

Sweet!

Maple for the Whole Family



Trip Length: 2-3 Days

My Mom always says that if I were ice cream, I would be Maple NUT! Every Sunday, or as often as I can talk her into it, I have something for breakfast I can put maple syrup on. So when I heard about a place that is dedicated to making maple syrup, where they even put hot syrup on snow, I knew I had to go there.

Turns out that in New Hampshire they have a whole Maple Weekend! All the sugar houses (which is what they call the buildings where they boil down the sap in giant vats) are open for visitors and some [even let you help carry the buckets](#) from the maple trees into the sugarhouses. The breakfast places all have special pancakes and maple treats. Some of the sugarhouses even do things the old-fashioned way, using horse-drawn wagons or things they call yokes you put across your shoulders to balance the weight of the full buckets on each end.

So, let me tell you about our weekend.

Maple Weekend in New Hampshire is usually the third weekend of March – but I learned it really depends on how warm it’s been before that and whether the sap is running. You have to have freezing nights and warm days for the right conditions. Sometimes that happens early and then it gets too warm (I guess when the tree starts making leaves, it changes the flavor of the sap and isn’t good for syrup anymore). Sometimes it’s too cold and the maple season comes late. But usually, the middle of March is just right.

When my Mom read about [Maple Weekend](#) in the paper she said we could probably find out more about it on the Internet, and boy, was she right! We [found a website](#) that listed which sugarhouses were open, the good pancake houses nearby and even a place to stay close to The Rocks museum where we could learn the traditional way of making syrup.

We figured out that we could drive up to [Bethlehem](#) in the [White Mountains](#) right after Mom and Dad got home from work because we could get to the place we were staying before dark. Our first morning, we came downstairs from our room for our first taste of New Hampshire pancakes with maple syrup from the same sugarhouse we were going to visit. Then we headed out to [The Rocks Estate](#) to see how maple syrup is made.

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The Rocks is a beautiful place in the country where we learned all sorts of things about maple – like how North America is the only place in the world that has sugar maples (one out of every four trees in Northern New England is a sugar maple) and that the Native Americans used maple in their food and even had a special Thanksgiving feast for maple in the early spring. I already knew that it took gallons and gallons of sap to make syrup, but watching a vat of thousands of gallons all bubbling and steaming until it started getting thick was awesome!

My Mom and Dad were having such a good time – you can tell when they start holding hands when they walk – that they said ‘How would you guys like to spend another day? We were thinking about driving farther north to visit some of the old sugarhouses...’ And my brother and I said, “Yes!!!” before they could even finish their sentence.

So instead of heading back home, we turned east to Route 2 and then north on Route 16 to get to [Berlin](#) and drove along through the forest and countryside. I never realized New Hampshire was so big!

After visiting a [museum about the old logging days](#) on the Androscoggin River, we took one of those “scenic routes” (Route 2, west) over to Lancaster to begin our ride south and home. In [Lancaster](#), we visited the [Fuller Sugarhouse](#). Just before we got back in the car at the sugarhouse, they poured some really thick boiled-down sap on a fresh patch of snow and I finally got to taste Maple Sugar on snow.



Our final stop of the weekend was at [Polly's Pancake Parlor](#) in Sugar Hill. We stocked up on maple goods before we headed home and now we have a giant jug of real New Hampshire maple syrup, pancake mix, maple cream to spread on toast, and of course maple sugar.

Maple syrup really sticks with you – or should I say to you – and so will this trip. I can't imagine having a “sweeter” vacation!

Mileage & Drive Times

Boston, MA to Berlin, NH — 185 Miles, 3.5 Hours

New York, NY to Berlin, NH — 385 Miles, 7 Hours

Providence, RI to Berlin, NH — 235 Miles, 4.5 Hours

Hartford, CT to Berlin, NH — 270 Miles, 4.75 Hours

Philadelphia, PA to Berlin, NH — 480 Miles, 8.5 Hours

Montreal, QC to Berlin, NH — 180 Miles, 3.75 Hours