



# Lost and Found Ski Area

New Hampshire's Mittersill rises from the dead  
by Brian Irwin | photograph by Chris James

Last season, the bullwheel on a Mittersill double chairlift turned for the first time in 27 years. The once prospering area adjacent to Cannon Mountain in New Hampshire's Franconia Notch had been quiet since closing in 1984. Until the new double ran, only those willing to skin up the slopes, or hike over from Cannon's iconic Taft Slalom, could enjoy the 1,850 vertical feet of what has become a backcountry ski area. For those who poached untracked lines (once forbidden and then condoned) it was like the place had been preserved for some future generation—a bizarre living museum of decrepit lift towers and overgrown trails.

Cannon, which is owned by the State of New Hampshire, purchased Mittersill's 86 skiable acres for one dollar in 1986. But it took decades of lobbying and environmental impact studies before Cannon's management was able to officially open the area and provide lift access. "The area has changed a lot," recalls Jeff Graves, a former Mittersill ski school instructor in the '70s. "The village was bustling back then. But the terrain is still just as classic and challenging. And you have it to yourself."

Despite the construction of the lift, Mittersill is being managed as an adventure skiing area. No trail names or signs. No grooming. No snowmaking. The 1,850 vertical feet of steep, gladed hillside bumps up quick and is more reminiscent of the expert-only terrain of Vermont's Mad River Glen than Cannon's wide groomers. But as any Plymouth University student or woodsy local skier could tell you, on a powder day the place is full of double fall lines, flaking birch glades, and hidden drops. The only difference is that now you can access the zone with the simple swipe of a Cannon lift pass.

But with the well-developed Cannon now just a lift ride away, time shares at Mittersill's base, and an average 13 feet of snow annually, Mittersill's future is unwritten. Its north-facing, wind-free slopes are too tantalizing to stay rough-cut sidecountry forever. Lodge construction, snowmaking, and some grooming are under consideration.

For now, though, Mittersill remains a wild place, a forgotten zone where you can point your sticks downhill, explore the pillows and pines, and coast out to a faux-Tyrolean base village. Crowds are thin, fresh tracks patiently wait, and the atmosphere is deceptively remote. It still feels like you're poaching a living museum. Get it before the time portal closes forever.



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