



put a notch in your belt

Up north, the Granite State of New Hampshire is a boneyard of exposed cliffs, deep ravines, and sharp ridges—an alpine rock climber’s playground.

Pinkham Notch is best known as the height of land that leads to Mount Washington’s venerable Tuckerman Ravine, where impressive and inebriated skiers alike fling themselves down the headwall each spring. But Tucks’ sister ravine, Huntington, holds some of New England’s most impressive climbing routes that range from easy ridge runs to full-blown aid climbs complete with overhanging, lichen-splattered walls. Arguably the birthplace of American technical climbing, the granite fins in Huntington are free of loose rock and northern New Hampshire’s extreme freeze-thaw cycles yield an abundance of cracks. Better still, you won’t find much in the way of bolts or other parties in this remote arena. If you go, pack your extra layers. It snows on Washington year-round and the summit temperature has never topped 71 degrees.

On the other side of the Presidential Range, Franconia Notch is the wind tunnel through which interstate I-93 runs. The Notch was made famous by the Old Man of The Mountain, a rocky outcropping that resembled a man’s profile. But although the Old Man fell down years ago, the monolithic Cannon Cliff that towers above the road is no less of a draw for climbers. Some of the longest, hardest climbs in New England reside on this 1,000-foot tall granite shield. Classic face and crack climbs that seem more at home in Yosemite than on the side of Cannon Mountain, dot the cliff. There are moderate routes, too, but in places the face is so challenging that new lines are still being pioneered each season—this despite the fact that the approach up the talus field is less than an hour hike.

Guides: Whether you’re scaling the hollows of Mount Washington or the flank of Cannon, these environments are extreme and alpine. Guides can offer a more pleasurable way to get acquainted with the area. **Check out:** International Mountain Climbing School (ime-usa.com); Synnott Mountain Guides (newhampshireclimbing.com); or Mahoney Alpine Adventures (mahoneyalpineadventures.com).

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