

Just Hike It!

Get ready for fun, scenic views and great exercise this fall on the trails of Pack Monadnock in South Peterborough, NH located halfway between Manchester and Keene, NH (approximately an hour and a half North of Boston).

Begin your trip with a drive up Route 101 East where you can take in the visual delight of greenery and views of mountainsides all around you. Enter Miller State Park, New Hampshire's first state park, on Mountain Road where the hiking season runs from mid-May through mid-October (winter season hikes are permitted on weekends). Pass through the ranger booth where the fee for accessing the mountain and parking is low (\$3.00 for adults, \$1.00 for children ages 6-11, no charge for children 5 years of age and younger as well as NH residents 65 and older). You'll receive a map of the three trail options for hiking and, if you prefer not to hike at all, you can drive up to the peak by following the winding, narrow road (1.3 miles) to the summit.

Hikers and dogs are allowed on the trails, so take your family's four-legged friend along with you. Make sure you bring your hiking boots or, at the very least, your trusty, rubber-soled sneakers. Toss a tube of sunscreen in that backpack as well as an extra light jacket to be safe. When you begin this climb at an elevation of 1,490 feet, the summit's temperature (at an elevation of 2,290 feet) can often vary from the warmer temperature below. Pack a picnic lunch, water and get ready to hit the trails.

The Marion Davis and Wapack Trails are similar in distance of an approximate 2.8 miles round trip; however, different in their rating of difficulty. The Marion Davis Trail is an easier path marked with blue triangles where you'll be sure to take in the greens of summer or vibrant colors of autumn while enjoying a more relaxing route. The Wapack Trail, which spans 50 miles from Mount Watatic in Ashburnham, MA to North Pack Monadnock Mountain in Greenfield, NH, is marked in yellow. The Wapack Trail provides the same breathtaking views of the surrounding wilderness; however, it is made up of some steeper ledges to climb, particularly with its rockier descent. The Raymond Trail, marked in white, is slightly longer in distance at 3.2 miles round trip and was co-created by the efforts of the Peterborough Boy Scout Troup 808 and the Peterborough Conservation Committee. All three trails offer its visitors ample room to travel comfortably and rest periodically and just "be", standing on the side of the mountain (something hikers often note as missing when hiking the nearby, more popular and larger Mount Monadnock).

When you reach the summit, take in the splendor of your hiking efforts! Walk carefully up the narrow staircase of the 27-foot tall observation tower (formerly an active forest fire watch tower) and enjoy the panoramic view of the mountains in the distance such as Mount Monadnock and Mount Washington as well as the city of Manchester and other New Hampshire towns. On a clear day, you can see as far away as the skyscrapers of Boston, MA. Bring those binoculars with you for an up close, detailed viewing of these spectacular sights.

From Mother Nature's sleek rock faces to man-made picnic tables, there is always a spot to be had to enjoy lunch, take a nap in the sun and breathe in the fresh air. Note that Miller State Park is a "carry in/carry out" park, so no litter bugs allowed (just nature's creatures). Be sure to pack up all of your belongings (trash included) when visiting. Also, keep in mind that outdoor plumbing does not exist out in the wild, so several outhouses are provided for visitors to use at the park.

For some added variety, when you descend the mountain, try your hand at one of the trails not traveled yet on your hike up or, if those muscles need a break, take it easy and hit the pavement, walking the road back down to the parking lot below. Whichever you decide, the fantastic views and scents of nature will still be all around you to enjoy.

For more information about Pack Monadnock (including maps of the trails), contact Miller State Park at 603-924-3672 or visit the park's website at www.nhparks.state.nh.us/ParksPages/Miller/Miller.html. Another helpful resource is the following website: www.newhampshire.com/pages/nh-state-parks-miller.cfm. Happy Hiking!

Photos by Paul Howe, Courtesy of NH Division of Parks and Recreation:



A View from Miller State Park



Climb the Wapack Trail