



New Hampshire's Route 16 meanders through the Saco River Valley.

Mountains at Every Turn

Lincoln to Conway, New Hampshire

The most dramatic way to enter the White Mountains region is to follow I-93 and Route 3 north through Franconia Notch, then head east along Route 302 to Route 16. The 75-mile winding drive is one of sweeping views, turnoffs to dirt logging roads and hiking trails,

babbling brooks, waterfalls, and covered bridges.

Just north of Lincoln, the road narrows as it snakes between the majestic peaks of the Franconia and Kinsman Ridges. Cannon Mountain's rocky face drops straight down to Profile Lake, over which the Old Man of the Mountain once presided.

Mountains at Every Turn

Franconia Notch State Park, exits 34A-C off I-93, Lincoln/Franconia, NH. Call or visit Web site for hours and prices. 603-745-8391. franconianotchstatepark.com

The Mount Washington Resort at Bretton Woods, Rte. 302, Bretton Woods, NH. Rates: \$230-\$1,390, including full breakfast and dinner. Rooms open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily. Entrées: \$7.50-\$15. 603-873-0626, 800-258-0330, 603-278-1000. mtwashington.com

The Notchland Inn, Rte. 302, Hart's Location, NH. Rates: \$195-\$295, including full breakfast. Dining room open for dinner Wed.-Sun. Full menu: \$35-\$45. 800-866-6131, 603-374-6131. notchland.com

Attitash, Rte. 302, Bartlett, NH. Open mid-May to mid-June and Labor Day-Columbus Day Sat.-Sun., mid-June to Labor Day daily. Tickets: 800-223-7669, 603-374-2368. attitash.com

Franconia Notch State Park offers much to explore, including the Basin's glacial potholes carved by the Pemigewasset River, the granite walls dripping with moss in the Flume, and the Appalachian Mountain Club's (AMC's) Greenleaf and Lonesome Lake high-mountain huts. The Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway is a favorite. Its 15-minute ride whisks you to within a short walk of the 4,200-foot summit, where on a clear day you can see into Vermont, New York, Canada, and Maine.

After the road skirts the Twin Mountains, Garfield Ridge, Mount Hale, and the Sugarloafs, the grand Mount Washington Hotel, a fixture of the landscape since 1902, comes into view. Stop here, if only to walk the wraparound porch and take in the magnificent view of the namesake mountain, with the track of the cog railway climbing up its left shoulder.

Now the road widens, edged by wildflower meadows and boggy ditches—a favorite habitat of moose—before

narrowing again through Crawford Notch. As you round the deep curve just north of the needle (marking Crawford Notch's height of land), you come to the AMC's Highland Center, which carries on the tradition of pioneering, guiding, and hospitality. New trails crisscross the property, introducing visitors to hiking basics and the concept of ecological stewardship. Inside the center, mountaineering photos by Bradford and Barbara Washburn rival big-city exhibits.

As you start the descent to the Mount Washington Valley, look for rock climbers at the popular Elephant Head and Willey's Slide ascents.

At about the halfway point of this scenic tour, The Notchland Inn's Tudor-style roofline pokes up out of the thick green of the 778,000-acre White Mountain National Forest. Turn up the drive and discover a refined retreat in the wilds of New Hampshire. The dining room serves a five-course meal most nights, and afterward you can

relax with a book or work on a puzzle next to the Gustav Stickley fireplace. In the morning, the Davis Path beckons from across the road.

For most of the remaining drive, the road parallels the Saco River and the Conway Scenic Railroad. In Bartlett, a side trip takes you along Bear Notch Road to several stellar viewpoints. Or continue on Route 302, looking for the slopes of the Attitash ski area. In the summer, a full-day value pass gives you access to 11 activities, including the alpine slides and a scenic chairlift, which is another fun (and easy) way to see the surrounding terrain.

Back on the road, a southbound Scenic Railroad train whistles. The first billboards in 25 miles appear, and the number of businesses increases as the blacktop winds into Glen, North Conway, and Conway. Here there are myriad options for a bite to eat and shops to browse while still being able to see the mountains. End your tour by taking East Side Road through Conway's

Saco River covered bridge before heading home. Or, if you haven't gotten enough of the mountains, complete a 110-mile loop by following the Kancamagus Highway (Route 112) back to Lincoln. — *Katrina A. Yeager*