

Blueberry Mountain and Rattlesnake Pool, White Mountain National Forest

Map legend: Blue trails, Blueberry Mountain and Rattlesnake Pool loop. Pinks trails, Speckled Mountain (western side). Yellow trails, Shell Pond loop. Purple trails, East Royce.

This was my most favorite hike as a kid. If you start from Shell Pond/Stone House Road you can do a loop around Blueberry Mountain that's roughly 3.5 miles. I recommend heading up the White Cairn Trail, doing the little summit loop at the top, and then heading back down Stone House Trail to Rattlesnake Pool (a spur trail off to the left). There are steep sections on this mountain, but they don't go on too long. The summit has open ledges and views.

You should not miss the heavenly (and quite popular) Rattlesnake Pool, one of the most beautiful swimming holes in the White Mountain forest. Aqua-marine, the pool glows in the forest. And it is very cold! Further down from the pool is a short trail to an impressive gorge. (There were trails that wandered away from the gorge. I did not follow them, so I am not sure where they lead. I was too exhausted.)

My map includes the loop around Shell Pond (in yellow), and the trails over to Speckled Mountain, which has a gorgeous summit. From Blueberry Mountain, you can head down the Bickford Brook Trail (it's short and steep) and check out the Bickford Slides, a series of pools and slides and smooth rocks. There is a little loop you can do around Bickford Slides. The trail at times leads you along a steep embankment above the brook (it's not too high, though), so take care.

Directions: Google maps calls the access road Shell Pond Road.

But I think it's also referred to as Stone House Road. It's off of Route 113. Drive in and park at the gate. Walk .3 miles, and you'll see the trailhead for White Cairn Trail on your left, and a trail for Shell Pond trail on your right.

