

# Foliage Drive #1

## (Evans Notch - 6 hours)



This tour takes you up the quiet side of the National Forest through scenic Evans Notch, then west across Route 2, finally bearing south again on Route 16 through Pinkham Notch to pass Mount Washington. Pack a picnic, grab your camera and prepare for some beautiful scenery as you cross the mountains.

Starting from the inn, turn left out of the drive. At Main Street, turn left then immediately right to take Route 113 past the Post Office. Cross the river by Weston's Farm where you can shop for snacks and drinks to take with you, then continue across the intervale to where the road dead-ends. Turn right (still Route 113) then sit back for the trip up to Evans Notch.



Saco River at Weston's Bridge

As you pass through the bucolic valley of the lower Saco River, the delights of the traditional countryside reminiscent of times past greets you at every turn. Stop for a bag of apples or other fruits of the harvest at a roadside farm before heading up into the mountains. At Stow, about 11 miles north of Fryeburg, the road starts to rise and the narrow wooded road twists past rounded peaks, magnified by comparison to the sharp peaks of the Presidential Range. North Baldface, at 3610ft, tops this range and you'll start to see many trail heads to this and the other peaks in the range as you pass the 18 mile mark in North Chatham.

Most of Evans Notch actually lies in Maine and includes the newest wilderness area of the White Mountain National Forest designated in 1991. A place of outstanding natural beauty, Evans is the least accessible notch in the White Mountains, and is a good place for those seeking solitude. Don't try and take this road in winter, though – it's closed!

As Route 113 gently descends through the forest look out for wildlife. This is moose country so take special care as these leggy creatures give no warning when wandering into the road and can do substantial damage in a collision to cars and people.

At Gilead, turn left (west) onto Route 2 to continue the circular tour. Strung out along the Androscoggin River, (once a highway for logs from the great north woods), is a famous stand of white birches near the town of Shelburne. Just a few miles further down the road, stop for a while in Gorham, a town that has been catering to tourists since 1851 when the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railroad (now the Canadian National) started bringing tourists to the White Mountains. The train on display in the park is the last evidence of this era of transportation.

As you leave Gorham on Route 16 south, notice how the majesty of Mount Washington takes on a different dimension as it is



Gorham, NH



## *Foliage Drive #1 - continued*

approached from the north. 8 miles south of Gorham, Great Glen Trails complex is the headquarters for the eight mile auto road to the summit of Mount Washington, the oldest continuously operating attraction in the country. Stop at the center for refreshments on the outside balcony which on a sunny day is the perfect spot to contemplate the vast mountain in front of you. Further down the road about 2 miles is Wildcat Ski Area. Take a trip up the Gondola and view the magnificent fall colors and stunning vistas of Mount Washington's several ravines.

A few hundred yards south and just across the road is the northern headquarters of the Appalachian Mountain Club. The Visitor Center is the starting point for many of the trails that follow the Presidential range and has available in its shop, a whole range of maps, outdoor clothing and equipment as well as a history of the organization which maintains a string of huts in high places accessible only on foot. If you've been in the car a while and would like a short walk, a moderate 30 minute hike to the Crystal Cascades, one of the best waterfalls in the area, will give you a taste of the trails - and a hearty appetite as you head down the remaining 12 miles of Route 16 to Glen. Once in Glen, turn left to join Route 302 towards North Conway. Stop in the village for dinner at one of the excellent restaurants, before heading home eastwards back to Fryeburg.