

## HIKE A MOUNTAIN RANGE – ALL OF IT

**NINE SUMMITS IN 16 HOURS? PIECE OF CAKE.**

As sporting challenges go, hiking the length of the Presidential Range in **New Hampshire's** White Mountains has serious advantages over most mountaineering endeavors, not least of which is the fact that you can do it in one day.

The basics are appealingly straightforward. A little more than two hours from the Manchester, N.H., airport (three from Boston's Logan airport), the Presidential Range stretches in a zigzagging line of peaks, most of them named for former American presidents. At the center, more or less, is 6,288-foot Mount Washington, with the oft-cited distinction of having some of the worst weather in the world. A fair number of people have died on Mount Washington, but you probably won't, unless you do something stupid like forget to pack warm clothes or eat too many hot dogs at the snack bar.

The Presidential Traverse ranges from 18 to 23 miles and can be tackled from either the north or the south. It's a tradition of sorts to attempt it on the summer solstice, racing the sun to complete the hike in daylight. Most people seem to prefer the north-south route, which begins with a fairly steep 4,500-foot ascent of Mount Madison. This gives you the advantage of getting the worst of the climbing over with when you are fresh, plus

you can stop for breakfast at Madison Spring Hut, one of eight backcountry refuges maintained by the Appalachian Mountain Club. Once atop Madison, you look out upon a startling and magical world of granite scree, stunted trees that seem plucked from a Japanese garden and the occasional glacier lake.

Ahead lie Mounts Adams, Jefferson, Clay and – *whew* – Washington, where your communion with nature will be broken by the cog-railway terminal and souvenir shop that bizarrely grace the summit. This affords the opportunity, depending on your mood, to feel either morally superior to those who summited with mechanical assistance or grateful for the chance to grab a ride back down on the railway.

If you continue, as you should, there's a sharp descent to the stunning Lakes of the Clouds, then a relatively easy jaunt (less than 400 vertical feet) up Mount Monroe. From there, it's basically a long downhill, with short diversions to the summits of Franklin, Eisenhower and Pierce. By the time you've reached the very welcoming Highland Lodge at Crawford Notch, you've been on the trail at least 16 hours.

Have another hot dog. You've earned it.

*For information on hiking the Presidential Range, visit the Appalachian Mountain Club Web site, [outdoors.org](http://outdoors.org).*

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