

FRANCONIA NOTCH STATE PARK

N E W H A M P S H I R E



Franconia Notch, New Hampshire



The Flume Gorge



Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway

The purpose of this informal guide is to provide the tour escort and the driver with information that will assist them on their visit to the Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway and Franconia Notch State Park. We recommend that when possible coaches tour the notch from south to north for easier access to some of the attractions.

THE PARK Franconia Notch State Park

Franconia Notch State Park's more than 6500 acres of land constitute one of the most picturesque parks in the United States. The site of logging and a thriving hotel industry at the turn of the century, this land was purchased by the state and public contributions, large and small in 1928. It borders the nearly 800,000-acre White Mountain National Forest.

THE NOTCH Franconia Notch

Glacially formed with two lakes at the northern end, Franconia Notch is an eight-mile pass between two mountain ranges. Notches tend to run north to south and this is what makes east/west travel so time consuming.

THE ROAD Franconia Notch Parkway/I-93

The rough wagon route of the 1800's has evolved into the road you travel today. Completed in 1987, the ten miles between I-93 Exits 34A and 34C is an interstate highway in a parkway configuration, only one of two in the nation to have this distinction. This simply means:

1. The speed limit is 45 MPH.
2. Lanes change from four to three to two and back to four.
3. Reversal of direction needs to be made at Parkway Exits 34A, 34B, or 34C.

Approximate travel time from one end of the park to the other with no stops: 15–20 minutes.

Driver's Note: The notch climbs gradually from the south to the north with the longest grades being those south of Exit 34A and at the Basin. Truck lanes are available where needed. Weather conditions can change dramatically from one end of the notch to the other, especially in the late fall and early spring. Windy conditions that would affect your coach would most likely be encountered between the south end of Profile Lake and one mile beyond Exit 35 at the north end of the park.

Flume
Gorge

CANNON
Naturally.



NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE PARKS

ATTRACTIONS

Exit 34A Flume Gorge and Gilman Visitor Center

Open Mid-May to the end of October, this is the best place to begin your adventure through the park due to the very comprehensive interpretive movie shown at this location. The movie is FREE and lasts 22 minutes. The movie is shown every half hour from 9:00 am–5:00 pm in the presentation room located to the left as you enter the visitor center.

The building also contains:

1. Large restrooms.
2. Area, regional and state information with a wide range of free brochures.
3. Information desk staffed with knowledgeable employees.
4. Gift Shop.
5. Cafeteria—Good selection of food and snacks. Complimentary lunch for driver and escort if group purchases lunch. Bag lunches are available to eat on site or to go if 24-hour notice is given. Call Stefanie Warsnip, Food Service Manager at 603-823-7722 x736 for more information.
6. Public telephone inside and outside.
7. Numerous exhibits pertaining to the notch including a full sized Concord Coach (1874 stagecoach made in Concord, NH by Abbott, Downing & Company).

The natural attraction itself, the Flume, is a 700-foot narrow gorge traversed by a boardwalk over a picturesque stream with a large waterfall at the top. Since you must walk at least a half-mile on this tour, and equal amount uphill and down with stairs, many senior groups decide to see the movie, which provides a vicarious visit and continue on to see the other features. Group rates are available for groups of 20 or more. Escort and driver are free.

Time: (Stop/movie/shop/restrooms) 45 minutes to 1 hour
(Stop/movie/shop/restrooms/lunch) 2 hours

Driver: Special bus parking located in the uphill (northern) lots. Follow signs to curb side drop off and parking.

Note: Interpretive signs. No Cost to park.

Basin (Northbound)

Located one-half mile north of Parkway Exit 34A, is the Basin. The Basin is a large pothole in the streambed formed when the melting glacial waters spun large rocks round and round in the solid granite carving this deep depression. There is a short, mostly flat, walk on a paved and gravel path paralleling a crystal clear mountain stream containing a lovely waterfall. It is recommended that if you are unfamiliar with the area, have people return the same way they went in to avoid confusion, as there are several hiking trails that intersect. (Hiking trails are easy to distinguish, since they are much rougher). Handicap accessible.

Time: 30–40 minutes

Driver: Bus parking immediately to the right after Basin sign.

Note: Pit style restrooms, no charge or closing time.

Basin (Southbound)

Turn into the pull off 1 mile south of Lafayette Campground. Walk mostly downhill on a paved and gravel woodland path bordered by a stream. Several waterfalls. Not as preferred as the northbound access due to terrain.

Lafayette (Northbound Trail head)

Public phone are available if needed. Ample space to turn coach around.

Lafayette (Southbound)

Not really accessible to coaches except in an emergency. A public telephone located outside on the north end of the cabin. The campground lodge normally staffed June through mid-September.

Boise Rock (Northbound Only)

A huge glacial boulder named for Thomas Boise, a local teamster. When Boise was trapped in the notch by a snowstorm, he killed his horse and wrapped himself in the skin, thus saving his life.

Also located here is a large iron kettle made at the Franconia Foundry from native iron ore, and a source of spring water.

Lovely views of Cannon Cliffs from the front of the rock or the observation area after a 100' easy walk. Missed by most tour groups. Even if you don't stop, take a slow cruise through the pull-off area.

Note: Pit toilets, interpretive signs, no charge and no closing time.

Profile Lake

First northbound glacially formed lake. So named because of the Old Man of the Mountains. This spring fed lake is home to Eastern Brook Trout, and is the headwaters of the Pemigewasset River—same stream you see at the Basin.

ATTRACTIONS

Old Man of the Mountains (Northbound)

On May 3, 2003, the Old Man left his post overlooking Profile Lake. Currently a task force set-up by our current governor is looking into what should be done to remember him. For up to date information please call. Minimal walking (30'–40') on sidewalk.

Time: 15 minutes

Driver: No designated coach parking. Must park on a diagonal.

Note: Interpretive sign, no charge, no closing time.

Old Man of the Mountains (Southbound)

Follow signs to the “Old Man Viewing”. Old Man Museum, restrooms, hand-dipped ice cream, drinks, gift shop, and snacks. Three hundred yard walk down a paved path to the viewpoint at the edge of Profile Lake. There is a grade, which could possibly cause difficulty to those with a walking problem. (Feel free to ask about future plans).

Time: 45 minutes

Driver: Coach parking

Note: Interpretive signs, viewing machines

Exit 34B Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway

One-half mile north of the Old Man viewing. Open Mid-May to Mid-October. A large 80-passenger tram makes a quick 6–8 minute ascent up the 4080' mountain. Cars operate every 15 minutes, between 9:00 am and 4:45 pm.

At the Valley Station you will find restrooms, public telephone, cafeteria, gift shop and information center. The summit area includes a cafeteria, restrooms, and gravel walking paths with an excellent view into four states and Canada on a clear day. Artist's Bluff and Bald Mountain are fairly easy hikes located close to the base of Cannon Mountain. The information centers at both the Tram and Flume can provide directions to the trail heads.

It is recommended that, weather permitting, you walk your group out about 150' on the Rim Path or to a small viewing area, this is a fairly level gravel path that offers a panoramic view as well as a peek at the mountain's flora and a taste of mountain air. If they take the longer path to the observation tower, allow at least another half-hour.

Time: 45 minutes to 2 hours, depending on itinerary.

Driver: Ample parking. Unload area available at foot of walkway to building.

Note: Interpretive talk on tram. For handicapped individuals or those requiring special assistance, please ask the staff member at the ticket booth so we can better accommodate you. People afraid of heights usually tolerate the trip quite well because of the smoothness and speed of the ascent. They can sit down or watch the horizon. Discuss any concerns with the tram conductors.

New England Ski Museum

Located at the base of the Aerial Tramway is the New England Ski Museum. Open 12:00 pm–4:00 pm, Mid-May to October. Closed Wednesdays. Interesting displays of the history of skiing and unique gift items. It is a good stop for the whole group, or a nice alternative for those who choose to skip the tramway ride.

Time: 30 minutes

Note: Admission is free.

Echo Lake

The larger of the two glacially formed lakes in the notch, located immediately north of the tramway. Eastern Brook Trout. Spring fed. Over a million gallons of water flow out of the lake each day. Swimming beach on the north end. The ski slopes seen are part of Cannon Mountain Ski Area—one of the first ski areas in the United States. Water out of the lake flows north into the Connecticut River watershed.

Exit 34C Viewing Area (Northbound)

Nice viewpoint, especially in the fall. Top of ramp, turn right, go through gate, follow road to cul-de-sac. Bus parking. Walk 40'–50' onto a bridge for mountain vistas. Missed by most tour groups.

Exit 34C Viewing Area (Southbound)

Turn left at the top of the exit ramp. At “Stop” sign go straight ahead 20', then turn left.

Let us help you make your tour.

For more information, please call

Julianne Ireland, Sales Manager,

603-823-7722 x776.