail follows the lake shore.

At the three-way intersection, go straight for 1.4 miles on the Shore Trail. After .4 miles more, turn left on the Birch Trail and enjoy a beautiful vista before proceeding on to the hut.

There, you can relax by the lake, swim or canoe (Guests and Maine Hut members have use of the boats for a nominal fee). In the winter, you can ski on the lake! Lunch is served during full season and there is fresh water and bathrooms.

OPTIONS: From the Flagstaff Hut it is 11.8 miles to the Grand Falls Hut .. although don't attempt this during wet weather as the trail floods! It's 24.1 miles to West Forks .. and 11.4 miles back to the Poplar Hut. In the winter, it's nice to ski from the Flagstaff Hut to the Grand Falls Hut and spend the night.

Hiked by Nancy Perry & Maine Huts Staff

GRAND FALLS HUT

It's all about the spectacular falls at this one ... dramatic horseshoe falls that leave you mesmerized. If you're lucky, you may even spot a rainbow. There was a double one hovering over the raging falls during an earlier fall hike. If you fish, bring a rod!



DISTANCE: 2 miles

TIME: 1- 1 ½ hours

DIRECTIONS: Follow Route 27 north to Stratton. After the village, drive 6.9 miles, through Eustis, looking for the King & Bartlett Road on your right. Turn. Cross a wooden bridge and turn right, drive past the 9 Mile Marker, cross another wooden bridge and turn left. It's a slow 11-mile slog over rough roads to trailhead.

Plan on an hour in the car! In the fall, you'll often see hunters in trucks and blaze orange .. it's prime territory for moose and deer. Park in open dirt area near the gate and walk in. It's about an hour to the falls. **Not recommended in Winter! In the Winter it is best to ski in!**

THE TRAIL: At the gate, continue on the road about 0.2 miles until Pine Loop Road. Look for the sign for Grand Falls. Take a right on Pine Loop Road and follow it to the end, a loop at the top of the falls. Follow the blue-blazed trail on the left (downriver) side of the loop to the falls overlook.

This is a gentle hike .. and well worth the tough drive getting to the trailhead! Listen. As you climb the gradual uphill to the falls, pause and listen. Soon, you'll hear the roar of the falls.

As you continue walking, you'll catch glimpses of the falls from several overlooks along the way.

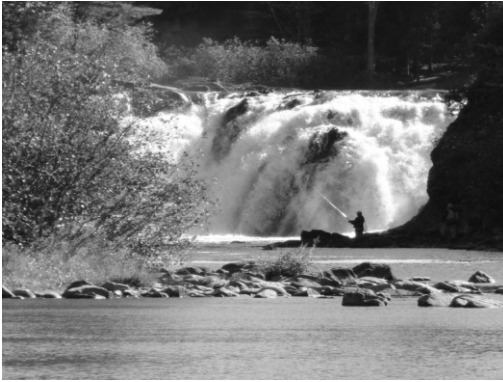
Then .. there they are .. below you and majestic at 40 feet tall and 120 feet across.



Catch them during wet spells and they are truly amazing! Spend some time savoring this sight. Take photos. Have lunch. You can backtrack from here or continue on the trail, which will take you over stone steps and then onward to the hut.

You can continue to follow this trail 1 mile to Grand Falls Hut - down stone steps and back out onto the snowmobile trail. Make a right and cross Spencer Stream. Turn right onto the Maine Hut Trail and then follow the blue-blazed Fisherman's Trail 0.75 miles to the hut.

Hiked by Nancy Perry & Maine Huts Staff



ANOTHER WAY: Hike 7.5 miles from the Big Eddy, a 3-4 hour hike.

DIRECTIONS: From Kingfield, head east on Route 16 towards North New Portland. After you cross the Carrabassett River, you'll reach a T where 16 continues to the right and Long Falls Dam Road goes left. (There's a yellow building with an Ace Electric sign directly in front of you at the intersection.) Turn left onto Long Falls Dam Road. (This road is paved.) At 22.8 miles, you'll pass the Flagstaff Lake Hut Trailhead. Continue past this sign for 4.5 miles. Look for the Dead River Road. sign. Turn right onto the Dead River Road and park before the bridge.

From the parking area, continue down the Dead River Road. for 0.1 mile and watch for the trail to leave the road on the left side. The trail then follows the Dead River through forest and wetlands for 6 miles before crossing the Dead River via the Tom & Kate Chappell footbridge. From the bridge it is one quarter mile to the falls and 1.3 miles to the hut.

MAKE IT EVEN LONGER: From the Grand Falls Hut you can walk another 14.2 miles to West Forks trailhead, where you will have hopefully arranged for transportation!

GRAND FALLS HUT FROM THE WEST FORKS TRAILHEAD

This trail is not for beginners, especially in the winter, when the “rolling hills” can make for some challenging nordic skiing!



DISTANCE: 14.2 miles one way

DIRECTIONS: From Carrabassett or Kingfield take Route 16 to Solon and pick up Route 201 through Bingham and on to The Forks. The trailhead is 1.6 miles North of Berry's Stores in West Forks.

THE TRAIL: They call this the Enchanted Trail. It's the longest stretch of trail in the Maine Huts systems that never crosses a road .. just a long walk or ski through forests, surrounded by the sights and sounds of nature.

The trail is not recommended for beginners as there are several sustained ascents and descents with a grade of more than 10 percent. It's too long for a snowshoe trek .. unless you're in really good shape and enjoy a long hike .. but it's a great trail for intermediate and advanced skiers .. the black diamond of the existing hut trail system!

The trail departs from the westerly side of the West Forks Trailhead and continues along the Dead River most of the way to the Grand Falls Hut. The trail departs from the river just after Alder Brook and travels uphill one-half mile after crossing Alder Brook to the front of Grand Falls Hut.

THE STRATTON BROOK HUT

The fourth hut in the Maine huts and Trails network sits on top of a healthy, significant ridge to the north of the Carrabassett River between the Bigelow Mountains to the north and Sugarloaf to the south. It boasts amazing views of both mountains.

The hut is nicely nestled on top of the ridge to take advantage of the views without being obtrusive. It is a beautiful building, it's natural cherry furniture and wood stove in the living room giving it a warm, inviting feel.

If you need additional warming, try the homemade chili and cornbread served daily for lunch.

While the hut is named for Stratton Brook, it is not located on the brook. In fact, it is quite a distance and elevation gain up from the brook to the hut. The Stratton Brook and Stratton Brook Pond can be seen from the hut when looking towards the Bigelow Mountains.

DISTANCE: 5.8 miles roundtrip.

TIME: Allow 1.5 hours each way plus additional time to enjoy the hut when you get there.

DIRECTIONS: Head north on Route 27 from the Sugarloaf Access Road. Go less than .25 miles. The trailhead parking lot is on the right after crossing over the Carrabassett River. If you get to the Bigelow Station camps, you've gone too far.



THE TRAIL: The trail from the parking lot to the Hut is well marked. For the first .7 miles the trail follows the Narrow Gauge Recreation Trail that tracks the Carrabassett River. At .7 miles turn left onto the Hut trail. The first portion of the trail is relatively easy going, with only slight elevation changes. As the trail approaches the Hut, there are several switchbacks with increasing grades as the trail climbs up the ridge.

The last push to the Hut is steep and strenuous, but doable. Just before reaching the top of the ridge and the Hut, the trail intersects a logging road coming up from the Sanitary District. Turn left to go to the Hut, which is about 100 yards up the road. Return to the parking lot by reversing the hike into the Hut. The trip down will be a lot more fun than the hike up, especially if you are on skis or a mountain bike!

The Narrow Gauge and Hut Trails are both frequently groomed in the winter for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, and both are excellent for mountain biking the rest of the year. The trail passes through some fine stands of mature trees as it winds up the ridge. From the Hut there are opportunities for backcountry skiing on the ridge and for bushwhacking hikes to nearby ridges.



This ridge is in the middle of an east-west valley between two large mountain ranges. As a result, the Hut often experiences high winds. The woods protect the trail, so the wind is not a problem until you get to the Hut. Just be prepared to possibly face a strong, cold wind as you approach the Hut.

Several years ago, prior to the construction of the Hut, this writer explored the area on snowshoes. The top of the ridge was covered with moose tracks and moose beds. So, don't be surprised if you sight one or more of these local residents on your hike.

ANOTHER OPTION: You can also start from the Narrow Gauge Recreation Trail Campbell Field parking lot, located off Route 27, just south of Hugs. Park in the lot and hike across the bridge over the Carrabassett, turning left on the Narrow Gauge trail. Then turn right onto the Hut trail about .5 miles from the parking lot.

The stretch from Campbell Field to the Narrow Gauge Trail is very popular, and frequently used by dog walkers.

Hiked by Pete & Judy Weston

LITTLE BIGELOW

(Elevation: 3,040 Feet .. Elevation Gain: 2,000 Feet)



This fabulous hike has a little bit of everything good .. nice woods, a special swimming area, flowers, mushrooms, varied terrain and incredible views. There's a lot of bang for the hiking buck here!!



DISTANCE: 6 miles roundtrip

TIME: 4 hours



DIRECTIONS: Take the Carriage Road off Route 27 and follow it 5 miles, turning left towards Round Barn. If you went right you would be on the Long Falls Dam Road. If you went straight you'd wind up at Flagstaff Lake. There are signs for Round Barn. Very quickly, you'll see a sign for the AT on your left. There's a parking area across the street.. and a nice swimming hole just beyond it for a cooling dip when you get back down.

THE TRAIL: The trail starts gradually, winding through the woods dotted with mushrooms and lady slippers. In the fall, bright blue berries appear on the lady slipper stems. At 1.3 miles you will arrive at a fork.

Take a minute to walk a few hundred yards down towards the lean-to and what AT thru-hikers call The Bathtub. This is a deep water pool that gives hikers an opportunity to plunge into bathtub-like basins for a refreshing .. if chilly .. cleansing.

There's a lean-to here where you can spend the night. But you might have to elbow your way in around the thru-hikers who camp here!! Take a moment to read the Thru-Hikers Log that is kept in the lean-to.

It is not unusual to run into thru-hikers on this trail. It's always fun to sit for a moment to enjoy their stories.

After the side trip, return to the main trail, which begins to ascend gradually, opening up onto a series of open rock ledges marked by cairns. Stop and turn around. The views are breath-taking, especially those of Flagstaff Lake. Look closely and you can see the Maine Huts & Trails Flagstaff Hut.

After the ledges, the trail climbs more steeply, narrowing as it winds through a forested area. The trail is mottled with roots and rocks. Keep climbing .. even if it seems like the summit will never appear.

Suddenly ... you will be above treeline.



Scramble up the last ledge and gaze out .. Sugarloaf, the Bigelows .. all spread out before you in gorgeous glory. Perch on the rocks and enjoy an alfresco lunch in an unbeatable setting.

Return the way you came.

OTHER OPTIONS:

Little Bigelow can also be accessed by the Safford Brook trail. This works best as a two car drop. Drive one car past the first trailhead and continue down to just before Round Barn campground. There is a parking area here.

The trail winds gently up through the forest for 2.5 miles where it intersects the AT. Here, there are giant boulders haphazardly dropped on the landscape. The trail straight across the AT leads to Stafford Notch Campsite .. just a short distance from the intersection. The campsite has tent platforms, an outhouse and a water source.

Turn left towards Little Bigelow (right along this trail will take you to Avery Peak.) The trail continues through thick forest and boulders with a gradual incline.

Look back to catch glimpses of Avery Peak. The trail dips and climbs several times, winding in and out onto ledges that afford beautiful views until finally reaching the summit of Little Bigelow.

It's approximately a total of about 6 miles to the summit of Little Bigelow. Continue down (another 3 miles) from the summit. (as described above).

Hiked by Sandy Jamison



POPLAR MOUNTAIN

A local favorite for hikers, hunters, snowmobilers and snowshoers, this trail climbs from the heart of Carrabassett Valley, offering scenic views of the western mountains and ample opportunity to spot game.



DISTANCE: 9 miles roundtrip.

TIME: 4 ½ to 5 ½ hours.

DIRECTIONS: Follow Route 27 South to Valley Crossing. Turn left by Tufulio's Restaurant, past the entrance to the town park. Turn right at Maine Huts & Trails signs and follow to the parking lot. On foot, walk back out until you reach the Narrow Gauge Pathway. Turn left.

THE TRAIL: Follow the path for .25 miles. Turn left on the snowmobile trail and start climbing. The trail ascends gradually over a mix of grass, rocks, raspberry bushes and wildflowers for almost 5 miles, with the distance noted by mile markers installed by the local snowmobile club. In the winter, the trail is packed down by snowmobiles and makes for an easy winter hike. ATVs are prohibited.

After about 1.5 miles, you'll cross a bridge over a small stream. Look on the left for a big beaver bog, which attracts moose and deer. At 2.5 miles, the Lunch Log can be found on the left. To the right, is a large clearing that offers outstanding views of Sugarloaf and Burnt Mountains, Mount Abraham and Owls Head to the southeast.

Around the bend and up the hill you'll come across a huge gully. The trail descends into the gully. To the right, a clearing is a popular grazing spot for deer and moose. The trail then ascends out of the gully, over another bridge and around a bend. Here, the trail levels off, offering views on the right of Claybrook and Ira mountains to the northwest.

At the 4-mile mark, there's a sharp turn in the trail. Turn left at the bend and climb steeply for another half mile to reach the height of land.

Turn around and return the same way.

Hiked by Paul Houlares



SABBATH DAY POND

***A nice walk through the woods to a very pretty pond.
Keep your eyes peeled for moose! And the views from
the starting point: Worth the ride even if you aren't
hiking!***



DISTANCE: 7.4 miles

TIME: 4-6 hours

DIRECTIONS: Follow Route 4 from Rangeley to Route 17 in Oquossoc until you reach the scenic turnout known as The Height of Land .. about 11 miles from Oquossoc Village. Park here. The views of Mooselookmeguntic Lake & the Bemis Mountains are stunning .. worth the drive even if you don't hike!!

THE TRAIL: Head north on the white-blazed Appalachian Trail, which begins with an uphill hike across a rocky ledge and over Spruce Mountain (Elevation 2,500 feet). The trail then levels off to a winding walk through a spruce forest.

After 3.4 miles of gradual hiking, you'll come to a nice beach on Long Pond .. a great spot for lunch and a swim!

In another .3 miles you'll reach the Sabbath Day Pond lean-to, which is quite popular with the thru-hikers heading to Katahdin.

Listen for moose crashing in the woods as you hike. They are frequent visitors to this trail. There's a good chance you'll spot one on the trail or in the pond.

The trail itself has a mystical air to it .. some locals wags claim boogeymen and ogres roam here .. although it is very well-travelled by AT thru-hikers on their way from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Katahdin in Maine.

The 8-person lean-to at Sabbath Day Pond is a popular overnight camp for thru- hikers .. located between the AT Bemis Shelter (8.3 miles) and the Piazza Rock Shelter (11.2 miles)

Hiked by CVOA Boogeyman Tom Spring



EAST KENNEBAGO MOUNTAIN (Elevation 3,592 feet)

A rugged camp road ideal for hiking or mountain biking that boasts views of Saddleback to the south and the Bigelow Range to the east. If you stop for lunch, be prepared to share your food with ravenous Canadian Jays that appear when you open your pack.



DISTANCE: 6 miles

TIME: 4-6 hours

DIRECTIONS: At the junction of Routes 27 & 16 in Stratton, turn left onto Route 16 and drive for nine miles. Turn right onto Bridge Road. Cross the bridge and turn right. At 9/10 of a mile, bear left onto 7 Gulpers Road (sign will be on a tree on your left). From there follow the road .. bearing right at an intersection at 1.2 miles .. for 4.3 miles. On your left is a “Trail Closed” sign and just ahead is the 7 Gulpers Camp. Look for the post with the snowmobile signs and East Kennebago.

THE TRAIL: This is essentially a snowmobile trail that terminates at the radio transmitter shack at the summit. The trail is rough for 3 miles uphill. At one point, the trail goes straight, but you should turn right, passing a snowmobile stop sign. Heading up you’ll see views of Saddleback and other peaks in the Rangeley area as well as views of the Bigelow Range. There are limited views at the summit .. so enjoy them on the way up and down!

Hiked by John McCatherin

WEST KENNEBAGO MOUNTAIN (Elevation: 3,705)

*This hike offers views of Mount Katahdin in Maine and Mount Washington in NH, as well as views of many lakes including, but not limited to, Aziscohos, Kennebago and Cupsuptic. There are commanding views of the surrounding area if you climb part of the fire tower, which is **NOT** recommended by this writer as the fire tower access is limited by a chain link fence attached to the tower legs.*



DISTANCE: 5 miles round trip

TIME: 3 ¼ -4 hours

DIRECTIONS: Parking and the trailhead is located on the Lincoln Pond Road, a continuation of the Tim Pond Road. Heading westerly from Eustis, cross the bridge over the Kennebago River, between Little Kennebago Lake & Kennebago Lake. The trailhead and parking area is about 2 to 2 ½ miles on the right. It is advised to follow the maps in the Maine Gazetteer. Drive time is about an hour from Sugarloaf, going through Stratton and Eustis and maybe 20 minutes from Rangeley.

THE TRAIL: Follow the **RED BLAZES**, begins easy through beech hardwoods, with plenty of evidence of wildlife .. deer, moose and bear. After about a mile the trail becomes steeper, following the runoff of a streambed. Boots with good traction are advised as some areas are coated with wet moss and is quite slippery.

The grade steepens as forest changes to conifers. The trail opens to a clearing, where not long ago the Fire Warden's cabin sat. It burned in a fire and only debris is evident now.

There are limited views .. unless you get past the chain link fence that encompasses the footprint of the tower.

The trail continues off to the right. Here you enter another clearing, with a platform .. not sure what this is or was for, perhaps a helicopter landing pad .. certainly a good spot for lunch.

Continue on through stunted spruce and evergreens as you are near tree line elevation. This trail never gets above treeline.

Hiked by John and Jane Marden



TUMBLEDOWN MOUNTAIN

(Elevation: 3,035 Feet)

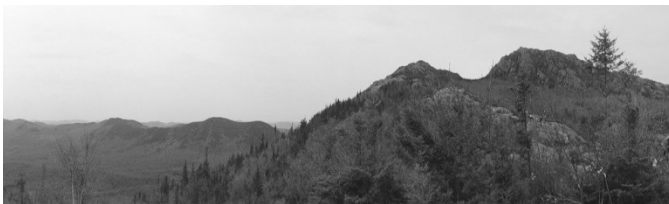
A wonderful hike with incredible views and a spectacular pond nestled below three towering peaks. It's a popular hike, so don't expect solitude, especially around the pond. You can just hike up to the pond for a picnic or a swim. Or try bagging all three peaks from the pond!



DISTANCE: 5.5 miles roundtrip

TIME: 3-4 hours.

DIRECTIONS: Take Route 27 to Kingfield. Turn right on Route 142 through Salem, Phillips and into Weld. After the Weld Transfer Station (on the left) it is about 1 mile from Webb Corner, where there is a large sign. At Webb Corner, turn right and continue straight for 4.3 miles. The road changes from asphalt to gravel surface. You will pass the 1810 Cemetery on the right. There is a big boulder placed at the entrance to the blue-blazed Brook Trail trailhead and a large culvert under the road for the brook's flow to the left of the trail access. There is ample parking on each side of the road.





THE TRAIL: The Brook Trail is the most direct route to pond and the three open peaks of Tumbledown .. and also the most popular. The trail is a washed out old logging road .. but not a steep climb for the first half. The upper half of the trail ascends steeply all the way to Tumbledown Pond .. also called Beaver or Crater Pond .. a distance of 1.5 miles. If you have a dog with you, the dog will love this hike because there is water flowing from the pond outlet for the entire climb.

This interesting pond stretches out for about five acres and is surrounded on three sides by the three peaks of Tumbledown. You may find people camped around the pond .. locals often hike up late in the day and camp there overnight although there are no tent sites.

The rock ledges around the pond are a great spot for lunch, a rest or a swim. If you time it right, you'll discover some great blueberry picking .. always a nice treat on a long hike.

You can follow a marked trail to the summit from here, then descend back to the pond.

A complete circuit of all three peaks takes about an hour, rewarding you with wonderful views in all directions.

Or, you can hike a short distance to just one of the peaks and still enjoy the views of Webb Lake, some unique alpine vegetation and the surrounding countryside.

This 1.7 mile peak-to-peak loop proceeds west from the pond over open ledge to the East Peak and the junction of the Loop Trail. Here, a short spur takes you to the top of West Peak with views of the surrounding mountains. Return to the pond and descend the same way you came. If you continue on to Parker/Little Jackson from here you will have to hike back to your car after descending.

OPTION I: You can add Little Jackson and Parker to this trek, making the total climb about 7 miles .. and a four-booter!



Before the trailhead of the Brook Trail there is a road to the right that will take you to the trailhead of Little Jackson. This is a pleasant hike to the summit with beautiful views of Webb Lake. Although you can't see Tumbledown from here, it's a great walk across the ridgeline. Continue down the steep side of Little Jackson for gorgeous views of Tumbledown Peak and Pond. This trail leads you back to Tumbledown Pond. From there, hike to Parker Ridge, across the ridgeline and back down to the car, enjoying beautiful views along the way.



OPTION II: There is a tougher hike .. The Loop Trail .. which is steeper, has iron rungs, a tight squeeze through a crevice known as Fat Man’s Misery. You can find a description of this loop in the AMC “Maine Mountain Guide.”

Hiked by Sandy Jamison





BURNT MOUNTAIN (Elevation 3,595 feet .. Vertical Gain 2,180 feet)

Burnt Hill, locally known as Burnt Mountain, is a well-trodden path that offers superb 360 degree views of Western Maine's breathtaking landscape. Burnt is often cold and windy, even when temperatures are warm and pleasant at the start of the trail. Be prepared with warm clothes and a windbreaker, especially in the fall.

As the name suggests, "Burnt Hill" was devastated by a forest fire in the early 1900s. The blaze started on the mountain but spread across nearby Sugarloaf towards the Crockers. This fire burned an estimated 5,500 acres and helped carve out some of Sugarloaf's ski trails.



DISTANCE: 6 miles

TIME: 4-5 hours

DIRECTIONS: Turn onto the Sugarloaf USA Access Road off Route 27 in Carrabassett Valley. In 1.5 miles, turn left onto Mountainside Road (same road as the Sugarloaf Inn). Go past Sugarloaf Inn and, at .7 miles, then turn left onto Bigelow Mountain Road. Park near the small bridge.

THE TRAIL: Cross Brackett Brook over a cement bridge and then look for the Burnt Mountain trail head on your right. The trail will cross the stream twice. There is now an alternate route along the stream without having to cross it.



The first stream crossing has a nice little swimming hole with clear mountain water .. a perfect place to cool off on the way back down.

Two-thirds of this trail meanders through the woods following Brackett Brook. As the trail continues to wind through the forest, you will see sections where trees have been cut by Sugarloaf for glade ski trails.

Towards the end of this section, there is a steep part that is eroded and marked by loose rock and roots. Once through this section, it's not long before you suddenly come out to a ledge with your first views of Sugarloaf to your left and the valley below. Continue on the trail as the trees thin out. Here you can see the final ascent to the summit. The views are becoming 360 degrees .. a rich panoramic offering an interesting vista of

Sugarloaf's less visible East side as well as an unobstructed view of The Bigelow Range.

On a really cold, windy day .. which describes most of them at the top of Burnt .. you can stop right here. You'll still get the views .. although you won't bag the summit.

The last section to the summit is treeless, an alpine landscape of rocky boulders affording fantastic views. Watch very carefully for the cairns on this last section, as they are easy to miss leaving you off trail. The footing is loose rock and boulders. The summit is marked with a large cairn.

The summit of Burnt Mountain has 360 views of the surrounding giant peaks. You can see ten of Maine's fourteen 4,000 foot mountains from the bald-faced summit of Burnt. Can you name them all?

HINT: All the peaks are included in this guide!

Return the same way you came.

Hiked by Sandy Jamison



CRANBERRY PEAK (Elevation: 3213 Feet)

Just over a 3,000 foot hike with some of the best views around! During the climb you'll trek past many overlooks offering great photo opportunities of both North & South Horn Peak, the best-of-the-best views of Flagstaff Lake as well as the windmills on Kibby Mountain, Sugarloaf and "The Valley." This is a great fall hike, with the vivid colors ablaze in the valley and on the mountains. Watch your footing in the forested sections: Tons of toads hang out there .. and you don't want to squash any!



DISTANCE: 6 miles round trip

TIME: 4 to 5 hours.

DIRECTIONS: Follow Route 27 north towards Stratton. Watch for the Stratton Brook Road on your right, about 2.7 miles north of the Sugarloaf Access Road .. past the Carrabassett sanitary district, the CVOA shooting range & the the AT parking area. If you get to Hobbs Road, you have gone too far. Drive down the Stratton Brook Road about a mile to the Loop Road. You can park here and walk 15 minutes along a dirt road. Turn left on the tote road and look for the sign for Cranberry Mountain. If the dirt road is passable, you can park just beyond the trailhead in a clearing by Rescue Zone 6.

Alternatively, you may drive north to Stratton, watching for the sign for Curry St., just before the Looney Moose restaurant and 7.1 miles from the Sugarloaf Access Road. Follow Curry Street to a clearly marked parking area at the trailhead. You may also position a car at both trailheads.

THE TRAIL: This is not a marathon hike .. but it is a strenuous hike.

This blue-blazed trail begins as an easy walk through mixed growth woods. There is a quick hill at the outset to get your heart rate up .. then the first 1/3 mile is a gradual and pleasant hike through forest dotted with moss .. and toads. Tons of toads in all shapes and sizes. Be careful early in the morning not to step on the little creatures!

At about a mile, there is a sign that says “Panberry Creek.” Stay to the right of the creek and don’t cross it! The trail continues up along to the right of the creek. The sign also says “Dry Trail Ahead” .. which means there is no more water.

In about another half mile you’ll see a sign for Arnold’s Well, a cleft cut into the ledge. Soon, you’ll pass the first real ledges with a view and, a little further, a large overhanging slab referred to as The Cave.

As you continue, the trail gets demanding. You’ll be trekking up and over many ledges and outcroppings, which offer great views. To the north is what’s considered to be one of THE best views of the man-made Flagstaff Lake, the fourth largest body of water in Maine. Beyond, you’ll see Kibby Mountain with its towering windmills.

This part of the trek is a rock scramble and quite steep. You gain a lot of elevation in a short period of time. Views start to peak through the trees. Once through the rocky steep section, you come upon the boulders .. fun to hike along! A few spots are not “short people friendly” but none of it is scary and there is always a way up or down.

The last mile is again a pleasant walk around the mountain. You reach a point where you can see the cone shape of the summit of Cranberry Mountain. Here, you feel like – is it really that far away? But, it looks further than it is. In no time (with a little up and down), you are on open rocks, the last stretch of trail to the summit.

Here you will have grand views in all directions. The peak affords 360 degree views of surrounding mountains, including Sugarloaf, both Crockers, Flagstaff and and the horns of the Bigelow range. This is a great spot for lunch. And a wonderful photo op!

Return the way you came but .. be warned: The descent is very tough on “Old Knees.”

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE:

This hike can be done as a loop hike if you continue beyond the summit, down past Cranberry Pond, and down to Stratton Brook. At the peak, you’ll see a sign with the “mileage” for the various routes down. The AT intersects the trail at 1.7 miles from Cranberry peak.

Hiked by John & Jane Marden,

Sandy Jamison & Peg Bickford

**REDINGTON MOUNTAIN (Elevation: 3,985 Feet ..
Considered one of the 4,000 footers)**

Once strictly a bush-whacking trail, the Redington summit is now much easier to find. The views atop this 4000-footer are worth the long trip up. It's a relatively easy climb except for a short steep section at the end .. the easiest of all our 4,000 footers.



DISTANCE: 10 miles round trip

TIME: 4-5 hours

DIRECTIONS: Follow Route 27 northbound past the Sugarloaf Access Road for 1 mile. Turn left onto the Caribou Pond Road. This is a rugged dirt road .. and you can drive only about 3.9 miles before reaching a concrete barrier. Park here and start walking.

THE TRAIL: From the concrete barrier on the Caribou Pond Road hike another .4 miles to the AT crossing. From this point, continue on the main road. In several areas, the road is in terrible shape. After about a mile or so the road will branch. Take a 90 degree turn to the right. If you go left, you will go to Caribou Pond. The pond is well worth a side trip! To continue to the summit, turn right. Here you are walking through open fields with broad views of the surrounding area. After about another .5 miles the road takes another 90 degree turn to the right and parallels the Caribou Pond Road in the opposite direction. Enjoy the variety of mushrooms you'll spot!



The road now becomes steep for about .75 miles but near the top you will see a cairn. Go left here. This is an old tote road that pitches downward slightly. At .25 miles you will see another cairn. It is another 1.5 miles of easy to moderate hiking to the open summit from here. The trail rarely has more than a 3 to 5 degree pitch. This makes it one of the easier 4000-foot hikes in the region .. although it is quite long.

At the summit, go to the right for the best views.

Look for the canister at the top. These plastic PVC tubes were positioned at the summits of mountains that could only be reached by bushwhacking. Inside the tube was a book to sign .. proof you made it! This hike was once considered a bush-whacking hike although today the trail is easy to follow.

Hiked by Paul Trueworthy & Sandy Jamison

SPAULDING MOUNTAIN (Elevation: 4,010 feet)

One of the ten 4000-footers in our area, Spaulding is a beautiful hike on its own or as a double-header with Sugarloaf .. or a triple-header with Sugarloaf and Abraham .. giving you one, two or three 4,000-foot peaks to bag in a single hike! But you'll need to plan ahead and stash cars at either end if you're planning on bagging more than one peak.



DISTANCE: 8 miles roundtrip

TIME: 4-6 hours

DIRECTIONS: Turn left on the Caribou Pond Road, 1 mile north of the Sugarloaf Access Road. Drive 3.9 miles to a concrete barrier/metal grated bridge. Park here.

THE TRAIL: It was a beautiful July day to hike Spaulding Mountain. With a starting temperature of 59 degrees, a northwest wind and a blue sky, the weather was perfect. After crossing the metal bridge, hike approximately 10 minutes while watching for the white-blazed A.T. on your left. The A.T. soon crosses the South Branch of the Carrabassett River, which can be swift at times. The trail follows the river, but the gentle walk starts to get steeper and eventually gets difficult in sections.

After the hard work of hiking you will be rewarded with nice views from the well built rock stairs skirting ledges on the back side of Sugarloaf. At 2.3 miles the trail divides. A short blue blazed trail (.6 miles) heads left to the summit of Sugarloaf while the white-blazed A.T. heads right to Spaulding Mountain. The terrain down the ridge between Sugarloaf and Spaulding is fairly easy with ups and downs and some views along the way .. a very pleasant hike.

During the traverse take note of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) plaque commemorating the final link of the 2,054 mile A.T. on August 14, 1937.

At the bottom of the ridge (about 1.5 miles) the terrain starts to climb steeply but will mellow after a while. A nice overlook on your left offers a beautiful view .. but be careful of your footing.

Watch for the Spaulding Summit sign or a blue-blazed trail on your left, which will take you 500 feet to the Spaulding Summit. Another 4000-footer conquered!

You can hike back down the way you came or backtrack to the blue-blazed trail leading to the summit of Sugarloaf. You can hike that up to the old Gondi building at the peak .. and then hike down any of the ski trails to the base area.

The views are awesome. But have a car waiting .. it's a long walk back to the Caribou Pond Road!

The distance traveled is 8 miles roundtrip so plan on 4-6 hours depending on weather, size of pack and physical fitness.

Hiked by Duff Doherty

SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN (Elevation: 4,250 Feet .. 2,500 Foot Elevation Gain)

This hike takes you to the summit of Sugarloaf Mountain, the second highest peak in Maine, after Katahdin. You can climb from the ski resort area and up the ski trails .. or follow the AT up the backside. One of the great benefits to the front-face hike is a breeze that keeps the bugs at bay. Second benefit: At almost every “rest stop” there are tremendous views of the Bigelow range.



DISTANCE: 4 ½ to 6 1/2 miles round trip

TIME: 3 ½ to 5 hours

DIRECTIONS:

If you're hiking up the ski trails, take Route 27 to the Sugarloaf Access Road, following the signs to the ski area. Park in one of the lots.

If you're hiking up the backside, follow Route 27 for 1 mile north of the Access Road to the Caribou Pond Road. Turn left and drive 3.9 miles to a barrier. Park here and hike another .4 miles to where the AT crosses the road. Turn left onto the white-blazed AT.

THE TRAIL:

If you're hiking the ski trails .. this is a multiple choice type hike. There are dozens to choose from so you can vary your route up and down.



Hiking the ski trails offers better views and more breeze than a trek through the woods. And you will also always be in the sun. One difficulty climbing Sugarloaf is keeping track of which trail you are on. At the intersections, it helps to look behind you for trail signs.

We chose a rather direct route to the top, beginning to the left of the Super Quad and hiking up lower Candy Side. We crossed Peavy X-Cut, and headed straight up Hayburner. We ski DOWN Hayburner often .. but never realized how steep it was until we hiked UP it! We had great views of the Bigelow Range looking back whenever we had to stop to catch our breath. Near the top of

Hayburner we took a left on Pick Pole, passed beneath the Super Quad to the Narrow Gauge and followed it to Upper Gauge and then on to the old Gondi unloading station. From here it is a short walk up and over rocks to the peak. A brisk breeze was there to meet us: It dried out our sweaty shirts .. then chilled us. We put on wind breakers and had lunch in bright sun.

For our descent we chose Cinderhoe and the service road. The service road was difficult due to loose stone and scree. At times, it was like a small rock slide. We left the service road to descend on Upper Binder, eventually winding our way back to Tote Road then down to Spurline, and to Stomping grounds, and then down Candy Side to the base area.

Tips: Take plenty of water, as none is available on this hike. If you think you'll need a quart take two. I used most of a 90 oz Camel Back. And remember: That fleece or windbreaker does you no good in the car. Bring it! The parking lot was sunny and about 60 degrees. The peak was about 50 degrees with an 18 to 20 plus mph wind .. and a wind chill equal to about 36 degrees. This is, after all, Sugarloaf!

THE TRAIL:

If you're hiking the backside, drive 1 mile north of the Sugarloaf Access Road, turn left on the Caribou Pond Road and park your car at the barrier 3.9 miles in. Walk .4 miles to the white-blazed AT on your left. Cross the South Branch of the Carrabassett .. there's a log here to assist in the river crossing but it can be tricky during times of heavy rain.

Hurricane Irene blew this “bridge” out back in 2011, stranding thru-hikers until the waters subsided and the cross log was reinstalled.

After the crossing, follow the river for awhile. The trail soon becomes steep as you hike up over the typical Maine rocks and roots .. the classic “trail.” Thru-hikers often comment about the difficulties of hiking on what passes for a “trail” in Maine. It’s the norm for us!

Be careful: Stay on the trail, watching for the white blazes painted on trees. If you wander off the trail you’ll find yourself bush-whacking through thick brush until you can reach a clearing. We were only feet away from the trail .. but never saw it until we reached a clearing after an intense climb over loose scree, fighting branches so thick we couldn’t see each other!

As you pause for breath-catching .. look back: The views are breath-taking, including the Crocker Cirque and The Slide. You’ll cross some boggy areas where our AT crew has built log “bridges” to make for easier hiking .. but you may still get your feet muddy!

After a total of 2.3 miles from the trailhead, bear left on a blue-blazed trail. The white-blazed AT heads right over to Spaulding Mountain and then Abraham. Follow the blue-blazed for another .6 miles to the Sugarloaf summit, the second highest peak in Maine. As you come out on to open ledge you’ll see the old Sugarloaf Gondi Building .. and views everywhere you look! From the top of Sugarloaf you can see for miles and miles .. as far as Katahdin and Mount Washington. Many say the views atop Sugarloaf are rivaled only by Katahdin!



The winds at the peak can be as ferocious in summer and fall as they are in winter: Be prepared to bundle up if you want to spend any time enjoying the views you worked so hard to witness.

From the summit you have several options for getting back down .. you can hike down any of the ski trails to the base area .. where you will hopefully have staked a car. You can go back the way you came. Or you can retrace your steps to the intersection of the AT and head over towards Spaulding and Abraham. It will make for a long day .. but you'll claim THREE 4,000-foot peaks as your prize!

Ski Trail Route Hiked by John and Jane Marden

Backside Hiked by Nancy Perry

MOAH: THE MOTHER OF ALL HIKES

Well, that's what former CVOA President Tom Spring called it when he dreamt up the idea for a 2-day trek from The Forks to the Valley.

We did it with buses, boats and by camping out in a friend's backyard on the lake, where we enjoyed food, a fire and a swim after a long day on the trail. It can be done in a day if you can work out the transportation logistics. But it's more fun to take your time and enjoy the waterfalls, the lakes and the ponds along the way.



DISTANCE: 17 Miles

TIME: This hike is a long two day hike .. not rugged or strenuous .. but hard because of its length. Plan to be tired! You can shorten it to one long day hike if you stake a car at Bog Brook Road, eliminating 5.5 miles of wood roads into Carrabassett Valley on the Carriage Road. That would make this a four-boot hike! Or you can stay at one of the AT shelters .. or a sporting camp, B&B or the Maine Huts & Trails Hut and really lighten your load.

DIRECTIONS: Catch a ride to Caratunk where the MATC contracts for "ferry service" across the Kennebec River. It's the only sanctioned way to get to the other side.

Marked by powerful currents, water releases and a width of 70 yards, the Kennebec River is what the AT calls “formidable.” It’s the only unbridged crossing on the 2,174 mile AT. DON’T TRY IT! Call ahead: You’ll have a blast being paddled across in a bright red canoe .. for free ... all part of the MOAH adventure.

THE TRAIL: Start hiking when you reach the other side of the Kennebec. You’ll be hiking gradually uphill for about 4 miles, passing numerous waterfalls along the way. Stop. Enjoy. This is a beautiful section of the AT to hike and worth taking some time to enjoy.

At 4 miles, you’ll reach Pierce Pond Shelter. Follow the trail heading south from the Pierce Pond Dam for another 10 miles to West Carry Pond Shelter ... easy walking along the trail, skirting East and West Carry Ponds. Then, you’ll start climbing up, crossing Roundtop on your way. After 2.5 miles of moderate uphill climbing, you’ll descend to the Long Falls Dam Road. The trail skirts Flagstaff Lake .. a great spot for a picnic or a swim .. or an overnight at the hut. You can loop around the lake on one of the trails there before moving on .. or calling it quits.

The trail then proceeds to the Bog Brook Road. If you’ve staked a car here, you can get in it and drive back to Carrabassett Valley, where a cold beverage with your name on it may be waiting at Tufulio’s, the locals watering hole.

If you’re proceeding on foot, it’s another half mile from the Bog Brook Road to the Carriage Road and another 5 miles of road-walking back to town.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED TO KNOW:

CONTACTS FOR TRANSPORTATION:

*** Taxi service from Carrabassett Valley to Caratunk
(Greg Roy: 329-3482)**

*** Ferry Service across Kennebec River (This is NOT
fordable): David Corrigan (207-672-4879) OR check the
Maine Appalachian Trail Web Site for the ferry schedule**

CONTACTS FOR LODGING:

***Harrison's Pierce Pond Camps is located .3 miles near
South of the dam**

*** Caratunk House Bed and Breakfast 207-672-9363**

*** Maine Huts & Trails Flagstaff Hut (1-877-634-8824)**

Hiked by Tom Spring



THE CROCKERS LOOP: NORTH CROCKER, SOUTH CROCKER AND THE CIRQUE

You can bag two 4000-footers in one climb with this one .. but you might as well go on a cloudy day since the views on South Crocker are limited. There's been some clearing on North Crocker so now you can enjoy the view there.



DISTANCE: 14 miles

TIME: 8 hours

DIRECTIONS: Park at the AT parking area on Route 27, on your left, 2.5 miles north of the Sugarloaf Access Road. Climb steadily on the AT for 5.2 miles to the North Crocker summit. Descend into the col and then ascend one mile to South Crocker. From South Crocker, descend gradually, then more sharply, for one mile to the Crocker Cirque campground, on your left. Descend gradually for 1 mile to the AT on the Caribou Pond Road. Turn left on this logging road, and then follow it for 4.5 miles to Route 27. Turn left on Route 27 and follow it 1.5 miles back to the AT parking lot. You can shorten this hike .. and it is highly recommended .. by positioning one a car at the AT lot and another at the barrier on the Caribou Pond Road.

THE TRAIL: Try to hike North Crocker & South Crocker in a single hike to bag two 4000-footers. It's long .. but you're walking the ridge and dipping in and out of the col .. rather than summiting twice from the base. See descriptions below for each of the peaks. There are no real views at either peak .. but you can daydream on the steep climb up and enjoy the views fanning out around you on the way down.

NORTH CROCKER SOLO (Elevation 4,148 feet)

A long, steady climb with limited views .. but a must-do for peak-baggers.



DISTANCE: 10.4 miles roundtrip

TIME: 5-8 hours

DIRECTIONS: This mountain is best approached from Route 27. Park in the AT lot on the left 2.7 miles north of the Sugarloaf Access Road. The distance to the summit is 5.2 miles from Route 27. There you can descend down into the Crocker Cirque and continue on to South Crocker .. or turn around and retrace your steps back.

THE TRAIL: For the first 1.5 miles the trail is a moderate but steady climb through a forest of birch and Black spruce. Your lungs will be tested but not overworked. You hike into a white birch forest and then back into conifers. The white birches are particularly colorful in the fall, the white bark contrasted by yellow leaves. At about 3 1/2 miles in, you will cross a brook. At this point the trail climbs steeply to the summit which is partially

wooded and offers very little in the way of a view. The lack of a panorama demands an appreciation of small detail .. an invitation to the senses to enjoy the mosses, the plants, the differences in the tree bark. Although the summit is treed .. if you veer off the trail for about a 100 yards you will discover an area where the view has been cleared. Descend the way you came up .. but be warned: The hike down to Rte. 27 from the peak is rough on the knees and seems to never end.

If you want to continue on to South Crocker, that summit is another mile away and the trail is steep .. after first descending and ascending the Cirque.

CROCKER CIRQUE SOLO (Elevation 3500 feet)

The "Cirque" is easily recognizable from Sugarloaf, a striking "bowl" carved into the mountainous landscape. The Cirque can be done as a hike on its own, starting and ending on the Caribou Pond Road. It's a good hike for beginning backpackers .. a modest hike from the trailhead to a tent platform and a privy, offering a chance to test out your gear without getting too deep in the wilderness!



DISTANCE: 2.4 miles roundtrip from AT crossing on Caribou Pond Road

TIME: 1 ½ -2 hours

DIRECTIONS: From the Sugarloaf Access road, drive north for 1 mile to the Caribou Pond Road. Take a left onto the dirt road.

There's a sign on a tree at the turnoff reading Caribou Pond Road, although the AMC guide refers to this road as the Caribou Valley Road. Drive 3.9 miles down the rugged road. There is a concrete barrier here and you cannot drive further. Hike up the road another .4 miles and pick up the AT on your right.

THE TRAIL: The hike is easy to moderate along the white-blazed AT for the .9 miles. Here, pick up the blue-blazed side trail and hike another .3 miles to the Cirque, where there are four wood tent platforms and three tent pads. There's a privy an easy .10 mile walk away.

If you're doing the Cirque as part of the two-peak trek you'll find the dip through the col between North & South Crocker to be a comfortable hike. From either summit you descend steeply for .5 miles to the cirque rim which is about .3 miles long. The cirque was formed by a glacier cutting off the sides of the two mountains forming a rounded hollow bowl with steep curved sides.

SOUTH CROCKER SOLO (Elevation 4010 Feet)



DISTANCE: 6.2 miles roundtrip

TIME: 4-6 hours

DIRECTIONS: From the Sugarloaf Access Road drive 1 mile to the Caribou Pond Road. Turn left on to the dirt road and drive another 3.9 miles to the concrete barrier in the road. Park here and walk another .4 miles to the AT trailhead.



THE TRAIL: The hike up South Crocker is easy to moderate for the first mile. Around the mile mark you'll see a blue-blazed side trail to the left leading to a campsite and privy. Heading up, the trail climbs steeply for another mile along a ridge line. At the end of the ridge line the trail gets steep again all the way to the summit. Return the way you came or continue into the col and across to North Crocker.

The views at the summit are obscured by trees. But don't be discouraged: The 2 mile descent to the Caribou Pond Road offers ledges looking out to views that test your long distance vision. The trail is steep. So let your knees do the work and enjoy the views on your way down. The end is near!

Hiked by Paul Trueworthy, Sandy Jamison & John Morey.

**SADDLEBACK, THE HORN & PIAZZA ROCK
SADDLEBACK MOUNTAIN (Elevation 4120 feet)**

One of Maine's premier mountains with spectacular views north to Katahdin and south to Mount Washington. Saddleback is named for its saddle-like shape as viewed from the town of Rangeley. You can bag two 4000-footers on this hike by adding The Horn to your trek .. and turning this hike into a four-boot trek! Or you can just climb up and down one of Saddleback's ski trails .. which would make this a three-boot hike!

SADDLEBACK MOUNTAIN (Elevation: 4,120 Feet)



DISTANCE: Approximately 1.5 miles from Saddleback Lodge .. 3 miles round trip

TIME: 1 hour 45 minutes to the summit. It takes less time to go down on ski trails. Plan on 3 to 3 ½ hours total.

DIRECTIONS: Take Route 4 south from Rangeley Village. At 1.1 miles from the village turn left on Dallas Hill Road. Follow the signs to the Saddleback Ski Area. Watch for a turn to the right off the Dallas Hill Road in 2.5 miles from Route 4. From here, it's 4.5 miles to the Saddleback Ski Area base lodge.

THE TRAIL: Follow the groomer trail up the mountain, follow the road up the Wheeler Slope to Gray Ghost and Tri Color trails. The Tri Color trail will bring you to the top of the Kennebago Quad, where a short, narrow trail behind the upper building leads to Saddleback's summit.

Some steep sections and loose gravel prevail. It is harder going up the ski trails than skiing down them.

There are outstanding views of Saddleback Lake and surrounding mountains. Go in early July when the lupines cover the middle to bottom of the mountain. Note: Because much of the trail is above tree-line and exposed .. foul weather, coupled with decreased temperature and visibility as well as exposure to high winds, can be dangerous.

The wind-swept ridge has exposed bedrock on which there are many erratic (Glacial erratics are rounded boulders left at random on the exposed bedrock). You will see krummholz, the scrub forest of gnarled and twisted trees which form at tree line.

Alternate routes: There are many paths going up the ski trails, or even just staying on the AT. One alternate route I have tried is to go up to the yurt at the bottom of the Kennebago Quad, which is a nice lunch spot. Follow the Nymph Trail to the left and go up Muleskinner Trail. Muleskinner, a double diamond trail, is the toughest climb I have been on in Maine. Not only is it steep, but it is covered with low bushes and rocks. If you want a workout, try this one.

SADDLEBACK HORN (Elevation 4,041 feet)

It's only another 1.6 miles from the Saddleback summit .. so why not bag a second 4000-footer while you're up there!!



**DISTANCE: 1.6 miles from the summit of Saddleback ..
3.2 miles round trip**

TIME: 2-4 hours

THE TRAIL: This is classic mountain hiking featuring high peaks and a deep sag between Saddleback Mountain and The Horn .. the “saddle” where the mountain gets its name. Much of this hike is above tree-line and offers outstanding views of the mountains to the east and west. The views looking back at Saddleback are gorgeous!

THE “AT” OPTION:



DIRECTIONS: Park at the AT parking lot on Route 4. Cross the street and follow the white-blazed trail.

THE TRAIL: Climb 1.25 miles to the Piazza Rock campsite. The trail then becomes increasingly steep to Ethel Pond, then becomes more gradual .. and muddy .. as it passes Mud and then Ethel Pond. At 3.5 miles the trail crosses a tote road and becomes steep again. At four miles you'll be above tree line. Another mile of hiking above tree line gets you to the summit. You can return the way you came... or hike down any of the ski trails. It's helpful to leave a car at both trailheads if you are making this a loop hike. This option is harder and longer ... about 10 miles and 7 hours.

PIAZZA ROCK

Piazza Rock is a flat-topped boulder cantilevered out from a cliff. It supports a growth of mature trees .. and is very, very big! It's a great picnic spot with family appeal. You can hike it on its own .. or combine it with your Saddleback hike.



DISTANCE: 1.8 miles one way .. 3.6 miles round trip

TIME: 3 ½ hours

DIRECTIONS: Take Route 4 south out of Rangeley for 9 miles. Park in the AT lot.

THE TRAIL: Head up the white-blazed AT trail, crossing a small metal bridge over a man-made stone gorge. The trail immediately goes up a moderate incline before leveling off. It's a nice walk through the forest, with wood logs over the muddy sections to make for a drier crossing. After passing the lean-to and tent platform area, take the blue-blazed trail up to Piazza Rock. There is a caretaker at this site in the summer. Spend some time marveling at this geological rarity.. the giant rock actually appears to be hovering in mid-air. You can also take a side trail from here that leads to an interesting series of boulder caves with narrow passages.

OPTIONS: After a nice hike to the rock and boulder caves .. head back to your car and drive another 3 miles South on Route 4 to Smalls Falls. Here there are two streams and a waterfall as well as restrooms, grills and picnic areas. It's a great place to swim, wade or enjoy the short water slides.

HIKED BY RICK YOUNG and SANDY JAMISON

MOUNT ABRAHAM (Elevation: 4,050 Feet)

Hike this titan in good weather and you'll be amazed by the vistas .. the backside of Sugarloaf, Spaulding, Burnt and the Rapid Stream Valley. It's a strenuous hike .. rivaling Katahdin .. certainly the toughest 4.000 footer to conquer in our neighborhood. And beware: In bad weather, visibility is so limited it would be easy to lose the trail above tree line.

NOTE: We hiked this trail in fall of 2011, after tropical storm Irene blasted through the valley that August. Irene washed away the two bridges over Rapid Stream, making passage treacherous. As of July 2012 these bridges have NOT BEEN REPLACED. This makes for a longer hike as you can no longer drive to the trailhead, adding 1.5 miles to an already long hike. You'll need to ford the river so .. don't go when the water is high. Bring walking poles and water shoes to get across .. then boot up on the other side! Some locals call this Mount Abram. Others call it ... one tough climb!



DISTANCE: 9 to 9 ½ miles round trip

TIME: All Day! Plan for 5 ½ to 6 ½ hours, not counting lunch. It took an extra hour just to get across Rapid Stream with dry feet.

DIRECTIONS: From downtown Kingfield take the West Kingfield Road, next to Jordan Lumber. This paved road ends after 3.5 miles and becomes the dirt Rapid Stream Road. Follow this 2.5 miles until you reach a fork in the road. Take the left fork. The parking area is on the right. Before Irene, you could cross the two bridges. Now you must do so on foot. After the second bridge washout the road forks to the RIGHT. Follow this gradual uphill for about .5 miles to a "T" intersection of logging roads. The "old" trail head starts here.

THE TRAIL: The hike begins as an easy walk through mixed growth hardwoods for two to three miles, then gradually steepens. This trail is well used and easy to follow along Blue Blazes. Once above tree line, this hike becomes strenuous and difficult, due to loose .. often times softball size .. stone and a boulder field you must climb through in the Alpine area. The loose stone makes it even more difficult coming down.

Once you enter the Alpine area .. the second largest in the state, behind Katahdin .. your final ½ mile is above tree line. While hiking the Alpine zone keep a sharp eye as many blazes here are faded from harsh weather. Cairns have been built .. but could be very difficult to see in bad weather and low visibility. Under those weather conditions, I would recommend not continuing above tree line unless you are prepared to SPEND THE NIGHT if you become disorientated. Several years ago the trail took you past the Fire Warden's cabin, but it was burnt down during the winter of 2010. The trail has been relocated to avoid the remains of the cabin.

Return the way you came.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE:

This hike can be extended by continuing about a 1.5 miles from the summit of Mount Abraham to join the AT. Head north along the AT to Spaulding. After another mile on the AT, you should arrive at the Spaulding Mountain AT Lean-To. You can spend the night, hike down or continue on to Sugarloaf. Leave a car where you'll make your descent.

CVOA hiked this route .. in reverse .. several years ago, climbing up the backside of Sugarloaf, following the AT past the Spaulding shelter and on to Mount Abraham. It's a great hike! And it bags three of our 4,000-footers!

TIPS: AS ALWAYS, bring plenty of water as there is none on this round trip route. And since the summit is above tree line, bring items like fleece, a wind breaker (waterproof is best) and food.

Hiked by John and Jane Marden





BEST OF THE BIGELOWS

This hike scales four peaks, including two over 4,000 feet. It is a strenuous hike, but well worth the effort because of the amazing 360 degree views.

The AT Northbound thru hikers love getting to the top of Avery Peak because it means they have hiked 2,000 miles since leaving Georgia, and they are over the last of the rugged mountains until they get to Mt. Katahdin.

The Bigelow Range is named for Col. Timothy Bigelow who was on Benedict Arnold's trek to Quebec City through the Maine wilderness during the Revolutionary War. Arnold ordered Bigelow to climb the mountain that is now named for him, to reconnaissance the route to Quebec. Avery Peak is named for Myron Avery. Mr. Avery, of Lubec, Maine, was the visionary behind the building on the Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia.



ELEVATIONS:

West Peak: 4,145 Feet

Avery Peak: 4,088 Feet

South Horn: 3,805 Feet

North Horn: 3,792 Feet

DISTANCE: The loop described below is 13.6 miles. There are other options for longer and shorter hikes. This loop covers the ridge from Avery Peak to Horns Pond. Part of the Firewarden's Trail is very steep.

Other sections of the ridge trail involves climbing over boulders. And it's a LONG hike!

TIME: 9 to 11 hours.



DIRECTIONS: Traveling north on Route 27, turn right onto Stratton Brook Pond Road 3.3 miles north of the Sugarloaf access road, at the bottom of the long downhill after you pass the Carrabassett Valley transfer station and the CVOA Range. Go 1.6 miles to the trailhead parking. Note that you cross the AT about one mile in from Route 27.

THE TRAIL: From the trailhead, follow the road into Stratton Brook Pond outlet, about 0.4 miles. There are several campsites here and you can drive to this location.

Follow the Firewarden's Trail (blue blazes) for 4.3 miles to the Bigelow Col, the low point between Avery and West Peaks. At 2.1 miles the trail intersects with the Horns Pond Trail on the left.

The first three miles are good going with moderate elevation change through mature forest with large sugar maples, yellow birch, a few red oaks and large red spruce trees.

The last mile of the Firewarden's trail is very steep with rocks steps that go on forever it seems. Just before the steep section and 1.5 miles from Bigelow Col is the Moose Falls Campsite with a privy and a water supply.





At the Bigelow Col (4.7 miles from the trail head) is the Myron Avery Tentsite and the old Firewarden's camp. Water is available on the left of the Firewarden's trail just before reaching the Col. There is also a spring on the trail to Avery Peak.

From the Col take the trail to the right and hike .4 miles over to Avery Peak, elevation 4,088 feet. There are spectacular views of Sugarloaf, Carrabassett Valley, and Flagstaff Lake. The original wood fire tower has been replaced by a stone structure.

After taking in the views head back to the Col, continue on the AT to West Peak (elevation 4,145 ft), which is .3 miles from the Col.

Enjoy more great views from the top of this steep peak. Leave the peak and continue southbound on the AT for just over 2 miles to the South Horn Peak, elevation 3,805 feet.

This section of the trail is good going for the most part, following along the ridge through the high alpine forest.

After South Horn Peak, come to the intersection with a short trail over to North Horn Peak, worth the few minutes it takes to hike to the 3,792 ft elevation exposed summit for the views of Flagstaff Lake and Cranberry Mountain.

Back on the AT after hiking to North Horn, continue southbound to Horns Pond Campsite, less than a mile. There is a full time caretaker at this location. Take time to check out the pond.

After leaving the campsite, continue southbound on the AT for .2 miles then turn left onto the Horns Pond Trail. This trail descends 2.5 miles where it intersects with the Firewarden's Trail, 2.1 miles from the Trailhead.



OPTION I: AT INSTEAD OF HORNS POND TRAIL

For a longer hike, stay on the AT instead of taking the Horns Pond Trail. Follow the AT to where it crosses the Stratton Brook Pond Road. The trail head is .6 miles to the east. This adds about .5 miles to the trip.

OPTION II: THE BIGELOWS UP AND OVER

After reaching the summit on Avery, continue down the mountain along the AT. It is steep coming down. The Safford Brook trail intersects the AT. Turn left on to the Safford Brook Trail (a blue blaze trail) and follow the gentle trail down to Round Barn. This is a two car hike. One suggestion is to drop one car off the night before! You'll be happy to get off your feet.

“Judy’s Hike” was hiked By Pete and Judy Weston and friends to celebrate Judy’s 60th birthday!! Optional Hikes by Sandy Jamison.

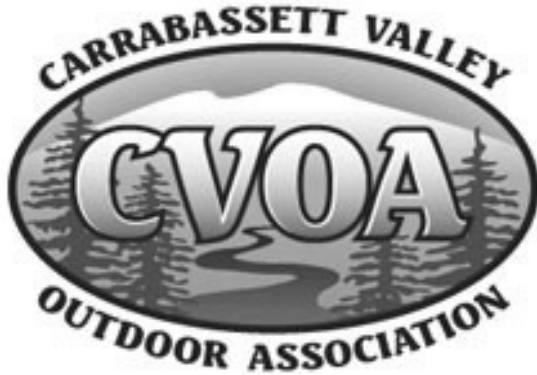




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