

Haystack Notch Trail, White Mountain National Forest

I can't quite figure out the point of the 5.4-mile Haystack Notch Trail, which cuts through part of the White Mountain National Park, between Caribou and Speckled mountains. It does not contain any vistas and there is no loop. It's just a trail through a notch, a wooded and pretty notch for sure, but it can't compete with the spectacular hikes all around, and consequently, I don't think the trail is in the best condition. Someone kind and thoughtful had, in the fall of 2016, gone through and slipped orange tape along the trail, making it somewhat easy to follow. Without that, it would have been close to impossible.

There are some pretty streams, good mushrooms, and perhaps ecological interest to people who know more about forests than me.

By the way, I tried to hike from Haystack Notch to Miles Notch trail, but could not find the Miles Notch trailhead.

Directions: The trailhead is off Route 113, about six miles south of the junction with Route 2.



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.



East Royce Mountain, 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.

A pretty, but quite steep little mountain! The best way to tackle this, in my opinion, is to charge up the mountain on East Royce Trail, leaving from the most northerly trailhead (off of Route 113). It'll take you to a rocky summit where you can gaze at near and distant peaks. The summit is accessible via a little .5-mile spur trail that goes right about a mile up. The trail continues over to West Royce in New Hampshire.

Other possible ways to go up this mountain is up the 1.1-mile

Laughing Lion Trail (very steep, yikes!), or the more gradual 2.7-mile Royce Trail, which is steep at the end. These trails link to miles of trails over the border on the New Hampshire side of the White Mountain National Forest. If you have the time and the gear, keep going!

Directions: The trailhead for East Royce is on the west side of Route 113. If you're coming in from the north, from Route 2, travel 7.7 miles. If you're coming up from the south, travel 21.9 miles from Route 302 in Fryeburg. The trailhead for Royce leaves from Brickett Place (10.6 miles from Route 2 in Gilead; 19 miles from Route 302). Laughing Lion Trailhead is in between these two trailheads.



Speckled Mountain, White Mountain National Forest

Map legend: Blue trails, Blueberry Mountain and Rattlesnake Pool loop. Pinks trails, Speckled Mountain. Yellow trails, Shell Pond loop. Purple trails, East Royce. Miles Notch Trail is not shown.

The summit here is grand, with a great vista over Caribou

Mountain and mountains to the north and west! Once when I was here, a Gray jay was grabbing snacks from a hiker's outstretched hand.

There are many ways (all, I think, equally strenuous) to summit the 2,906-foot Speckled Mountain, one of the two biggies, along with Caribou Mountain, in this part of the White Mountains. You can start at the parking area for East Royce Mountain on Route 113, and climb 1.9 miles over Spruce Hill, connecting to the Bickford Brook Trail for the final 1.2 miles to the summit. Or you can start at the Brickett Historical House, and hike 4.1 miles to the summit along the Bickford Brook Trail, past Bickford Slides (which are nice). Or, you can hike up and over Blueberry Mountain, along the Blueberry Ridge Trail (4.2 miles). Finally, you can hike up Cold Brook Trail (4.2 miles), Great Brook Trail (5.9 miles), or Miles Notch Trail to Red Rock Trail (8.8 miles).

I really recommend hiking up Blueberry Mountain and over the ridge trail. There are fabulous views along the way. Also beautiful is the upper part of Cold Brook Trail. Great Brook Trail, Cold Brook Trail and Red Rock Trail do not seem as well traveled as the trails that begin from Route 113, and consequently they are rougher and not as thoroughly marked. If you are nervous about getting lost, I recommend hiking up and over Blueberry Mountain. This route is quite popular. Also, Great Brook Trail, Spruce Hill Trail, and the Red Rock Trail are all wooded, with scant views.

I *absolutely* do not recommend starting or finishing at the Cold Brook Trailhead. The path is very badly marked, there are confusing No Trespassing signs posted all over the place, and there are several intersecting rough roads that make it hard to see where the real path is. If you want to start at this side of the mountain, it's much better to begin or end your hike at the better maintained Evergreen Link Trail, off of Mountain Road.

Directions: From Route 2 in Gilead, travel south on Rte. 113 for 10 miles to the parking area on the right, at Brickett Place. From the south, travel north on Rte. 113 for 19 miles from Route 302 in Fryeburg. Or you can start at the East Royce Mtn trailhead off Route 113.

To find the trailhead to Great Brook Trail, take Adams Road to Hut Road. Drive all the way to the end, after it turns into a bumpy jeep track, and you'll see park signs and trailhead signs. Walk along the track, past a pretty stream. You should see a trail sign a hundred yards so so from the stream showing you which way to go (there are other tracks heading off in different directions, so take care). Also, at about 1.8 miles in, there is a junction with a trail sign pointing to the left, but it is very hard to see.

To get to the Evergreen Link Trailhead, take Adams Road to Mountain Road. When the road turns right into a private drive, park your car, and start walking up the snowmobile track straight ahead. When I hiked this in the fall of 2016, there was no sign at the start here, just a faint yellow mark on a tree. The official trail sign is a ways up the snowmobile path. After about half a mile, the snowmobile path heads right, and you'll see a walking path continue straight ahead.



Albany Mountain, White Mountain National Forest

If you hiked this mountain several years ago, you'll notice the trail system has changed. Beaver activity has washed out the old Albany Notch Trail, at least on the northern side of this mountain.

The best way to tackle this wonderful mountain is to park at the trailhead off the dirt road that leads to Crocker Pond Campground. You can get here by driving down Patte Brook Road. Once you start hiking, you'll first head out along a flat section of the trail and then start climbing. To reach the beautiful southerly views, follow the cairns for .4 miles along the ledges. Then relax, rest, and take it all in! It's about two miles to the top.

You can also hike up the 2.2-mile Albany Notch trail, on the other side of the mountain. It doesn't appear this is a popular way to hike, and there is no easy place to park at the bottom (unless you have a four-wheel drive and can drive along the pretty bad access road to the trailhead gate). This path can also be quite wet.

Directions: From Bethel take Route 5 south past Songo Pond and turn right onto the Patte Brook Road at the sign indicating National Forest Camping. Follow signs toward Crocker Pond Campground. (You'll make a left onto Crocker Pond Road). Travel .6 miles to the trailhead on the right.

To reach the Notch Trail, follow Birch Ave. from Route 5, all the way to the end, past several camps. Look for a brown park sign pointing to Albany Notch Trail. You can park here, I think? Off to the side of the road. Or you can keep driving, as far as the trailhead gate, if possible. There are snowmobile paths at the trailhead gate, too, branching off in

different directions. If your car isn't tough enough for this, try to park off to the side of the narrow Birch Ave. Then follow the road in; eventually you will see yellow blazes.



Shell Pond Loop, 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 is a mostly flat, charming little walk around Shell Pond. It includes a faint road that passes under gnarled old apple trees. There is one little climb (pretty insignificant), from what I recall. If you do the whole loop, it's about four miles.

Directions: You'll see a little trail sign for Shell Pond trail on Shell Pond Road. If you're coming from Rte. 113, it'll be on your left about 3.5 miles in. This road is closed in the winter. You can also park at the parking area for Blueberry Mountain and Rattlesnake Pool on Shell Pond/Stone House Road, which is further north on Rte. 113, off to the

right.



Little Deer and Big Deer Hills, White Mountain National Forest

You can hike over the two Deer Hills for different views of the White Mountain National Forest and for some moderate hiking that offers nice rewards. The trailhead to Little Deer hill can be found at the parking lot for the Baldface loop, on Route 113 (which is closed in the winter). Weirdly, there was no sign for the trailhead when I was there in July 2016. You have to scour the edge of the parking lot to find the trail and a yellow blaze on a tree. Also, the trail map at the parking lot was not accurate for the Deer Hill trail network in July 2016. Maine Trail Finder's map is accurate though.

Follow the path to a funky river crossing over Cold River and to some beautiful pools to cool off your feet (if they need cooling). A few feet from the river, you'll see a post that marks the border between New Hampshire and Maine. Continue on the trail and follow the signs to Little Deer Hill. You can

take the Deer Hill Bypass on the right, or continue to the first summit (which I recommend. Then return via the bypass). From Little Hill, you can continue on to Big Deer Hill for different views. Then head down the bypass trail. I highly recommend checking out the bubbling spring, a detour of about .3 miles one way.

To make a shorter loop, and to skip Big Deer Hill, you can head down Little Deer on one of two short paths and link up with the bypass trail. The whole loop is roughly four miles, counting the detour to the spring. Or you can start at the trailhead from Evergreen Valley Road (also Shell Pond Road).

It's about .9 miles to the summit of Little Deer, if you start from the Baldface parking lot.

Directions: Follow Route 113 either 17.5 miles north from Fryeburg or 12.5 miles south from Gilead, and look for the Baldface Circle Trailhead on the eastern side of the road. From here, the Deer Hill Connector trail links the parking lot with the Deer Hills Trail. It was not marked with a sign in July 2016! Look for a yellow blaze and a trail at the eastern edge of the lot, sorta close to the port-o-lets. Alternatively, you can start at the trailhead on Shell Pond Road/Evergreen Valley Road. To get here, take Deer Hill Road (off of Route 113, south of the Baldface Circle parking lot), and continue to the left when the road splits. Look for the trailhead sign about 1.3 miles on the left.



Lord Hill and Pine Hill, White Mountain National Forest

The trail systems of Lord and Pine Hills are in blue; the neighboring preserve trails are in green.

This is a nifty trail network with two smallish summits with nice views. Or, you can do just one. The Pine Hill loop is about 3.7 miles, and the Lord Hill loop is about 3.3 miles. But if you just want to go the Lord Hill summit, it's 1.3 miles. Go another .1 mile to check out the old Lord Hill mine.

I think – and this is purely subjective! – that the Lord Hill hike might be nicer than Pine Hill. Better views, a cool mine, an easier hike. Pine Hill has some pretty steep trudges.

Note: On the access road to the Pine Tree trail, make sure you stay to the left. I marked on the map where I missed the road to the left. If you go to the right, you hit some No Trespassing signs. There is a chain across the correct trail – just step over it and continue up. When I was here in July 2016, there was a tiny faded trail sign pointing left. You'll continue walking straight up, while a driveway/road curves left into someone's private lot. More info on Maine Trail Finder (although its beaver info is outdated).

There is a neighboring preserve, Bishop Cardinal, whose trails connect with this mountain trail network.

Directions: There are two trailheads – one for Lord Hill, the other for Pine Hill. To get to the one closer to Pine Hill,

follow Route 113 either 16.8 miles north from Fryeburg or 13.2 miles south from Gilead. Turn onto Deer Hill Road, which is .7 miles south of the Baldface Circle Trailhead on the eastern side of the road. Take Deer Hill Road 1.5 miles (becomes Shell Pond Road/Evergreen Valley Road) and take a right (soon after the trailhead sign for Big Deer Hill on the left) onto a short connecting road, followed by a quick left. Park to the side of the road. From here, the hike begins by continuing down the road (which also leads to some houses).

To get to the Lord Hill trailhead, follow the directions above but continue along Shell Pond Road 3.1 miles to the trailhead on the right. It's near Horseshoe Pond. Alternatively, from the east, take the West Stoneham Road from Route 5. Continue on Adams Road (becomes Shell Pond Road) for about 3.2 miles to reach the trailhead on the left.



Albany Brook Trail (to Round Pond), White Mountain National Forest

From the Crocker Pond campsite, you can park and walk one

easy, flat mile to Round Pond. This is a lovely, remote pond—although when I was there in July 2015, it appears a road is being built into it :(. This might be the easiest trail in Maine's bit of the White Mountain National Forest! More info can be found [here](#).

Directions: This trailhead is located adjacent to the Crocker Pond Campground and can be reached by travelling down the Flat Road from West Bethel, Maine for 5.8 miles and then turning right, following the sign to the Campground.



Caribou Mountain, White Mountain National Forest

This is a lovely hike, with an open summit and great views. You can tackle it either by starting from Route 113 (closed in winters) or from the Bog Road. Most people depart from the trailhead on Route 113, climbing up either the northern Caribou Trail or the southern Mud Brook Trail. You have more views along the Mud Brook Trail, which also is a bit steeper. I noticed it was harder to follow the trail at the open, rocky mountaintop coming in from the Caribou Trail. And there are fragile alpine plants on the top, so it's unfortunately easy

to wander off the trail and damage them. Or was in July 2016.

The other possibility is you start at Bog Road, and hike up 2.3 miles to intersect with the loop. Note that at the start of Bog Road, the logging road you head out on splits into two. The way was not marked when I was here. Take the road to the left to reach the footpath, which'll be on your right 100 feet or so further up and posted with an arrow.

The whole trail network is about 11.4 miles. If you just do the Caribou Trail-Mud Brook Trail loop, it's about 6.7 miles. I'd say this hike is moderate, rather than difficult. The elevation gained from the Route 113 trailhead is about 1,950 feet.

Directions: From US Route 2 in Gilead, travel south on Route 113 for 4.8 miles to the parking area at the Caribou/Mud Brook Trailhead on the left side of the road. From US Route 302 in Fryeburg, travel north on Route 113 for 24.8 miles to the parking area, which'll be on your right. For the Bog Road trailhead, travel on US Route 2 and just west of West Bethel town you'll take a left onto Bog Road. Drive 2.8 miles to a small parking area. The road is gated.



The Roost, White Mountain National Forest

The Roost offers a 2.1-mile loop (the last .6 mile along Route 113), and a steep, short spur to the only lookout over the Wild River and westerly views. The ascent is about .5 mile, so this is a pretty kid-friendly hike. As soon as you get to the first ledges, look for the sign, "Scenic view," pointing down to the trail spur to the lookout. It's easy to miss! More info here.

If you want to swim at the end of the hike, there's a bridge across Route 113 just a little south of the trailhead. It leads to a little beach where you can pop into Wild River and cool off.

Directions: The Roost trailhead is along Route 113 (closed in winter), 2.8 miles south of Route 2 in Gilead, Maine. Hikers can park at the small gravel pull off by the trail sign, or at the larger Hastings trailhead .2 miles south of there where Route 113 meets Wild River Road.

