

HIKES: A Checklist to Help You Pick a Hike

- 1) When picking hikes from the *table above* and *list below*, look at the “**climb**,” the “**difficulty**” & the required “**agility level**,” not just the **distance**! Know your limitations.....
- 2)If in the past year or so you have not done at least a three hour hike, then please do not sign up for any of our all-day hikes (all ~five hours or more of actual hiking)... out of respect for your fellow hiking Summiteers....
- 3) Every trail bend might seem perfect for **photo taking**, and we’ll all be snapping photos like crazy....Just please not so much as to be to the detriment of your fellow hikers or denying all of them the time to actually reach our hiking destinations! Thanks.
- 4) Traditionally, we call these “regular” Summit hikes listed below “destination hikes.” Natural and/or historical interpretation is *not* the focus of these hikes, unlike rambles and most other Summit programs. While your leader will often offer *some interpretation*, if you want the primary focus to be on ecosystems, plants, history, geology, birds, photography, environmental issues, etc., we recommend Summit rambles and other Summit programs. The Roost, Goose Eye Brook, Lost Pond, Table Rock, and the all-day Blueberry Mtn. hikes will offer more interpretation than most hikes (historic on the first, natural on the others.)
- 5) Some veteran hikers, especially in the Appalachians, disdain mind-numbing, needlessly lengthy, often 2% grade (poorly designed) switchbacks, and hate flights of stone stairs replacing natural trails, both obsessions in recent decades by certain trail clubs. Good news... you don’t have to worry about that here (with less erosion-prone soils than most areas in the East.) Here, heavily used but **more natural trail routes** will be found, many existing for over a century. AMC and other trail builders and maintainers have moved a load of rocks, to be sure, but only where critically needed and never to needlessly replace or destroy a more natural route.

What that all means is rocky footing, erratic, often steep, and always requiring agility.

- 6) The **rocky footing** means above-average agility levels are often needed. This year we added an “**agility level**” column to our hike table where a “5” is extreme, a “1” is normal. The hikes requiring high level rock hopping and agility are, in order, the extreme Mahoosuc Notch rock scramble, then the Mt. Washington & Carter Notch hikes, then, not too far behind, the short Table Rock hike. We’ve made the trickiest parts on Lost Pond and Blueberry Mtn. optional. Instep injuries and turned ankles are a frequent risk from placing your feet at odd angles, or when landing after a longer drop than normal.
- 7) Arguably the past six consecutive Summits (Rockies, Acadia, Monterrey, Smokies, NM, Tahoe) have had more hike to hike variety than this Summit’s ten non-Mt. Wash./Carter Notch hikes, all of which range from 750 to 2,850 feet above sea level, all in Eastern hardwood forest breaking out at higher elevations into more boreal, evergreen-dominated forests with views. It’s an amazing area, but with less variety from one hike to the next. So **if you’re seeking more variety, think about some of the other great Summit programs.**

8) If great **views** are your goal, skip Mahoosuc Notch and Goose Eye. Our half-day Dome Rock, Roost, Lost Pond, Table Rock, and Mt. Crag hikes each have one view (very nice, long-distance.) The other five hikes have many views; all are all day-long.

9) If getting to **waterfalls** (or at least captivating rapids) is your main goal, you'll find some on most hikes (not Mahoosuc Notch, The Roost or Lost Pond), but only the beginning and end of the Dome Rock hike will really and truly scratch that itch, with the side trips on the way back from the Table Rock hike coming in 2nd place.

10) Looking to avoid **crowds** during a holiday week in one of the East's premier hiking regions? Well, we'll be ok on Mt. Crag, Mahoosuc Notch, most of Basin Rim, and perhaps, with luck or bad weather, on Goose Eye, and Blueberry Mtn. To avoid **long drives**, pick a ramble, Goose Eye or Table Rock.

11) Looking for **one of the best hikes** in this White Mountains NH-ME hiking mecca?? If so, pick any hike! Our Summit hike leaders last fall and this year have scouted all of our hikes while also absorbing trail reports from numerous books and web sources. As always, we rejected more hikes than we accepted for our schedule....Our dozen hikes are simply the best here!

For each hike: pack carefully (see list below), pick up a bag lunch for all-day hikes, and....**be on time** (please.*)

Leaving on time:

For considerations of safety and scheduling, it is important that hikes depart on time.

* Summit hikes, rambles, and field trips are timed out to return in time for another Summit program, a meal, or child pickup. Van drivers must obey speed limits, and there will be plenty of traffic. Some of our parking lots routinely fill up early. Thanks for your consideration!

2018 White Mtns. Summit Hikes

Hikes listed below are in order from least rigorous to toughest, numbered 1 to 12.

A. For the infrequent and/or less ambitious hiker:

These NH-Maine border mountains are known for rugged, rocky, steep trails, but this Summit also has four *less rigorous* half day “destination hikes” (A.1 to A. 4 below.)

In addition, the Summit features an entire “rambles” program with easier and shorter hikes and more of an emphasis on nature interpretation.

A.1) Lost Pond - Square Ledge at Pinkham Notch: Moderate / “2+” agility / 3 mi. / 550 ft. climb;
Wed. 8-12 Local leader w/ John K.

A "White Mountains in miniature", this is one of our three hikes offering a nice viewpoint for a minimum of effort. This Pinkham Notch hike in the heart of New Hampshire's White Mountains includes terrific **Mt. Washington views from just three miles**. Scouting this for us in September, long-time Summit hike assistant Tina Egan saw beaver activity, dams, and lodges on the flattish Lost Pond trail. We'll have **more nature interpretation** on this hike than most. Starting on a nice part of the Appalachian Trail adjacent to the Ellis River, we'll stroll along Lost Pond admiring the contrast of the deep pools, the balsam fir, and the white birch trees. While close to the busy Pinkham Notch road, sounds are muffled for the most part. Our short hike up to Square Ledge is rewarded with views of Mt. Washington, Tuckerman Ravine, and the Gulf of Slides even before the final steep, loose rock section. If time permits, we can visit the mecca for hikers in New England, the Appalachian Mountain Club complex at Pinkham Notch as we exit this hike through their gift shop.

A.2) Goose Eye Brook - Wright Trail: Moderate+ / “2” agility / 3 mi. / 600 ft. climb;
Sun. 8-12 Local leader w/John K.

More nature interpretation on this hike than most. Lovely Goose Eye Brook is paralleled for the entire hike and features a 30 foot **deep gorge and scenic slides** (sheets of water flowing over slanted granite slabs.) After fine footing for the first mile, we'll see how far we get (another half mile?) on a rockier streamside trail with numerous plunging cascades. At the end, time should permit a wade or dip in popular Frenchman's Hole amidst Bull Branch's interesting rock formations. The photo below is from James Sherrard while he was scouting this hike in September.

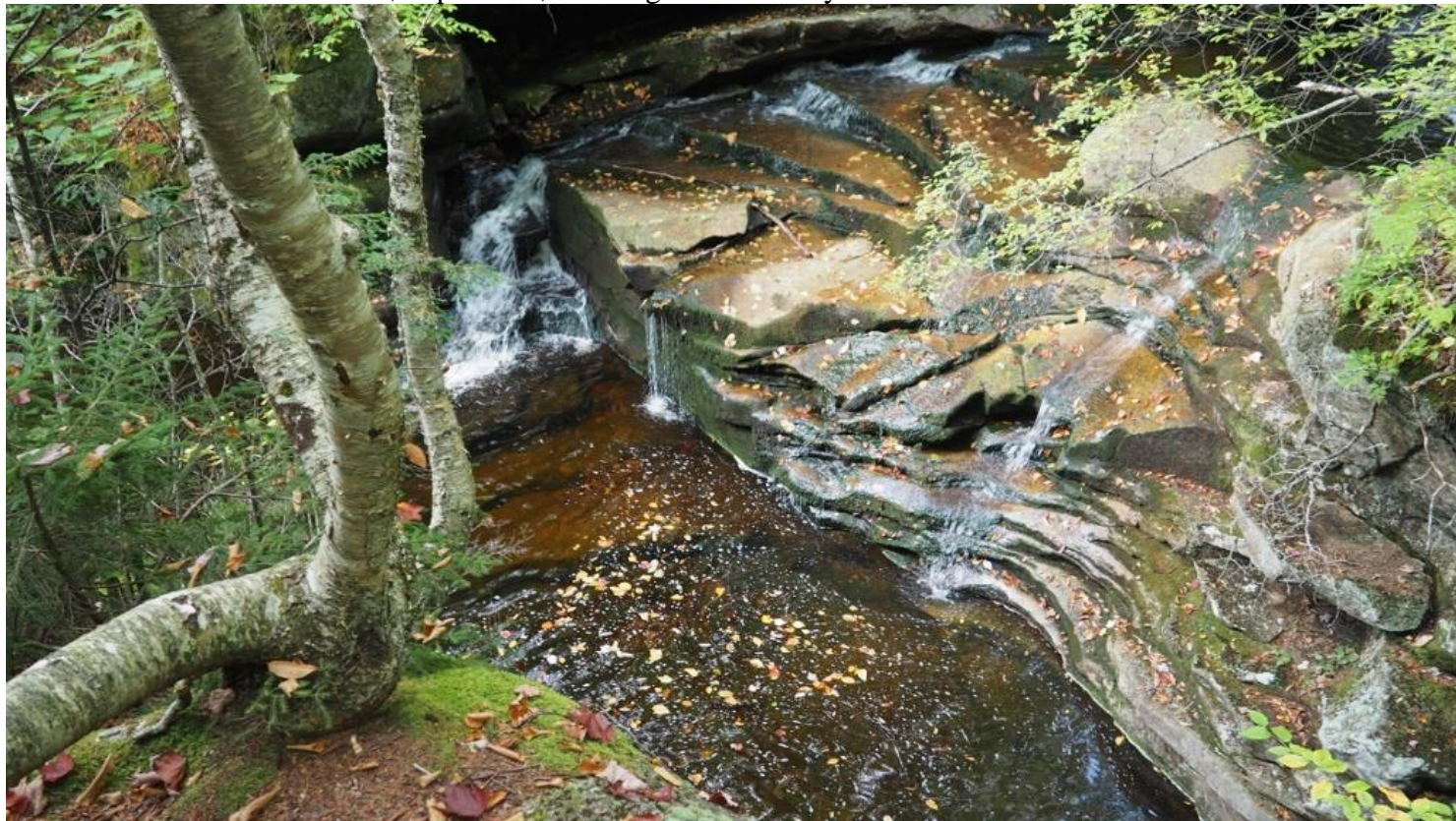
A.3) Mt. Crag- Austin Brook: Moderate+ / “1+” agility / 4 mi. / 900 ft. climb;
Mon. 1-5 Danny M. w/ John K. & Wed. 1-5 Danny M. w/Jan H.

Pleasant? White Mtns. hiking is oft-described as dramatic, rigorous, or inspiring. But pleasant? This hike is delightful and is one of our three hikes offering a **nice viewpoint for a minimum of effort**. Mt. Crag's excellent views of the Androscoggin valley are reached after just a 700 foot climb, after which we descend steeply, briefly, to reach meadows that at least *look* like **moose habitat**. **One of the area's loveliest streams** with numerous shimmering "slides" (sheets of water over slanted granite slabs) is followed for the hike's entire second half and is quite....pleasant.

A.4) The Roost – Hastings-Wild River: Moderate+ / “2+” agility / 4 mi. / 900 ft. climb;
Sun. 1-5:15 Dave L. w/ Christine R. & Tue. 1-5:15 Dave L. w/Jan H.

One of our three hikes offering a **nice viewpoint for a minimum of effort**, The Roost is a rocky platform overlooking both the Wild River and Evans Brook valleys of New Hampshire's White Mountains. We'll linger on the ledge gazing at the peaks of the Carter-Mariah Range and the Wild River Wilderness. We'll offer **more history interpretation** on this hike than most..... The forest, heavily logged from 1891 to 1904, now has a variety of aspens, ash, birch, beech, sugar maple, spruce, pines, hemlocks, and even balsam fir. We'll then enter what was the town of Hastings a century ago, with a population of 300. Now all that remains is the occasional alcohol mill and dam remnant, apple grove, or stone foundation that we'll explore. An optional 2nd hike, ~ 1.5 mile, 200 ft. climb (both included in the totals), partly-off trail, leads us to the region's only ~450-year old tree (a hemlock) plus 1890's logging railroad remnants; others will opt for a dunk or wade in the Wild River instead.

Photo below: *James Sherrard*, Sept. 2017, scouting the Goose Eye Brook hike.



B. For the average/ above avg. hiker looking to explore new vistas on a half or all-day hike: These are the White Mountains...the Presidential Range of NH...the Mahoosuc Range of Maine...some of the grandest hiking in the East. And the beauty of all this beauty is that hikes of just average length can lead to spectacular views and/or dazzling waterfalls / cascades. We have four of these:

B.5) Dome Rock- Snyder Br. Falls: Vigorous / “2” agility / 4 mi. / 1,450 ft. climb;
Sun. 7-12 Danny M. w/Jan H. & Tue 7-12 Danny w/John K.

The region's best hike for waterfalls: one dramatic plunge after another, interspersed with striking slides, gorges. The region's best hike for old growth (hemlock, red spruce, sugar maples), protected since 1891. All of these visual treats come in the first mile (and again at the end.) After that, we'll have to really earn the next highlight via a steep 3/4 mile to Dome Rock. We'll linger there on top for awesome views of Mt. Madison and Mt. Adams, both within 2.5 miles of us. Our route features a White Mountains rarity: mostly non-steep, relaxed two mile downhill hike with some nature interpretation along the way. Near hike's end, we're back at our waterfalls with a chance for a wade or a dip in a plunge pool. Waterfall pictures (and of the Dome Rock) at <https://www.scenicnh.com/blog/2016/07/snyder-brook-waterfalls/>.

B.6) Table Rock- Moose Cave: Vigorous / “3+” agility / 3 mi. / 1,000 ft. climb;
Thu. 8-12 Local leader w/Jan H. & Thu. 1-5 Danny M. w/John K.

Dramatic views, hard-earned by a 900 foot climb culminating in a **tricky, steep, rocky scramble** up to Table Rock. Grafton Notch State Park calls this trail "not suitable" for all, thus our "3+" out of 5 rating for the level of surefooted agility required on rocks. Joel and Peggy scouted Grafton Notch State Park trails and gave this trail the “best” rating. Our downhill return route is on the Appalachian Trail. Our views of The Eyebrow and the Mahoosuc Range across the valley are splendid. Near the top are some caves that we can crawl around in if so inspired. **We'll do a bit of nature interpretation.** On the way back, we'll likely do the quarter mile loop hike to Moose Cave at a 45 foot deep gorge on the Bear River and explore the startling rock formations at Screw Auger Falls in a 40 foot deep 150 foot long narrow gorge.

B.7) Caribou Mtn. – Mt. Wash. back-up!.. **Before 6:30 p.m. Tue. nobody except those on the Tue. Mt. Wash. hike can sign up for Caribou Mtn., since Caribou Mtn. will be totally canceled if Mt. Wash. is canceled on Tue. due to weather; see Mt. Wash. below; Strenuous / “3” agility / 7 mi. / 1,950 ft. climb; **Thu. 8-3:30 Roy M. w/ Seth S.

Breathtaking views on top and pretty hemlock and birch **moose habitat** streamside routes make this a nice hike throughout. One of our two hikes in a Wilderness Area (thus the group size of 10.) After a couple miles alongside Morrison Brook, we'll stop at lovely little Kees Falls with its deep plunge pool. Hiking poles may help some as we rock hop across the brook six times. We'll linger at the top, sitting on rock ledges gazing at a 360 degree view including Mt. Washington 19 miles away, weather permitting. Our hike highlight is the next mile as we descend fairly gently on a memorable open ridge of flat rock slabs and ledges with **nearly constant views** of the Presidential Range and Wild River Wilderness in front of us, Kezar and other lakes and the Caribou Wilderness Area on our left, and the Mahoosuc Range to our right. We'll stop for lunch at one of the best views before a descent, steep at first, then quite easy in the poorly-named Mud Brook valley for the last two miles (only rarely within sight of the stream.)

B.8) Blueberry Mtn.- Bickford Brook: Strenuous / “3” agility / 7.6 mi. / 2,400 ft. climb; Mon. 8-3:30 Local leader w/Christine R.

We'll enjoy **extended views from the remarkable two-mile-long Blueberry Ridge** adjacent to Caribou Mtn. and similar in many regards (but tougher.) One of our two hikes in a Wilderness Area (thus the group size of 10.) **More nature interpretation** on this hike than most. The steep, rocky half mile side trip (requiring a "3+" out of "5" for surefooted level of agility needed) is optional; the group will split there with some electing to stay on the main trail for that half mile. Those on the half mile scramble get up close to the dramatic gorge and **cascades called "slides"** (sheets of water sluicing across flat granite slabs.) Everyone will get up close to the Lower Slide.

The whole way up is on a gentle grade on an old lookout tower road (that now looks like a well-graded trail.) Our hike highlight is the relatively gentle stroll down the awe-inspiring Blueberry Ridge open ledges with nearly constant views of the sheer cliffs of the Basin Rim and Baldface on our right and Kezar and other lakes to our left and in front of us. (When scouting in Sept.: Dave L.: “Probably my **favorite hour** of my six days of dawn to dusk hiking.”) Views include Mt. Washington 17 miles away, weather permitting. After a particularly tricky steep downhill section in rocky gullies, we're just 3/4 mile from the end. The hike starts and finishes at the 1811 Brickett Place brick house.

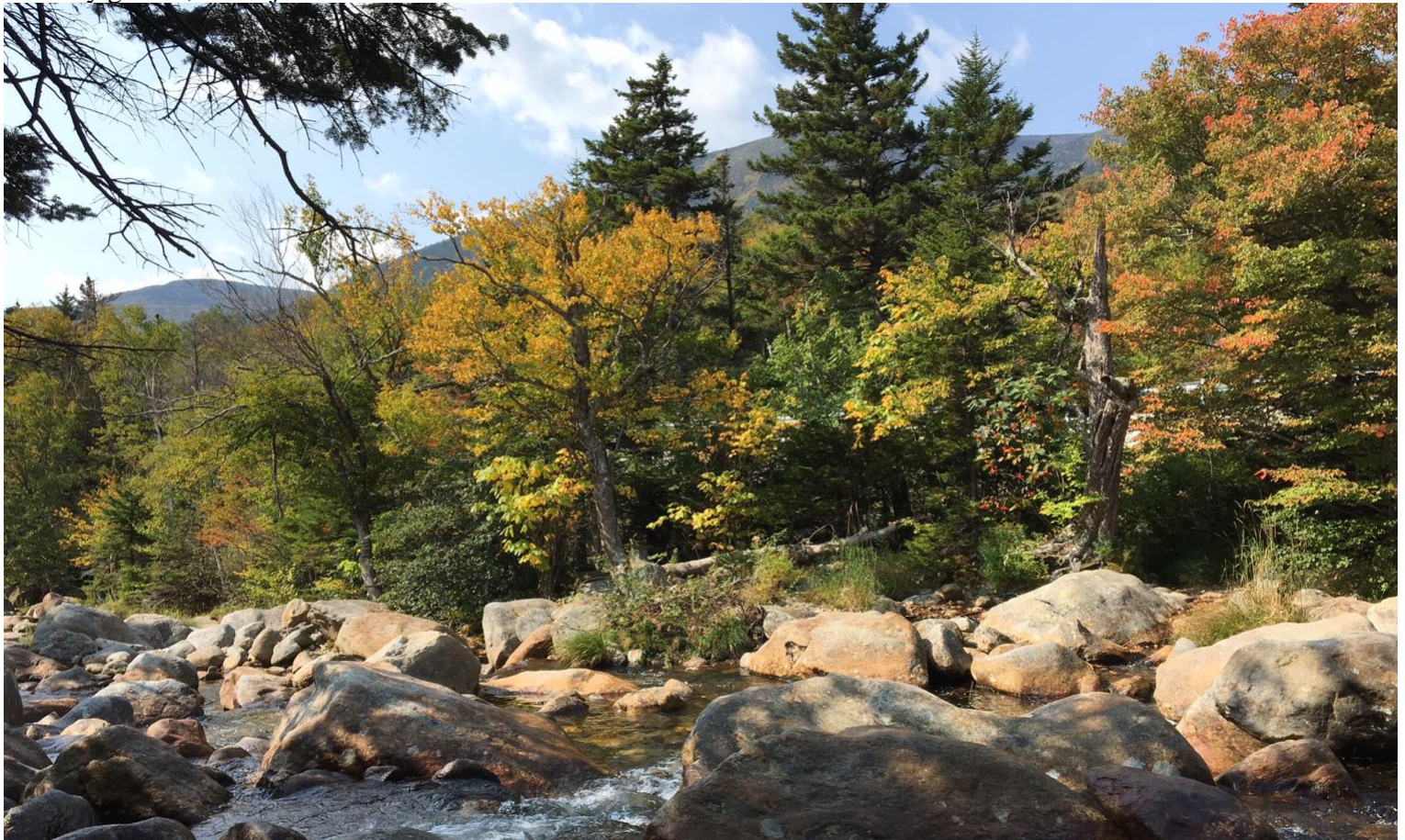


Photo above: *Tina Egan*, Sept. 2017, scouting the Lost Pond hike.

C. For the *high-end* hiker looking for a day-long challenge:

Some stunning White Mountains views demand quite an *investment in agility, time, and fitness*, but it's so much more fun with a group of like-minded hikers with veteran hike leaders as at this Summit. We have three of these (plus one with no views (Mahoosuc Notch)):

C.9) Basin Rim - Basin Lake: Strenuous / "3" agility / 8 mi. / 2,200 ft. climb;
Thu. 8-5 Dave L. w/Christine R.

A tough hike, but we'll have nearly a mile of **moose-frequented lakeshore** and wetlands right at the start. The next 1.5 mile up has variety: some is ridiculously steep, some is absurdly steep. Our reward is **awesome cliff-top views** for much of our 1.5 mile along the Basin Rim itself. Heading down, we'll have a couple "trickles" generously labeled as waterfalls and some gentle streamside strolls. We finish with a **half mile off-trail**, bashing through some saplings in moose habitat (where we'll at least get away from the hiking crowds!)

C.10) Mahoosuc Notch Rock Scramble: Strenuous / "5" agility / 6 mi. / 1,600 ft. climb;
Sun. 8-3:30 Chris Hoechstetter w/ Seth Schroeder

This "**toughest mile on the Appalachian Trail**" is in a league of its own, and we'll do it **twice**, first downhill, then uphill (the only way on our schedule without either camping or a helicopter.) For a 2,200 mile trail with some tough sections, this is truly the AT's toughest mile. For surefooted level of agility needed on rock scrambles, this is a 5 out of 5. In places we'll **crawl under and through giant rock slabs**; this trail has been compared to what it must be like for a baby in a birth canal. Spoiler alert: the most representative footage is minutes 9:30 to 15:00 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJW95UdsSk0>. Hiking poles will be a hindrance (note the hiker wisely leaving them in her backpack at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=td9O9FTYwGg>.) Patches of ice remained on July 1, 2017. At the halfway point, we'll enjoy lunch at a nice streamside campsite. Did we mention how pleasant and verdant the moose habitat is on the two miles at the beginning and end of the day? Did we mention a moose once fell off a cliff here and died, with the bones being a trail landmark for years?

Peggy is giving the 18-25 year-olds in the **Young Adult** program the option to tackle either Table Rock (shorter route to amazing views) or this epic Mahoosuc Notch route (no views.)

C.11) Carter Notch- gondola to Wildcat Ridge: Strenuous / "4+" agility / 7.2 mi. / 1,100 ft. climb;
Wed. 8:30-5 Dave L. w/ TBA

With **3,500 feet (!) of often very steep downhill**, this is our second toughest (after Mt. Washington) hike on the knees, requiring a top fitness level and a "4.5 out of 5" for surefooted level of agility needed on rock scrambles. What uphill there is also requires top level rock scrambling agility. Stepping off the enclosed **gondola (\$15)** after a 15 minute ride, we'll enjoy sporadic but **splendid views of Mt. Washington just four miles** away as we scramble along one of the toughest 3 miles on the Appalachian Trail. There's plenty of very steep loose rock gullies to pick our way down, tricky ledges to scramble up. Trail difficulty eases up after the first 45 minutes, though the biggest steep downhills are yet to come. A highlight and welcome respite comes at our only visit this Summit to an iconic Appalachian Mtn. Club hut, the 1904 stone **Carter Notch Hut** with its two tiny but scenic ponds and stark "Ramparts" boulder field. After lunch at the ponds or the hut (which has snacks for sale, potable water, and rest rooms), we'll start our 3.5 mile descent with the steep first half hour followed by gentler hiking along pretty cascades and slides. A pool or two near the end invites a wade or dip.

C.12) Mt. Washington- Tuckerman Ravine/ Boott Spur Tr.: Extreme / "4+" agility / 9.5 mi. / 4,400 ft. climb; **Tue. 6:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. Roy M. w/ Seth S.

Amidst gardens of alpine wildflowers, some of the **grandest views in New England**, all the way to the ocean on a rare clear day....But you know this hike is a magnitude beyond everything else when the rest of the text below reads like a warning label on a medicine bottle. As with our extreme hike last year, the Summit hike leader may talk with

you a couple days in advance and might then suggest that you consider a different hike based on your ease of climbing and descending 8,800 feet in steep, rocky terrain. **If during the past year you have not done a continuous four to five hour hike with steep terrain, you should not be on this hike**, for your own and everyone else's welfare. The upper part of this trail was hammered by 133 mph gusts just a few months ago. The snow arch near (not on) the trail at the base of the headwall often lingers into July. A typical July day will be **windy, in the upper 40's and lower 50's, with frequent rain** and fog. Even experienced hikers can struggle climbing from Pinkham Notch up 2,400 vertical rocky feet, then emerge above timberline to see yet **another 2,000 vertical feet of scrambling up boulder jumbles**. One hiker died on this trail the day Summit hike leaders were scouting here in September. Our return route on the Boott Spur Trail provides variety and views, but only marginally less steep terrain.

We'll not attempt this hike with bad weather. Thus, *our Mt. Washington back-up is Thursday's Caribou Mtn. hike; **we suggest that qualified hikers sign up for both hikes. Good weather on Tuesday means, unless you drop it (fine), Caribou Mtn. for sure on Thursday (8:00 a.m. start.) A bad weather prognosis at 6:30 a.m. on Tuesday means Caribou Mtn. for Tuesday in which case we'll duck back in for a hot breakfast and leave around 8 a.m. A second bad weather prognosis (at 6:30 a.m. on Thursday) means no Mt. Washington or Caribou Mtn. at all that day, and we'll all find available spots on that day's other hikes. Either or both days, we may also switch to a different hike upon arrival at the Pinkham Notch trailhead or even with a weather update from the Hermit Lake shelter two miles up the trail; your experienced hike leader makes the decision after input from the group; our hikes are not democracies.* If all else fails, after the Summit one can join the throngs driving up to the Mt. Washington summit on the auto road!