

Waterfalls and Covered Bridges of the White Mountains Franconia Notch, Crawford Notch and the Kancamagus Highway

In between the seasons of winter and spring in the White Mountains are a stretch of sunny days that beckon us to say farewell to one and to greet the other. These days are quiet and contemplative, where you can explore and find places you have all to yourself and revel in a sense of timelessness and awe.

When the deep mountain snows give way to warm sunshine, the snowpack high above the valleys of New Hampshire's White Mountains begins its disappearing act.

Gravity always directs the flow of all things liquid and the melting of the snow follows a downward path and in the spring, it is an awesome and mesmerizing experience to watch winter disappear over one of more than 100 waterfalls in the White Mountains.

And as frantic as the spring melt can be, especially after a stretch of particularly warm days or heavy rain, a sense of quiet contemplation and the reach of history can be found at one of dozens of covered bridges across the region.

A delightful spring day can be passed seeking out and sitting beside a natural wonder and manmade treasure, which have well-stood the passing of time. In your travels, we invite you to stop by the White Mountains Visitors Center, off exit 32 of Interstate 93, where there's a brochure detailing where you can find waterfalls and covered bridges and new this year, you'll be able to keep track of your discoveries.

Here are a couple of destinations you can find at the end of your wandering nose, suitable for all generations with an adventurous spirit.

- When you depart the Visitors' Center, continue north for a few minutes on Interstate 93 and turn off when you reach the exit for the Basin in Franconia Notch State Park.

This is a great place for young legs to stretch and you can follow a paved footpath to the Basin, where the force of water swirling in it for a millennia has created the namesake wonder. Look closely at the rock formation aside the pool. Now you know why this is also called the Old Man's Foot.



- Continue to follow the path to the Cascades, where you can soak in the spring sun and even have a picnic lunch if it's later in the season and if you have more energy to burn, continue another mile or so Rocky Glen Falls, which some folks have proclaimed the prettiest waterfall in the Notch.
- The next stop on your waterfall adventure is Crawford Notch. You'll want to continue your journey through Franconia Notch and get on Route 3 north at exit 35. At the crossroads of Routes 3 and 302 in Twin Mountain, head east on Route 302. The Elephant's Trunk, a natural rock formation at the top of Crawford Notch will greet you and as you head down the hill, park your car at the parking lot on the right and cast your eyes to the left.

There are two waterfalls side-by-side each other, the Silver and the Flume Cascades. When the conditions are right, the water literally roars down the rocky path and you can be quite mesmerized by the sight and sound of it all.

- When you depart the cascades, continue east on Route 302. If you are in the mood for something more strenuous, there are several other waterfalls that you will have to hike to. Our caution in the early spring season is that the trails leading to them will still be covered with snow and it will be slippery, so make sure you are adequately prepared for this adventure.

Arethusa Falls reaches about 200 feet high and is located about a mile and half from the parking lot, which is well marked and there are two bonus waterfalls, Bermis Brook and Coliseum Falls.

- Coming out of Crawford Notch on Route 302, covered bridges begin to appear. Just south of Bartlett village, you will come upon the town's covered bridge that crosses the Saco River, which today has found new life as a seasonal gift shop.
- A few miles past that, take a short detour north on Route 16 at the intersection of Route 302 and head to the postcard pretty town of Jackson, where you can't gain entrance to the village without passing through the Honeymoon covered bridge.

The Honeymoon covered bridge, which spans the Ellis River, greets all visitors to this postcard pretty town, so named, legend has it, because it is a tradition for local newlyweds to have their photo snapped there on their most special day.

Continue over the bridge and follow a short loop that takes you through Jackson Village and returns you to Route 16, which you will want to follow back to Route 302 and head east toward Conway and the Kancamagus Highway.



Proclaimed as a National Scenic Byway, the Kanc, as it is affectionately called by locals, winds through some of the most beautiful mountain scenery in the northeast. While much of the 34-mile road takes in wilderness, you'll find some of the remains of the time when it had a bit of a population.

- A few miles west on the Kanc, the Albany covered bridge crosses the Swift River. There is a small parking lot alongside it, so it's another place to stretch your legs walking across it.
- About a mile west from the bridge are the first of three beautiful waterfalls along the Kanc. Lower Falls is a lazy swimming hole when summer takes hold, but in the spring, water runs high and fast over the huge boulders mid-stream. Depending on how fast it's running, you'll want to resist the urge to go boulder-hopping, for the rocks are extremely slippery and the water very cold.
- When you've absorbed the beauty of Lower Falls, drive two miles beyond it and visit Rocky Gorge, which has picnic tables.
- Both Lower Falls and Rocky Gorge are just a stone's throw from the Kanc, but if you want to take another short jaunt through the woods, you'll want to stop at Sabbaday Falls, about three and a half miles past Bear Notch Road. The easy path, less than a half mile, ends at the 25-foot waterfall.

By now, you've spent a good portion of your day meandering through the White Mountains and seeing some beautiful sights. When you resume your drive along the Kanc, you will end up where you started, at the Visitors' Center in North Woodstock.

When you return home, we hope you'll chart another course through the White Mountains as you work your way through the list of covered bridges and waterfalls awaiting your visit.