

OUR FAVORITE BACK ROADS

NANCY'S TOUR No. 1



Folks ask us "what's there to do" This appeals to young and old, year round, with a sampling of our area favorites.

We "take" this tour at least once a year. This trip through country roads and covered bridges offers shopping and scenery, and an opportunity to hike, snowshoe, ski, or swim if you wish. Optional things: bug spray, swimsuit, picnic lunch, water bottle, your camera, binoculars. Mandatory things: comfortable shoes!!!

Placing the Inn at your right hand, drive to the corner of Sunset Hill Road and 117. At the corner you'll notice an old, faded cast iron sign dating from the turn of the last century. Many of the places on it are no longer in existence, but it serves as testimony to the tradition of Grand Hotels and tourism we are so proud of. If you're observant you'll notice that many of these places are on the historic sign in our red parlor. If you're very observant, you'll see at least one more of these signs as you go along your way today (within 1 mile of this one). **Turn left onto route 117, heading toward the village of Sugar Hill.**

You'll pass our community church on your right (the kids get to ring the bell and dangle from the bell rope every Sunday), and see our community building and **Sugar Hill Museum** on your left. The museum is worth a stop. It showcases the history of the area, and specifically the tourism that has driven our economy for 120 years. There you will find the original stage coach that conveyed guests from the Sugar Hill Station (in Lisbon) to Sunset Hill House. Each Grand Hotel had its own stage. Stop at **Harmon's Country Store** on your right, and say hello to Maxine and Brenda. They can tell you more about the area than just about anyone. Their "really-aged cheddar cheese" is really good — we suggest that you buy a baggie of cheese ends to nibble on your way. Of course, she ships all over the world.

Continue on 117 just a bit further - the road will bend to the right, but you will turn left onto Pearl Lake Road. It is a tiny road, marked with a hand lettered sign. It is after Easton road and South Road. I love Pearl Lake Road for the sheer beauty of it. Careful on the curves. Watch out for moose and deer and those very stupid wild turkeys (supposedly, turkeys are so dumb they will drown themselves in a rainstorm). Pearl Lake road ends in Lisbon. **When you get to Main Street, Lisbon (Route 302), turn left.** Think about stopping at **Thyme to Heal Herbals** - the big red Victorian on the left, less than a mile down. Melanie is a talented herbalist who makes all

our signature lotions and bath salts. She of course has a much broader selection than we can offer in our own little retail shop.

Continue down 302 to the village of Bath. Without a doubt stop at **The Brick Store**, the oldest country store in the US. It has wonderful fudge (anything with a free sample is a good thing!) and its own smokehouse. Right next to it, you'll find **the longest covered bridge in the state** (be sure to kiss in the middle!).

Then go just a bit further and **turn left (east) onto route 112.** You'll find another **covered bridge and a wonderful swimmin' hole** down a bit on the left. The water is cold but a popular place for a dip, and it is an idyllic spot for a picnic. Might want to bring bug spray.

Continue east on 112, miles and miles of scenery ahead! On your right you'll spot a lovely small lake. Right after that, if you'd like a hike, stop at the parking lot and follow the **trail to the Cascades - on the Appalachian Trail.** No more than 30 minutes walk, and most of it (except the last 1/2 mile) is quite level. You may see a moose in the bog.

A bit further on, you'll go uphill, uphill, uphill — through **Kinsman Notch.** That's North Kinsman on your left, and South Kinsman on your right. In New Hampshire, just to be contrary, what the world calls a pass we call a notch. You'll go through two, today! Just past the notch, you'll find **Lost River Gorge** on your left. Stop here. I went to Lost River with my parents when I was a kid, and can still hear my dad talking about the "lemon squeezer." Time for you to experience it, too. At Lost River you'll find a hike on boardwalk following the river through the gorge and caves (if you are a cave-o-phobe, like Lon, you can always bypass the scary parts!). Lots of steps, but worth the effort! The path ends in wonderful **alpine gardens.** Although you could eat lunch here, we recommend just having a drink on the terrace if you're thirsty, and continuing down the road just a bit to Lincoln.

Continue Left out of the parking lot and down 112 where you'll pass a small sign on your right that reads "**Indian's Leap.**" It is right next Govoni's Italian restaurant. Stop if you have the energy for a short (10 minute, max) walk over two bridges to see the pothole carved by the runoff from the last ice age, and where young Indian braves leapt from precipice to precipice over the river far below to prove their manhood.

You'll soon arrive via **II2 in the twin villages of Lincoln and Woodstock**. Main Street there is Route 3. **Turn left (north)**, and head through town (stopping for shopping as needed). **The Woodstock Inn**, right in the center of town on route 3, is a good lunch choice with homebrew beer. Across the street from the Woodstock Station is **Thru The Artist's Eye** gallery - do drop by and say hello to Adrienne and Julie. You'll find great art and have fun looking around.

Feeling energetic? Time to drive on to Franconia Notch. **Continue North on 3 until you reach the highway, and head North**. Although it may seem that this is route 93, you are actually on the Franconia Notch Parkway, driving through Franconia Notch State Park (named one of the top 10 state parks in the US). Follow the signs to the **Flume Gorge** to get an orientation to the history of the area, kiss in another covered bridge, and explore the narrow gorge (only 12' wide in parts) and rushing waters. Not a hard hike, and breathtaking. It is one of the oldest attractions in the area, and you'll find it often on postcards and brochures dating from the 1800's. Remember the sign we mentioned, which hangs in the red parlor? Its on there, as well.

Back on the highway heading north, stop at The Basin, which is my favorite spot in the mountains and an attraction as old and famous as the flume. A paved trail (ADA accessible) takes you on a relatively level trip through the woods along the Pemigewasset river. You'll find spots to stick your toes in the river, interpretive signage and a huge pothole carved by the rocks and water runoff from the last glaciers. Take a look at the mountains around you as you drive through the notch - those like Cannon mountain on your left (heading north) are rounded from Glacial action. Those formed by seismic upheaval, like Lafayette on your right, are craggy on top.

Head north on the highway again and stop at Boise Rock, just to say you did it! It is a 5 minute stop where you'll see where Mr. Boise saved his skin by sacrificing his horse's in a snowstorm.

Right past that (further up the highway), you absolutely must stop and say "goodbye" to our beloved state symbol, the **Old Man of the Mountains**. Our old man fell in the spring of 2003, causing children and adults to sit in stunned silence, or just sob. Now, there is a wonderful interactive

view-finder which superimposes his image back on the mountain, as well as great museum and a picnic site. Do stop. The parking lot is well marked. It is said that Chief Pemigewasset fell in love with a squaw from a neighboring, warring tribe (over in Vermont). They wed and lived happily until she received word her father (the warring chief) was dying. Pemigewasset was old, and could not make the entire wintertime journey with her, so he took her as far as Cannon Mountain, and vowed to await her return there. She never returned. In the springtime, Pemigewasset's braves found his bones on Cannon Mountain, and his spirit immortalized in the Old Man's profile.

Past the Old Man's site, you'll see the ski slopes at **Cannon Mountain**. These "famous five" front trails end almost in **Echo Lake** (now that is a great place for a swim or a turn in the paddleboats or canoes). "Avalanche" - the steepest of the trails, was the site of the world cup races in the 60's. You'll next find the exit for the **Cannon Mountain Tram**. If it is a clear day, ride the oldest aerial tramway in the US to the top of Cannon Mountain. No matter the weather, stop at the **New England Ski Museum** at the base of the tram. This region was the center of American skiing, starting with Pecketts on Sugar Hill (the nation's oldest ski school - more on this in a bit). Cannon saw the founding of the ski patrol in America, as well. It is the spiritual home of the "oldtimers" of the famous 10th Mountain Division - top end mountaineers and skiers from WW2 who fought valiantly in the Alps.

Once more, **return to the highway heading North**. You'll find yourself on a long, long hill downward - known as three mile hill from the time of the stagecoaches. On the straightaway right after you cross under the bridge, sharp eyes will pick out Sunset Hill House on the ridge dead ahead. That is your goal. **Take exit 38, left at the bottom of the ramp and right onto Main Street Franconia, then left again 1/2 mile later onto route II7 direction Sugar Hill/Lisbon**. You'll notice a historical marker about a mile up the road on the right where Pecketts of Sugar Hill used to stand - the Oldest Ski School in America. Continue to the top, **turn left onto Sunset Hill Road and head for the inn**. Time for a cool drink in the tavern, and a dip in the pool or a book by the fireplace. Don't forget your reservations for "NH's Very Best Spectacular Meal" in our main dining room. ■



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