



**WATERSHED MOMENT:** Fall colors come to the woods surrounding Upper Falls in New Hampshire's White Mountain National Forest. AP file photo

# SPLASH *of* COLOR

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Because of all the wet weather in New England this summer, this is the time of waterfalls.

Cascades that in some years are little more than a trickle in August are sending a frothy flow crashing to the rocks below, the kind of show usually reserved for the snowmelt months of March and April.

In mountainous New England, waterfalls are abundant. You could spend days doing nothing but exploring them. So I did.

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## NEW HAMPSHIRE: ENCHANTING SPOTS CAN REALLY DRAW A CROWD

Waterfalls are almost everywhere in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. One of the most popular stops is Sabbaday Falls, off the Kancamagus Highway, 3.5 miles west of where Bear Notch Road joins the highway.

This is a fairly touristy waterfall. While I was there, cars rolled into the parking lot every few minutes. Families got out and trudged the 0.3-mile trail to the falls, took a look and a picture, and moved on. You see more flip-flops than hiking boots. Pretty much everybody congregates in the area of the falls, which are justifiably popular. Water from Sabbaday Brook is funneled through a narrow gap in the rock and falls into a large pool of sparkling clear water with an emerald cast to it. There is no swimming allowed. It is an enchanting spot; the far side of the pool is a wall of rock covered with moss and ferns.

Alongside the falls is Sabbaday Brook Trail, which most people take only as far as the top of the falls — no more than a half-mile from the parking lot. The trail itself is worth a look. It hugs the brook above the falls, passing one enticing pool after another. I took it for at least a mile and saw perhaps 6 or 8 people the entire time. As for the name of the falls, the story is that long ago a work crew cutting a road nearby finished their work for the season late on a Saturday. With the next day a Sabbath day, they named the falls Sabbaday. It is, incidentally, teeming with little brook trout.

Also off the Kancamagus is another popular waterfall, Lower Falls. If Sabbaday is touristy, Lower Falls is more so. One look (you can easily see it from the road), and you know why. It is a spectacular natural

swimming hole. Arethusa Falls is another world. Also in the White Mountains, Arethusa Falls are off Route 302 in Crawford Notch. Well-marked from the highway, this area is hardly a secret. But the falls require just enough exertion that far fewer people visit them than Lower Falls. A sign in the parking area scares off couch potatoes: The

hike to the falls will take 60 minutes, it says. And 60 more to come back. The round trip is 2.6 miles.

Arethusa Falls are ideal for the more serious hikers. A trip to the falls can be turned into a 4.7-mile loop hike that also takes in an area called Frankenstein Cliffs, named for a landscape painter. It is an ideal half-day hike. And the falls are said to be the biggest single drop in the White Mountains. You'll find varying estimates of their height, some books saying more than 200 feet, some a little bit less.

On this day, Bemis Brook — the source of the water — fell over the precipice in a lacy sheet, the sound akin to a muffled roar. With the parking lot and Route 302 more than a mile away, the sound of the

falls dominated everything, though it was not loud. This is part of the appeal of a waterfall, the insistent sound, evoking eternity, as primordially soothing as a fire in the hearth in winter.

We chose the loop hike that includes Frankenstein Cliffs and were glad we did. Nearly two hours after viewing the falls, we reached the cliffs and discovered outstanding views of the valley below — Route 302, a rail line and the Dry River. Looking back, way off in the distance, we could see Arethusa Falls. Had we really come all that distance in two hours? There are vistas along the way offering views, on clear days, of Mount Washington, New England's highest peak.



Staff graphic/Karsten Ivey