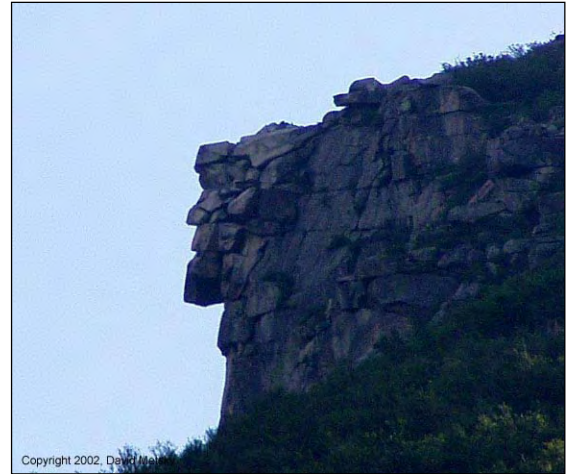


Franconia Notch State Park

Located right in the center of the White Mountain National Forest, Franconia Notch State Park in New Hampshire is 6,692 wild acres of amazing outdoor fun and recreation. Truly a park of all seasons, whether it is skiing on Cannon Mountain, canoeing Echo Lake, hiking the Appalachian Trail, taking a leisurely auto tour, camping in the backcountry, or climbing one of several very challenging and rewarding mountains, it is all found here

Like so many other scenic wonders in the northern half of the United States the Wisconsin Glacier created the terrain that is Franconia Notch State Park approximately 15,000 years ago. The scouring powers of the ice in the glacier removed the soil and left the red Conway Granite behind, sculpting this narrow valley and leaving some of the highest peaks in New England.

The original draw to this region goes back to 1850 when writer Nathaniel Hawthorne immortalized the Old Man of the Mountain, a unique geological feature that is world famous. The Old Man is actually a rock shoulder that sticks out of Profile Mountain. Five layers of granite ledge, one on top of each other form what appears to be the face of an old man, gazing eastward from the side of the mountain. The ancient formation is over forty feet tall, and receives annual maintenance to seal cracks formed by the endless cycle of freezing and thawing in the New Hampshire winters. The Old Man is now the state symbol, sits on the state seal, and is viewed by the millions of people who drive down Interstate 93 that cuts through the heart of the park.



A booming tourist industry was built around the Old Man including stagecoach routes that led to the posh Profile Inn that brought wealthy visitors from around the US to this bucolic setting. In 1923 the Inn burned down and the owners put all 6,000 acres they owned up for sale to be cut as timber. A nationwide campaign to save the area raised over \$200,000 and with the state of New Hampshire matching funds, Franconia Notch State Park was born in 1928



Just South of the Entrance to Franconia Notch, is a natural Stone profile, resembling an Indians Head, complete with headdress. The Profile is at the top of Mt. Pemigewasset. A Resort called Indian Head is just below the profile. This is the last development before entering the park.

You will then enter the park on the Franconia Notch Parkway, a stretch of Interstate 93, which originates in Boston, and ends in Vermont. For the next 8 miles, you will be within the confines of the state park. There will be numerous parking areas along the roadway. There is also an 8-mile long Bike path, which is accessible from any of the parking areas along the parkway.





The Flume Gorge at the southern tip of Franconia Notch State Park is a very popular attraction. Discovered in 1808, the narrow natural gorge is only 10 to 20 feet wide and has granite cliffs rising 70 to 90 feet upward. The narrow rocky gorge has Flume Creek rushing through the granite boulders at its base. From the Flume Gorge Visitor Center you can walk or take a shuttle bus to hike the gorge.

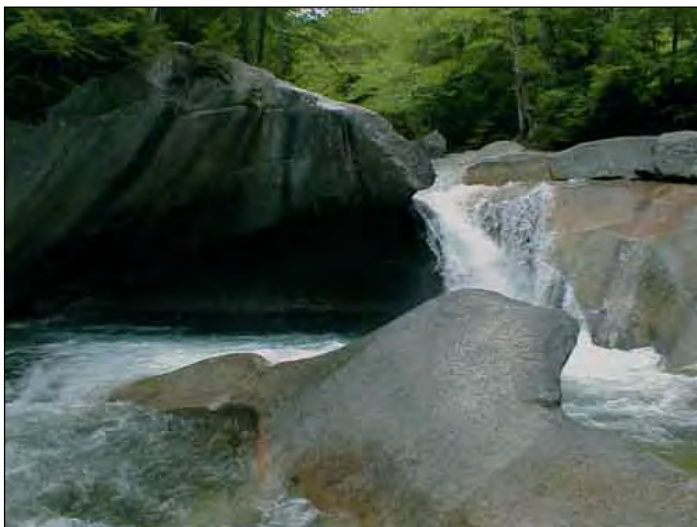
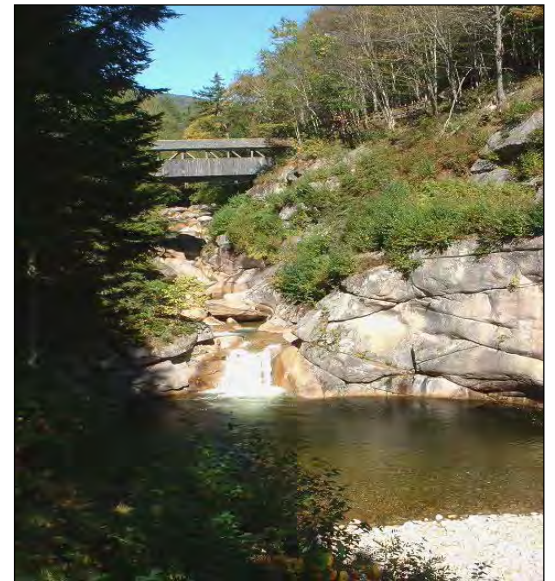
You will pass thru the famous Flume covered bridge, perhaps the most photographed covered bridge in all of New England. A boardwalk allows visitors to walk through the claustrophobic, cool, damp crevasse and see the lush plant life that



flourishes in this sheltered area.

If you are in good shape, you can climb what seems like an endless series of stairs at the north end of the Flume out of the chasm into old growth forest. The trail then descends downhill to the Sentinel Pine Bridge.

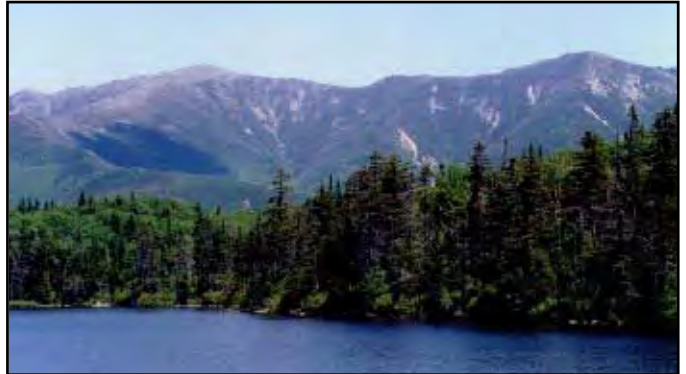
This covered bridge was built in 1939 over the Pemigewasset River out of a **single** pine tree that was felled in a severe storm. While on the bridge be sure to look down at the natural stone pool it crosses below. The trail then loops back to the Visitor Center and is a little more than a mile to complete. This hike is wonderful during any season of the year.



Continuing north along the Franconia Notch Highway the next major feature is The Basin. For the last 15,000 years the Pemigewasset River has been cascading down into a natural pool made of solid granite. Through the forces of time, water, sand and small stones have carved a pothole at the falls base that has grown to over 20 feet in diameter. A short gravel trail leads to The Basin and it is easily accessed from the highway.

If you are looking for a scenic day hike that offers lakes, forests, and bragging rights of walking a bit of the Appalachian Trail, The Basin offers an excellent jumping off point for a six-mile trek. From the Basin you can take the trail north along the west bank of the Pemigewasset River northward to the Lafayette Campground. You then turn west toward Lonesome Lake and walk southward along its wooded eastern bank. If you take the trip in the early morning or before sunset you may here the cry and laughter of loons echoing across the water and be sure to take a look at the beaver lodge display.

At the southern tip of Lonesome Lake you leave Franconia Notch State Park and enter the White Mountains National Forest and start heading southward on the Appalachian Trail (AT). Just before you reach Cascade Brook, just a bit more than a mile on the AT, you turn east again and follow the brook back to The Basin and the parking lot.

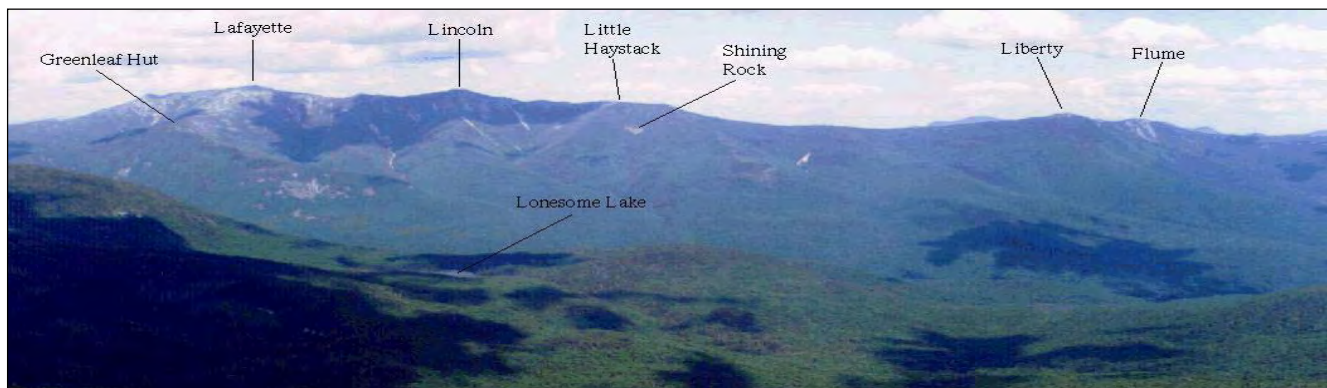


Continuing deeper into Franconia Notch State Park your next stop is at Lafayette Campground. Flanked by mountains on both sides, including 5,260 feet high Mount Lafayette to the east, Lafayette Campground offers 97 improved and heavily wooded campsites for park visitors. Hot showers, firewood, ice, and camping supplies are available at the lodge. Reservations are accepted, but more than half the sites are left open to be taken on a first come first serve basis. The Lafayette Campground serves as a very popular base of operation for a grueling nine-mile long day hike to 4,840 feet Little Haystack Mountain, 5,089 feet Lincoln Mountain, and 5,260 feet Lafayette Mountain, all of which sit atop of the Franconia Ridge.



The hike up starts on the eastern side of the Franconia Notch Parkway at the banks of the ever-present Pemigewasset River. Heading east the trail will fork and you will head south on the Falling Water Trail. The trail turns east and climbs sharply up Little Haystack Mountain and into the White Mountain National Forest. The section that rises from 2,200 feet to 3,600 feet is aptly called the forty-five, due to the steep angle on the trail - take heart in knowing it gets easier past this point. As you rise above 4,000 feet the trees start to give way to struggling scraggly pine, grasses, lichens and wildflowers of a mountain environment before giving

way to the wind scoured barren top of the ridge.





At the bare summit of Little Haystack Mountain the Falling Water Trail ends at the Appalachian Trail. Take the trail heading north to even higher Mount Lincoln about a mile away. Travel another mile and you will reach the summit of Mount Lafayette. From the barren windswept peak you can see Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Quebec Province, Massachusetts and the Atlantic Ocean on a clear day. Hiking down the Old Bridle Trail from the summit of Lafayette you can stop and rest at the Greenleaf Hut, or stay for the night if you wish to pay the steep \$50 per person fee. Greenleaf Hut

sits at Eagle Lake, which rests about 1,000 feet below the summit of Lafayette and just above the timberline. The trail winds down Mount Lafayette back to the waters of the Pemigewasset, and back to Lafayette Campground.

Continuing northward through this rewarding park you come to popular Profile Lake and there 1,200 feet above the Old Man of the Mountain. Profile Lake is famous for world-class brook trout fishing. From Profile Lake you can take a hike up the side of Cannon Mountain to an observatory that sits atop this popular wintertime ski resort.



If all this hiking is making you tired don't despair. Cannon Mountain is also the site of the first aerial tramway in the United States. Originally built in 1938 and updated in 1980, two 80-passenger gondola cars take you on a five-minute ride to the top of 4,180 feet Cannon Mountain for breathtaking views of the valley below. In the wintertime skiers and snowboarders alike are taken to the top of Cannon to explore over 26 miles of trails. At the base of Cannon Mountain you can visit the New England Ski Museum or park your recreational vehicle at the Cannon Mountain RV Park.



Your exploration of Franconia Notch State Park is almost complete. At the northern end of the park is Park Headquarters and Echo Lake. The calm cold waters are popular among paddlers, swimmers and anglers. You will be looking up at the ski slopes of Cannon Mountain. The lake provides the water for snow making operations during winter. Even with those operations, the level of the lake drops only a few inches, and then fully recovers during spring.

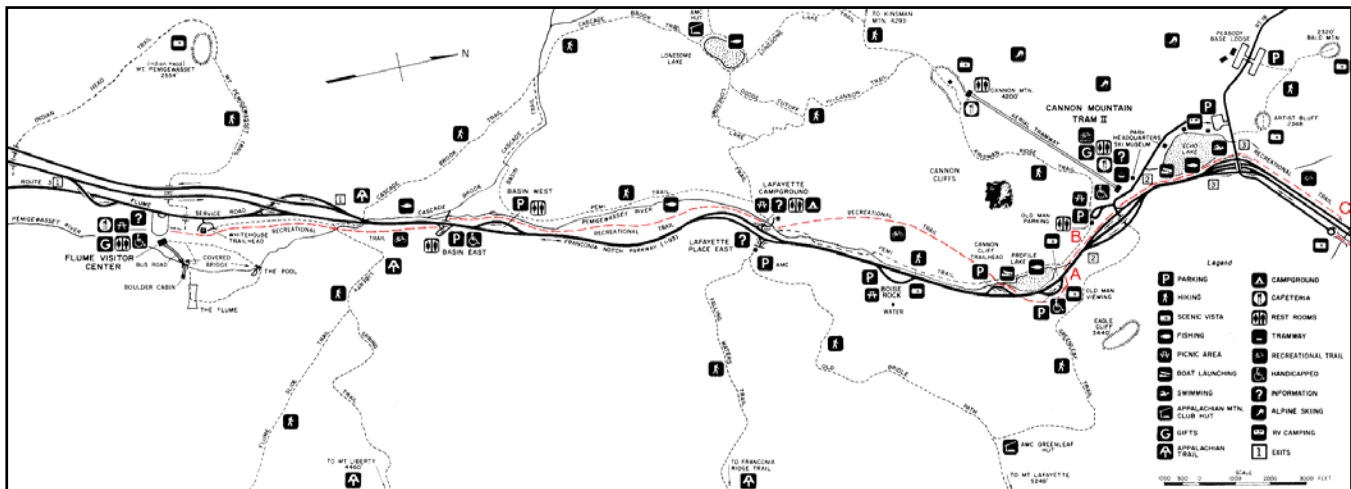
From Echo Lake you can take a short 1-1/2 mile loop trail up to Artists Bluff and Bald Mountain for an excellent view of Franconia Notch looking back southward along the route you just drove up. The Trail starts across the road from the parking area.

Whether your plans include driving through to see the world famous fall foliage, skiing in the winter, enjoying world class fishing, or some of the best hiking and climbing in all of New England, Franconia Notch State Park is the one of the best places to have your next outdoor adventure



Franconia Notch State Park Map

Franconia Notch Bike Path



The Franconia Notch State Park Recreational Trail is a paved trail that parallels Franconia Notch State Parkway. The 20 mile round trip brings riders within easy reach of park attractions including the Flume Gorge, the Old Man of the Mountain Profile, Profile Lake, Boise Rock, the Basin, Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway and Echo Lake. There's no fee for the use of the bike path. However, fees are charged at some attractions. Loon Mountain in Lincoln, NH offers one way shuttle service to Cannon Mountain for a nominal fee, and also rents bicycles if needed. The return to Loon Mountain is mostly a downhill ride of about 18 miles returning via Rt 3 south to connector Rd, to the Kancamagus hwy.



Walks and Hikes in the Franconia Notch region

The Franconia Notch region of the White Mountains has long been a favorite of visitors to the area. Home to the famed Old Man of the Mountain, the popular Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway, and the much visited Flume Gorge, Franconia Notch probably entertains more visitors each year than any other region in the northern mountains of New Hampshire. The Notch itself is the narrow scenic mountain pass flanked on one side by massive Cannon Mountain and on the other by the bald peaks of the Franconia Range. Franconia Notch is quite accessible, as I-93 and the Franconia Notch Parkway make their way north to Vermont along the floor of the mountain gap.

