

Monadnock Region's Snowy Woods & Winter Wonderlands



My Dad used to swear by the Old Farmer's Almanac. Each year, when the new edition arrived, he would flip to the February page to see what "magic weather word" appeared close to his birthday. I can't look at those Yankee rhymes without thinking about him and all the other "old farmer" traditions he – one of the most urbane Manhattan lawyers I've ever known – held dear.

So, when my husband and I drove through Dublin, New Hampshire, for the first time this winter and passed that unassuming little [Yankee Publishing](#) building on the left, smack in the center of town, I couldn't believe we had reached Old Farmer Central. It was sort of like seeing a sign for the North Pole.

Our trip began on a Friday when we decided to venture beyond our usual Green Mountain getaway and headed to New Hampshire. We started our journey by driving east on Route 9 to the [Monadnock region](#) of the state, a place with enough surprises for many visits and many seasons.

From the cozy inn in Hancock to the lovely restaurant where we dined that first evening, every place we went had a wonderful fire blazing on the hearth and that quintessential New England smell of wood-smoke in the air. What's not to love when your hosts make a romantic getaway so warm and cozy?

The dreary rain we left behind in the city turned into a light dusting of snow on the fields as we arrived in the southwestern corner of New Hampshire. We decided to cross the [covered bridge](#) off Route 10 in West Swanzey twice, just for the dazzling effect of emerging from the dark, dry bridge into the crystalline sunshine (those clever Yankees – you don't need to plow a covered bridge!). We've decided to make a habit of "collecting" the 52 covered bridges of New Hampshire. In this part of the state, it seems as if every side road has one. We even found a covered bridge by accident when we got lost coming out of Mason after a fantastic lunch at [Pickety Place](#). (When I checked the map I discovered it was the Nissitissit Bridge off Route 130 in Brookline.) Pickety Place is a wonder for all seasons. It's an actual storybook place – the quaint cottage, now a restaurant serving seasonal menus, was the model for Grandmother's House in the Little Golden Book version of Little Red Riding Hood. While visiting, we enjoyed strolling through the shop and greenhouse, and we plan to visit again in the summer when the gardens are in full bloom.

We have sampled several different inns in the area, and each one is charming in its own way. We try to stay where we can see [Mount Monadnock](#) almost every time we lift our heads. To be honest, you can see Mount Monadnock practically everywhere in the southern half of the state! It is sort of New Hampshire's "pet mountain" because it's so user-friendly. Unlike the real mountaineering



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Mileage & Drive Times

Boston, MA to Keene, NH — 115 Miles, 2.25 Hours

New York, NY to Keene, NH — 220 Miles, 4.25 Hours

Providence, RI to Keene, NH — 110 Miles, 2.5 Hours

Hartford, CT to Keene, NH — 105 Miles, 2 Hours

Philadelphia, PA to Keene, NH — 315 Miles, 5.75 Hours

Montreal, QC to Keene, NH — 395 Miles, 4.25 Hours

challenges of Mount Washington, the highest peak in New England, Monadnock is about half the height, with trails anyone can manage (even this city girl).

As an interested but not fanatic [bird-watcher](#) I was drawn by the promise of seeing migrating eagles and hawks from the viewing area atop “Pack Monadnock” nearby. Though the September migration of those birds was long over when we

visited, we did see cardinals, blue jays, downy woodpeckers, chickadees and even a purple finch (the New Hampshire state bird, I learned later) on our walk through the quiet winter woods.

To cap off our trip, we headed northwest to Walpole for the best cup of hot chocolate I’ve ever had. A friend from the city had recommended we stop by the quaint town of Walpole and check out the local chocolatier, [L.A. Burdick’s](#), and boy were we glad we did. Despite the tiny size, each cup contained the richest, most decadent liquid chocolate we’d ever tasted.

We had such a truly memorable – and mostly serendipitous – experience on this trip. Whether it was the hot toddy our innkeeper served by the fire after one of the most delicious, gourmet dinners I’ve had in ages, or the sound of the brook rumbling under the covered bridge, this part of the world is a special place for us now. I can’t wait to find out what the rest of New Hampshire is like!