



ADIRONDACKS
JULY 1-9, 2023

TRAVEL

In July 2023, we found ourselves heading back to the Adirondacks to climb more high peaks. Heading into the trip, we had completed 36 of the 46 high peaks. Instead of our usual base in Lake Placid, we would be staying about an hour west, in Long Lake, NY. This would provide easier access to some of the trails in this area of the Adirondack Park. Plus, exploring a different area, one filled with beautiful lakes, was a bonus! While we had planned to hike multiple high peaks during our trip, we only had to climb one from here - Allen Mountain. All of the other hikes could be accessed from different trailheads, or in one case, was equidistant from Lake Placid.

On the way to our cabin, we made a beer stop at Fidens in Albany, and stopped to eat lunch at a restaurant, arriving in Long Lake at 4pm. We unpacked and had a casual dinner as we settled in.

DAY 1



While we were fully prepared, and hoping, to hike on our first day there, the weather had other plans. Rain was forecast most of the day, so we decided to take it easy and plan more of an indoor day. We began the morning with breakfast at the Long Lake Diner, replete with blueberry pancakes, an omelette, and copious amounts of coffee.

We then headed just up the road to The Adirondack Experience, located on Blue Mountain Lake. This museum is dedicated to telling the stories of the people who lived, worked, and played in the Adirondack Park. We both agreed this was one of the best museums we've ever been to. The exhibits were informative and there were lots of opportunities for interactive exhibits, even for adults. We got to try our hand at mining, rowing an Adirondack guide boat, and tested our outdoor knowledge. There were exhibits on the woods and water, boating, old log cabins and hotels, a restored train car, carriages, and even a fire tower!





We spent over three hours at the museum, including a quick trip to the parking lot to enjoy our PB&J sandwiches in the car, escaping the rain. By the time we were done, the rain had mostly let up, and so we decided to stretch our legs with a quick stop at Buttermilk Falls on our way back to town. Just a short walk from the parking lot, the falls were roaring after all that rain! After the falls, we stopped in town at the general store to pick up a few items, and then went back to the cabin to relax for the rest of the afternoon, the skies having largely cleared, a good sign for the next day.

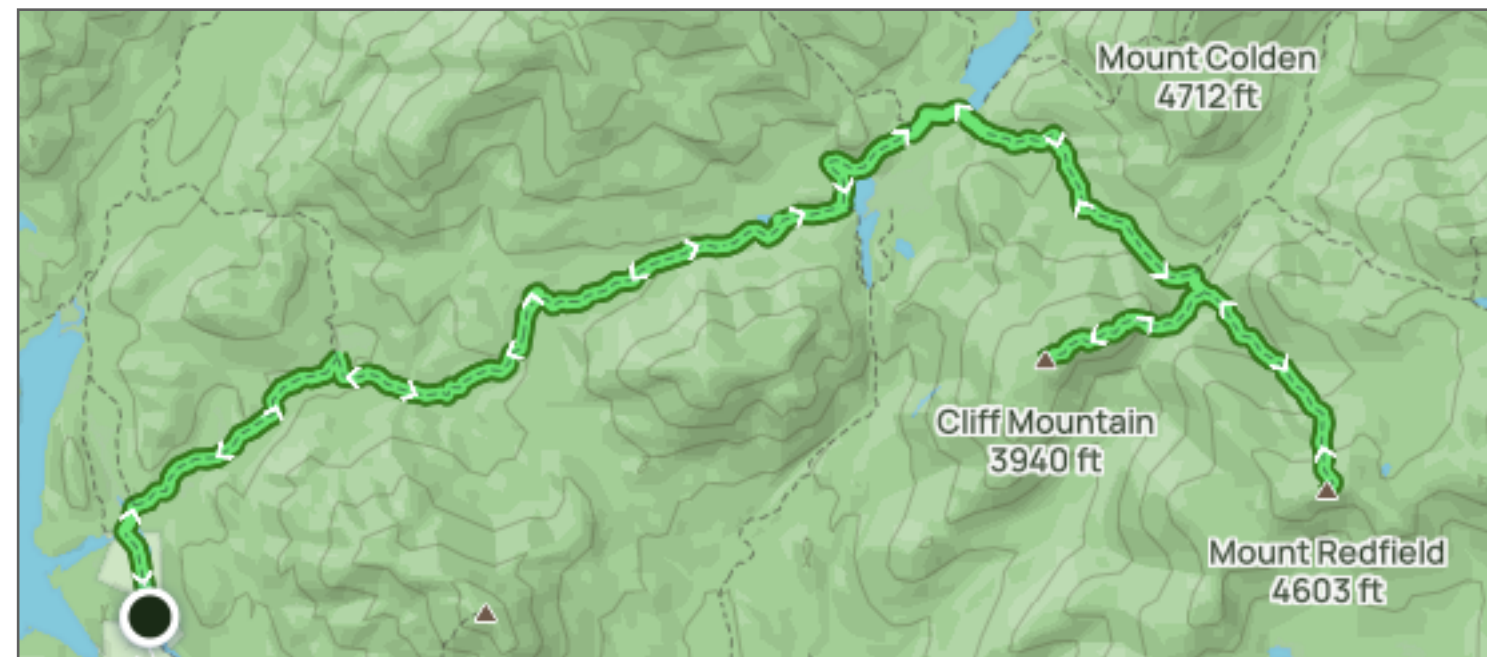


DAY 2

REDFIELD & CLIFF

Having sufficiently rested the previous day, we woke to our 3:45am wake up call ready to hit the trails! We packed up our last minute items, prepared breakfast, and got in the car to make the 45-minute drive to the Upper Works trail-head near Newcomb, NY. While 3:45am is not an unheard of wakeup call for our hiking in the high peaks, it was really nice that the sun started to rise on the drive such that by the time we parked around 5am it was already light. No head-lamps required!

The first 7-8 miles of the trail were relatively easy because although we were gaining elevation, it was a gradual incline the entire way. The Calamity Brook Trail was pretty muddy in spots, but that wasn't surprising given the recent rain and it wasn't the worst we'd ever seen. We tried to keep our heads down and power through the initial miles quickly. There were several bridges to help with any water crossings, and going across the Colden Dam was beautiful. It took us about 4.5 hours to reach the junction with the path for Cliff and Redfield.

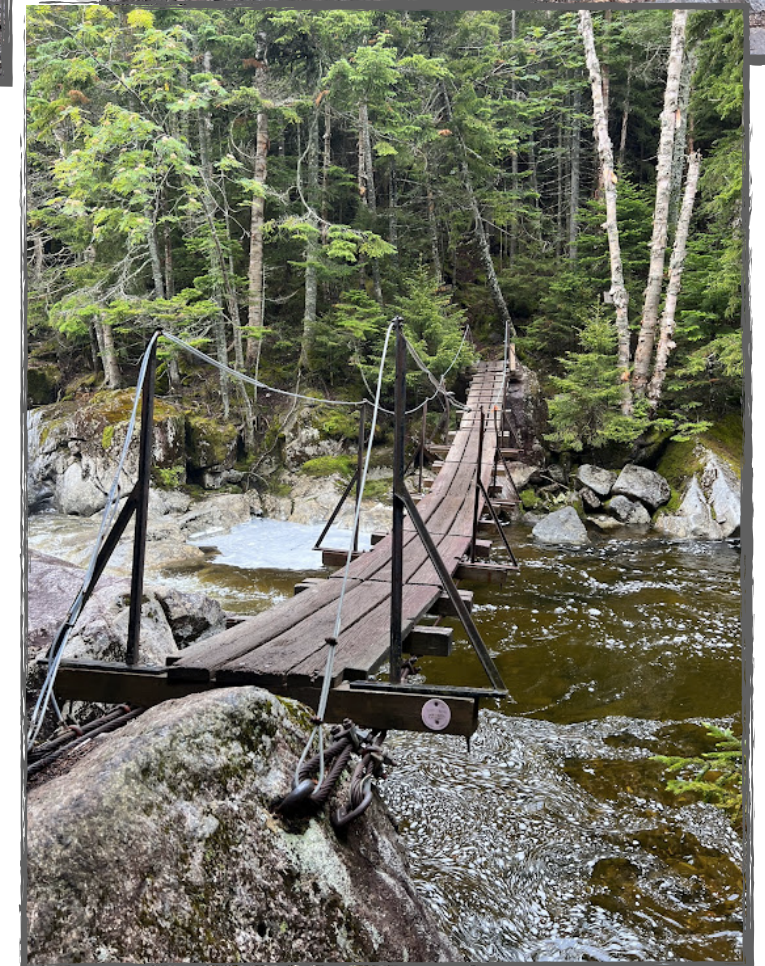
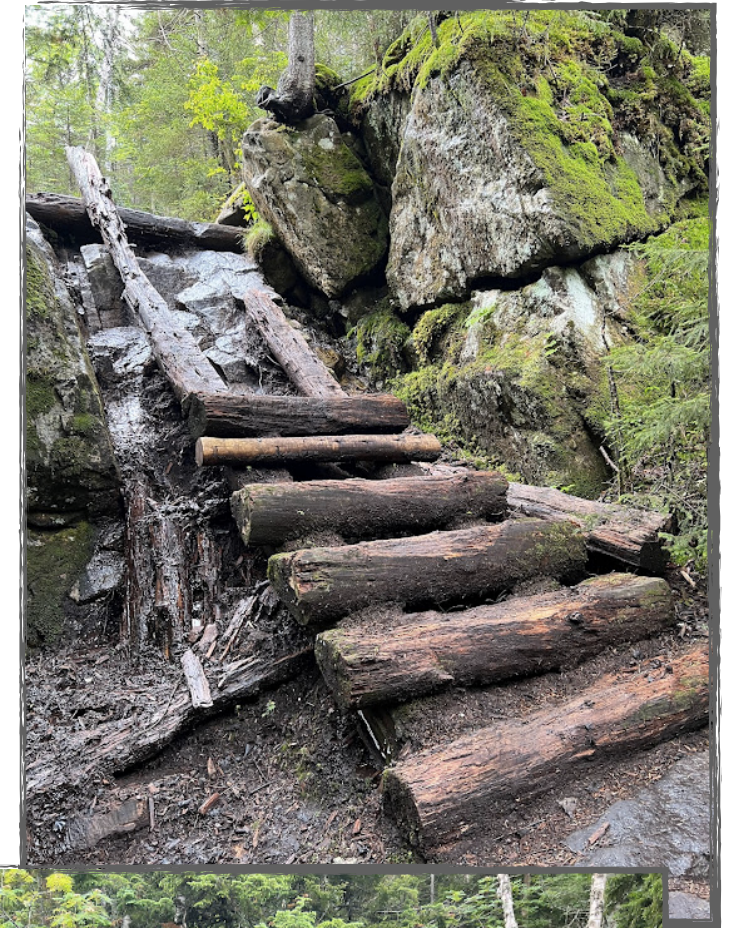




Stone marker in honor of David Henderson who lost his life in that very spot in 1845. While on an expedition to search for additional water sources for a nearby iron works, his gun misfired when he laid it down on a nearby rock. It is said Calamity Brook Trail got its name from this “calamitous” event.



Some bridges were definitely in better shape than others!

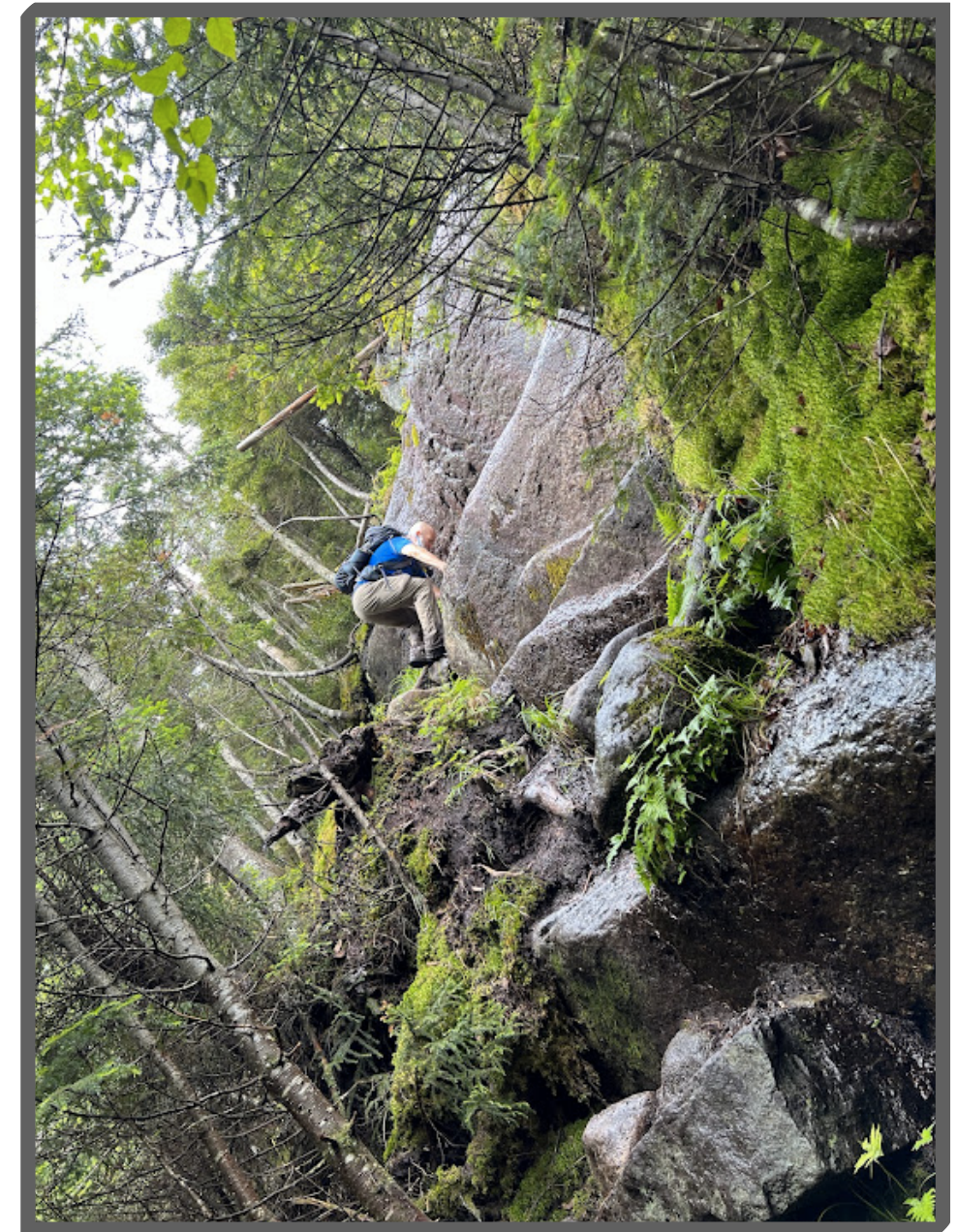




**Down climbing then crossing
Colden Dam**



A cairn marked the intersection of the Cliff and Red-field trails. From here, the trails were unmarked herd paths, but relatively easy to follow. We we elected to climb Cliff first which was a shorter out and back, and to get the infamous “cliffs” on the trail over. Overall, while there were definitely very steep parts, the cliffs were not terribly exposed and there were plenty of life-saving Adirondack tree roots to grab on to along the way. Here, our pace crawled to one mile an hour as we needed to gain 1,000 ft of elevation over one mile.





Summit #37! I think my face says it all. That was HARD!

The trail was definitely straight up, but I kept waiting for a really scary part to happen based on people's comments on AllTrails (one person even said they were glad they had a rope to use to lower themselves down!) but no really scary parts came. There were no views at the top, but there were nice views of the neighboring mountains along the way up. Over course, going down for us is just as slow and sometimes even slower. With slick rock underfoot, we took our time making our way down the trail. At last, we were back to the cairn and turned right to make our way up Redfield.



Right away we encountered the infamous Redfield bog. The trail was an absolute mud pit. And then as we began to climb, the trail essentially went straight up a waterfall. Just rocks, with torrents of water crashing down on them. The trail went on and on and on and on...gaining 1,300 ft of elevation. I had been so worried about doing Allen Mountain that I hadn't really given much thought to how hard this particular hike would be. Eventually though, we persevered and made it to the top!!



Summit #38!



And here I thought I looked tired on the top of Cliff!

As we started our descent from Redfield, it began to rain. Then it began to downright pour. Knowing that at that point we were completely soaked from head to toe and that we still had 9 more miles of hiking to do was a real mental challenge. I am pretty sure at one very low point Mike said he didn't want to become a 46er anymore! I just kept telling myself the only way out was through, and if it was easy, everyone would become a 46er. It rained for the better part of the next 4 hours, so we hiked as fast and safely as we could. At least our boots were so wet that on the way back we didn't worry about trying to avoid the mud puddles. We just splashed through them knowing we pretty much couldn't get more wet. This hike took us SO long, clocking in at just under 15 hours. That meant that after starting around 5am, we didn't get back to the car under close to 8pm. And in that entire time, we never sat down once because there were no dry or non-muddy spots. This was our longest, most challenging, and terrible hike in the high peaks and probably ever!

Cliff & Redfield hiking stats:

- 20.12 miles
- 4,140 ft elevation gain
- 14 hr 39 min hiking time
- High peaks = 2

Due to the rain, we didn't take any pictures on the hike back as we had our phones stowed away in our packs. Once at the car, we peeled off our hiking boots and socks, taking stock of the damage. My feet looked like white prunes, but I was essentially unscathed other than being tired. Mike could feel pressure on one of his toes throughout the hike and his big toenail hurt quite a bit. He said it felt very "loose" which is never a good sign. As if that weren't bad enough, as he was taking off his shoe, he realized one of his hiking boot shoelaces was completely stripped to its white core! What.a.day. On the drive back to the cabin, we ate nearly an entire box of CheezIts and then once back we heated up a frozen pizza for dinner, not eating until 9:30pm! We had originally planned to try and hike in the high peaks on every good weather day. Although the next day looked like clear weather, we decided there was no way we could stomach another long outing.



DAY 3

TUPPER LAKE TRIAD



After a very good night of sleep, we took it easy in the morning sipping our coffee and sampling hot bagel breakfast sandwiches from Stewarts. They were surprisingly delicious! Although we didn't have a day in the high peaks planned, we still wanted to take advantage of the nice weather and so we set out to do three shorter, more relaxed hikes. These

are part of the "Tupper Lake Triad", a hiking challenge to the top of three mountains that boast outstanding views of the surrounding peaks and lakes. First up was Goodman Mountain, not far from where we were staying. We left our hiking boots outside to dry in the sun and strapped on our trail runners. We were the only car in the parking lot upon arrival, and we headed up the initial part of the trail which is paved. Not long after we heard rustling to our right and both watched as a juvenile black bear ran away! We finally saw one of the famed Long Lake bears!



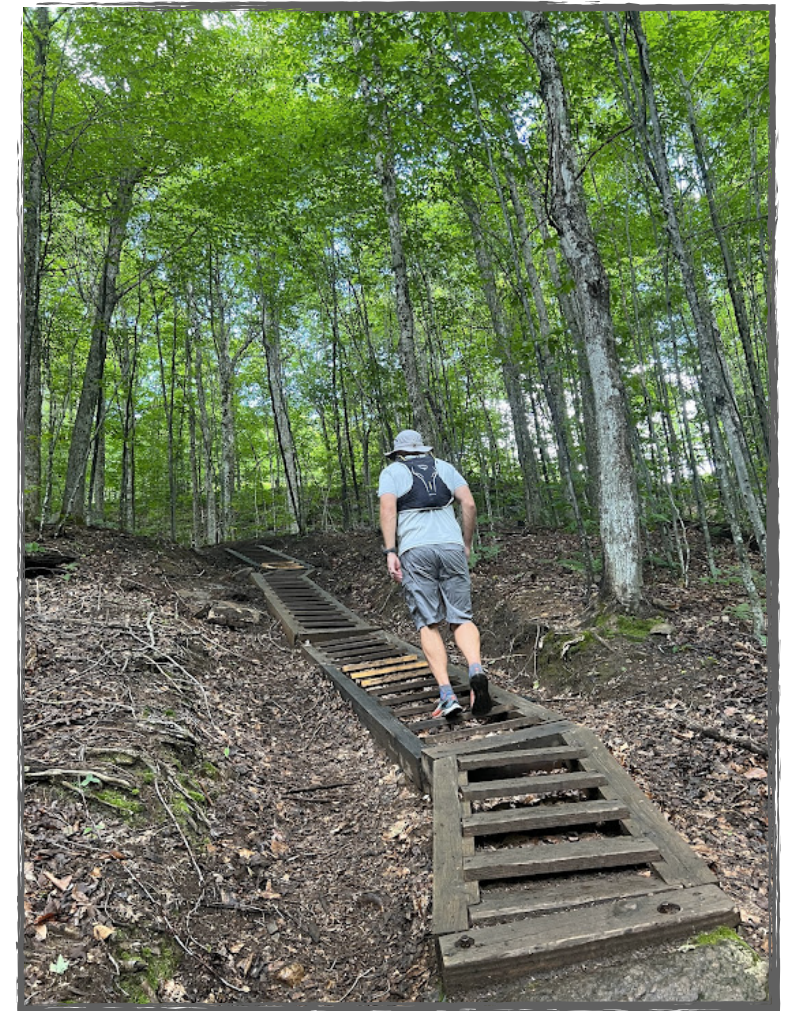
At the end of the paved portion of the trail, we turned left to steeply climb to the summit of Goodman Mountain. The summit was bald with a nice outcropping of rock and beautiful views of the mountains and trees nearby. It felt nice not to have to work too hard to enjoy the scenery! We made our way back down and only encountered two other hikers on their way up. This was a hidden gem!



Next, we drove over to the trailhead for Mount Arab where a mile-long trail would lead us to a fire tower at the top. The steel fire tower was erected in 1918 and this hike would not only count as part of the Tupper Lake Triad, but as part of the ADK Fire Tower Challenge too! This was a more popular area with lots of cars in the parking lot. Although steep, the trail was very well-maintained. I wish some of the high peaks trails had steps on them!

Goodman Mountain:

- 3.2 miles
- 587 ft elevation gain
- 1 hr 27 min hiking time





Mount Arab:

- 2.2 miles
- 741 ft elevation gain
- 1 hr 22 min hiking time



The views from the top of the fire tower were gorgeous and there were some pretty nifty benches on the summit too!



We stopped at a small market and deli to pick up pre-made sandwiches and chips for lunch. We found a park to stop at and had a lovely picnic right along the water under a shaded gazebo!



Our last hike of the day was to the top of Coney Mountain which has a wide open summit and amazing 360-degree views. We had a nice long rest and then headed down the mountain, officially Tupper Lake Triad finishers!

Coney Mountain:

- 2.2 miles
- 571 ft elevation gain
- 1 hr 14 min hiking time



We thoroughly earned an ice cream reward at Custard's Last Stand. I had been wanting to get soft serve ice cream from here ever since we saw it last June, when it was closed. We each had a chocolate and vanilla twist which were delicious! Thankfully our cabin had a washer and dryer and so I finally had the chance to wash our beyond muddy clothes from the day before. Well, when I opened the washer after the cycle ended, there were chunks of dirt and mud still inside!! I took out all the clothes and ran the washer without anything in it to clean it out, then had to wash the clothes again. Hah! We decided we'd be wearing shorts the rest of the trip since theoretically we could more easily wash our legs off. We spent the rest of the afternoon relaxing at the cabin outside, enjoying the beautiful weather.



DAY 4

ALLEN MOUNTAIN

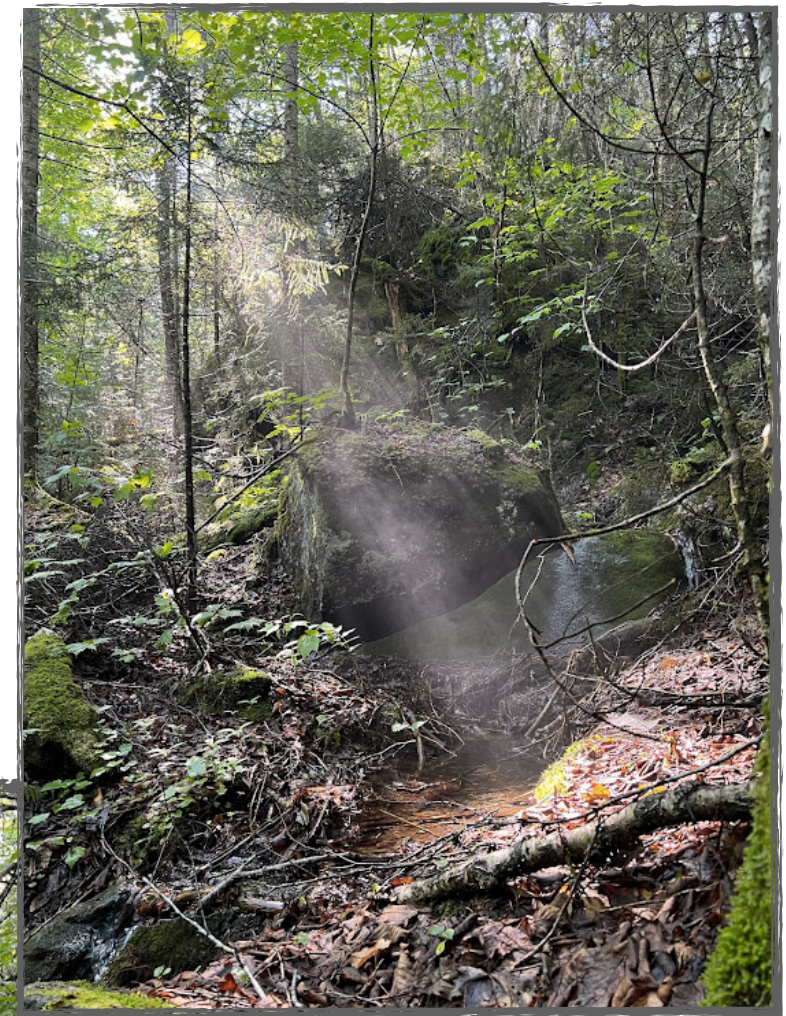
Ever since we started research on all of the 46 high peaks, Allen Mountain was the hike I was dreading the most. I can vividly remember Mike telling me there was a mountain with a huge slide you had to climb up that was usually covered in red slime. The notorious red slime is actually algae and has such a reputation for awfulness that many people wear traction devices like microspikes, even in the summer. Throw in the fact that you need to hike 8 miles before you even begin to climb, and that there is a substantial river crossing with no bridge, it was my most feared hike. With another 3:45am wake up call, we once again made our way up the Upper Works road to park at the trailhead for Allen Mountain. We were each laden with 4L of water, copious amounts of snacks, a change of footwear for the water crossing, and our microspikes (just in case!).



We set off just around 5am and encountered our first bridge crossing the Hudson River. It looks like it's seen better days and is about to go the way of the bridge that used to cross the Opalescent River. The initial portion of the trail was VERY flat and not terribly muddy, so we were able to keep up a good pace. Our plan was to get to the start of the climb as soon as we could.

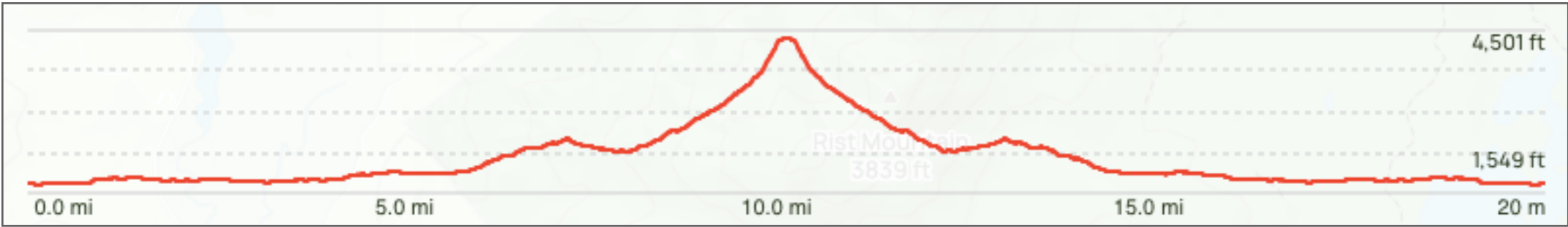


When we got to the Opalescent River crossing, there was one hiker ahead of us so we watched as he finished crossing to gauge how deep it was. The answer? Generally about knee to mid-thigh height. Although we had bought Crocs last year explicitly for this water crossing (since they were light and would dry out easily) we both decided to just leave our boots on. The current was fairly strong and we didn't feel like it would make sense to change into less stable shoes. With that we set off towards the other river bank slowly and carefully, making it across without incident. This was one part of the hike I was really worried about and now it was done! In hindsight, keeping our boots on was the best decision. There were several more smaller water crossings that I'm guessing could typically be rock hopped, but with the recent rain that was impossible. We ended up fully dunking our boots and feet three more times over the next several miles. Oh and the mud. There was lots of mud! This trail gets a really bad rap, but we both thought it was really beautiful. Although long, the approach made us feel like we were hiking in a magical fairy land in the forest. Of interest, about seven miles into the trail we ever passed a random thunderbox! A wooden commode. We could not find any information on why it was placed at that location, but definitely a first for us!



Thunderbox!





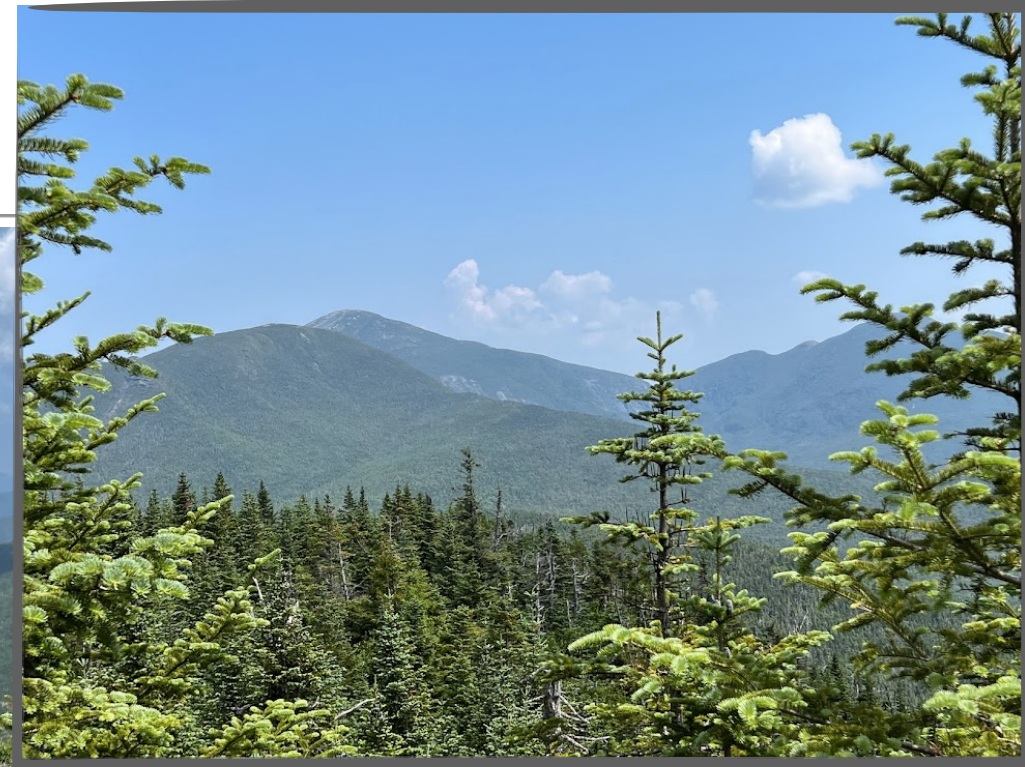
Elevation profile and middle split times of hike

In case you couldn't tell, the climb began after mile 9. As we knew from trail reports, just after the water-fall the climb would begin in earnest. At first it was just straight up through a jumble of tree roots but then we hit the exposed slide. The part I was most scared of! From other hikers, we knew the mantra on the slide - stay left, stay left. On the left side, there were fallen trees and enough tree roots to use as hand holds. And for me, these were absolute life savers. Going up the first part of the slide on all fours, I didn't hold on to something for one second and immediately slipped and fell, thankfully only a short way. I would describe the slick rock in this way. Imagine a dry rock on which someone rubbed Crisco, then poured water over it, then vegetable oil, then more water just for good measure. It was that slippery.

9.0	39:28		509 ft
10.0	1:05:58		1,007 ft
11.0	1:17:50		492 ft
12.0	50:43		0 ft
13.0	33:02		115 ft

Going in I told myself I didn't care how slow I went up, I just wanted to do it safely. And over an hour later, we made it!!





Summit #39!

We were only slightly worse for the wear with wet boots and very dirty, but the summit was a great place to rest. Just beyond the Allen Mountain sign, there was a rock outcropping where we could drop our packs to rest. There we met another hiker, Mike, and this was his 46th peak! We spoke with him for awhile and enjoyed our lunch, before packing up for the long, slow trek down. As usual, going down took us longer than going up. Here, I placed every foot insanely carefully so as not to slip. Once we were at the foot of the slide I wanted to cry with relief!





Back at the bottom we celebrated with a Snickers, of course, and then made our way back along the trail, picking up our pace retracing our steps from earlier in the day. Once back at the Opalescent River crossing, we took a break on one of the old bridge pylons to have one last snack. We saw dark clouds begin to gather and just after we crossed the river it started to rain and thunder. Thankfully it was not as heavy as a few days ago. We made it back to the car nearly 13 hours after we started with the only unfortunate incident being Mike's mesh water bottle holder on his backpack ripping after a likely snag on a tree branch. He will have to retire his backpack too, a mere month after I had to retire mine!



Due to the warmer weather and how muddy our pants got on our first high peaks hike, I elected to wear shorts. My legs were so dirty!! Check out my Adirondacks "tan". Plus, after getting cleaned up in the shower, my poor legs looked like I was in a car accident.



Allen hiking stats:

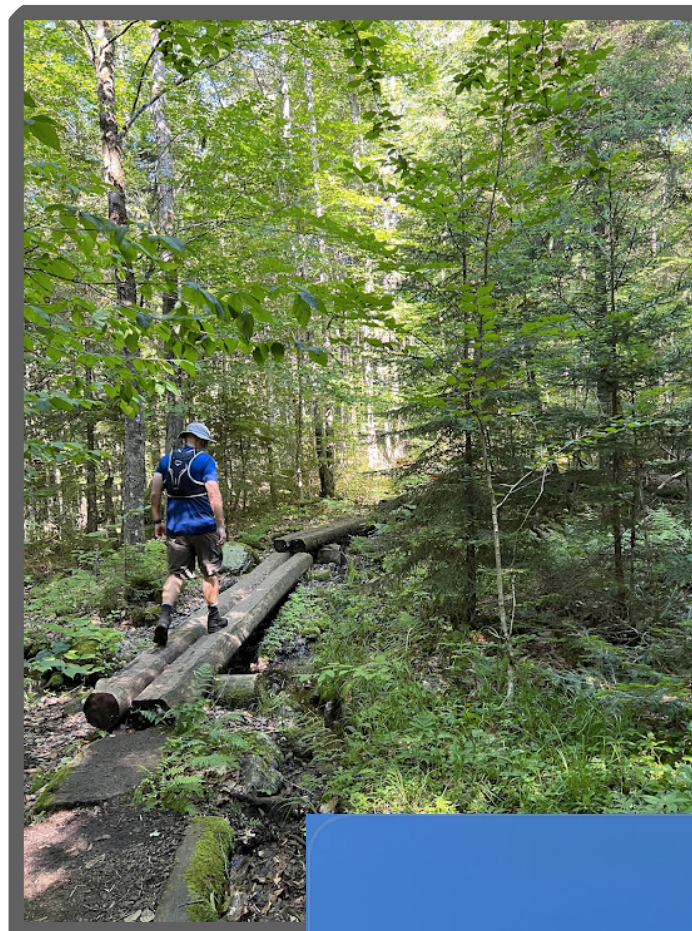
- 20.44 miles
- 3,579 ft elevation gain
- 12 hr 39 min hiking time
- High peaks = 1

Once back at the car we couldn't wait to take off our boots and socks. Spending 10+ hours with completely soaked shoes and socks left my feet worse for the wear. I had a lot of hot spots on the top of my feet and toes from the constant chafing. It stung real bad! On the drive home we polished off the CheezIts and tucked in to reheated baked ziti once back at the cabin. We decided tomorrow would again be a "rest" day!

DAY 5

OWLS HEAD MOUNTAIN & CASTLE ROCK

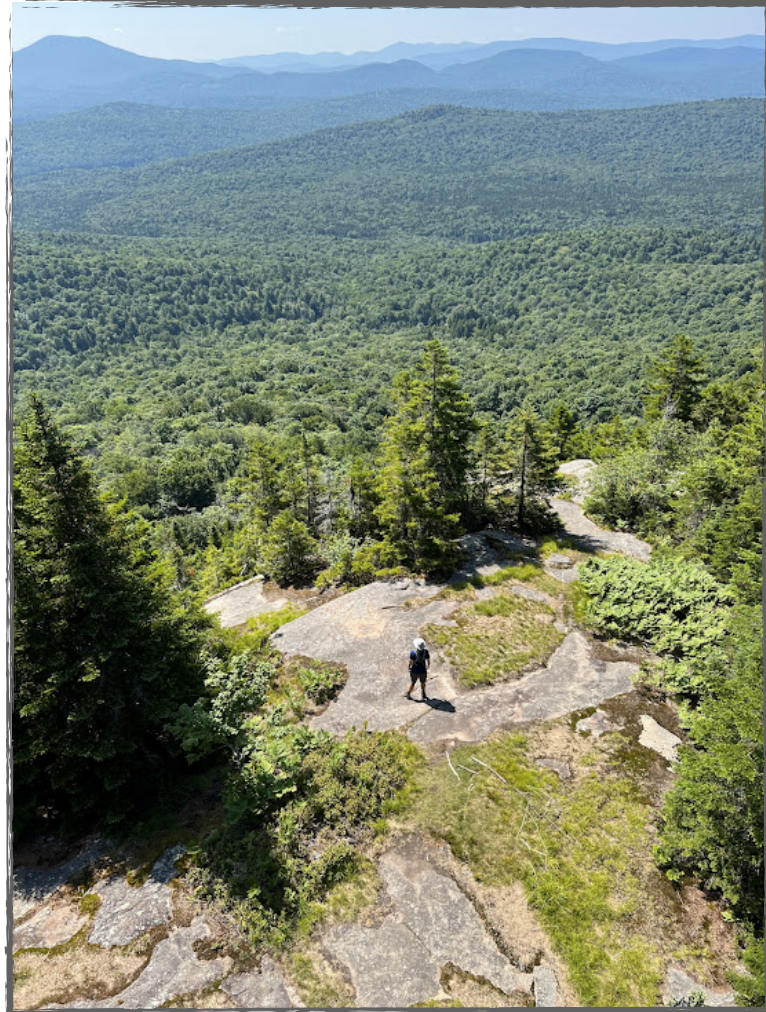
Sufficiently fueled with a good night of sleep, more Stewarts breakfast sandwiches, and dry shoes, we headed to Owls Head Mountain just a short drive from our cabin. At the summit is a 35-ft tall fire tower that was erected in 1919, replacing the original wooden one. Although we gained a lot of elevation during the hike, it was a steady incline the whole way with a pretty well-maintained trail. We climbed through the forest, then the trail leveled out which was almost like getting to a false summit because we then had to climb steeply to get to the actual top! Along the way, we passed the ruins of the fire observer's cabin. The views of Long Lake, nearby high peaks and mountains, and just general 360-degree stunning views from the top of the fire tower were a real treat.





Owls Head Mountain:

- 6.65 miles
- 1,545 ft elevation gain
- 3 hr 26 min hiking time



The only people we saw were a few people making their way up the trail as we were coming down. We were starving by this point, so we stopped at the small Adirondack Trading Post to order sandwiches to go. They were delicious, and we enjoyed them back at the cabin before setting off towards our afternoon adventure at Castle Rock near Blue Mountain Lake. We parked at the trailhead and as we began the initial path was along a private, dirt road before turning in to the woods.

Shortly after turning into the woods this trail turned STEEP! It was so much steeper than we were both expecting and the hike yesterday plus this morning's climb left me exhausted! At least it was just over a mile to the top and soon the massive bulk of rock giving Castle Rock it's name came into view. It was really quite impressive and beyond what we were expecting! We had a fun bit of scrambling as we approach the summit which involved squeezing ourselves between two large boulders. Once at the top we were absolutely blown away at the view of Blue Mountain Lake below us. I felt like we were looking at a model railroad below but, but in lake form.





Castle Rock:

- 3.2 miles
- 673 ft elevation gain
- 1 hr 39 min hiking time

Although there was a loop hike we could do, we opted for the known route conditions and headed back down the way we came up. What a fun day! Once again, we spent the rest of the afternoon relaxing at the cabin outside, grilling sausages for dinner.

DAY 6

WAKELY MOUNTAIN

With a chance of afternoon thunderstorms in the forecast, we opted to stay out of the high peaks again and tackle yet another fire tower. Wakely Mountain was a bit farther afield, so we woke up and set out earlier than some of our other non-high peak hikes driving out towards Indian Lake. The fire tower on top of Wakely is one of the highest in NY, standing at 70-ft tall! The steel structure standing there today was erected in 1916 and was restored in 2018 after suffering significant wind damage in 2017. This would be the steepest of our non-high peak hikes with the trail gaining 1,600-ft in 3 miles, with a whopping 1,200-ft in just one mile alone!





The trail through the forest started out by going up an old dirt road and then turned to cross several streams, most with some sketchy log bridges that required a lot of balance to traverse. From there, a straight up hike commenced. I did appreciate that there were occasionally ladders or even handrails to help hoist yourself up. I could have used these on some high peaks! The trail flattened out near the top, only giving us false hope because there was yet another steep final push before the summit. We stopped to admire the helipad (constructed in part to help ferry supplies for the fire tower restoration) and at last arrived at the tower itself! It was impressive and honestly going up it felt a little scary. Unlike the other fire towers we climbed which had maybe 5-6 flights of stairs, this one had 10!

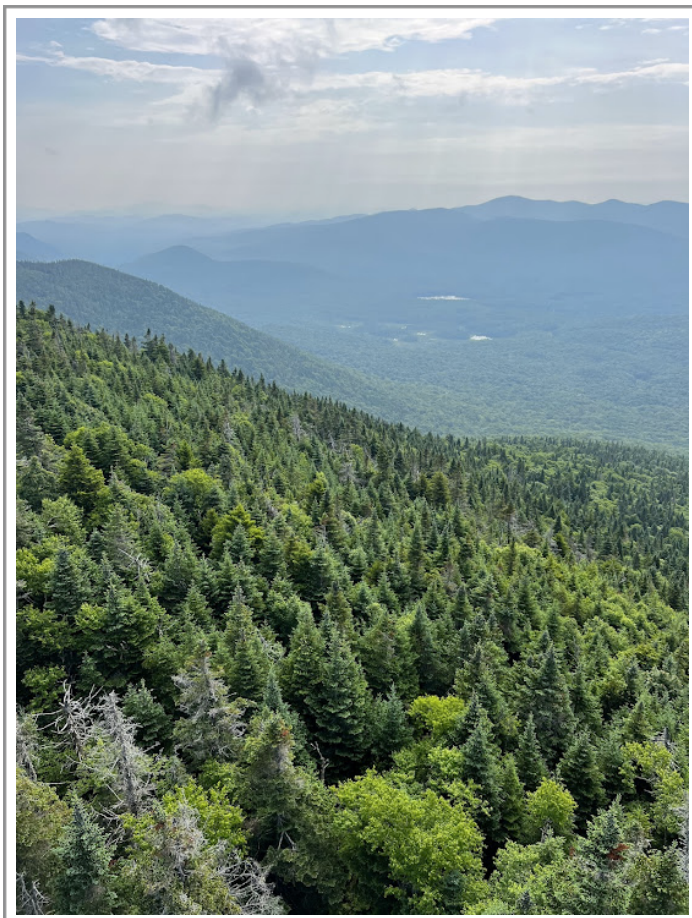




We spent time enjoying the views at the top and eating a snack, and then walking around at the bottom of the fire tower to look at the caretaker's cabin. It was a beautiful spot! We headed down without incident and only saw a handful of people on our way out. Back in the car, we decided to drive to nearby Indian Lake to find a scenic picnic spot to eat our lunch. As we arrived at a picnic pavilion, dark clouds gathered and thunder rumbled. The storms came earlier than expected and all I could think about was those people we passed on the hike who were still out there. Yikes! We quickly ate our food and by the time we got in the car it was down pouring and continued to do so most of the way back to Long Lake. Near town it let up enough for us to hop out of the car and try another soft serve ice cream place in town. We spent the remainder of the afternoon relaxing at the cabin and watching a movie. A great day!

Wakely Mountain:

- 6.4 miles
- 1,650 ft elevation gain
- 3 hr 14 min hiking time



DAY 7

MOUNT MARSHALL

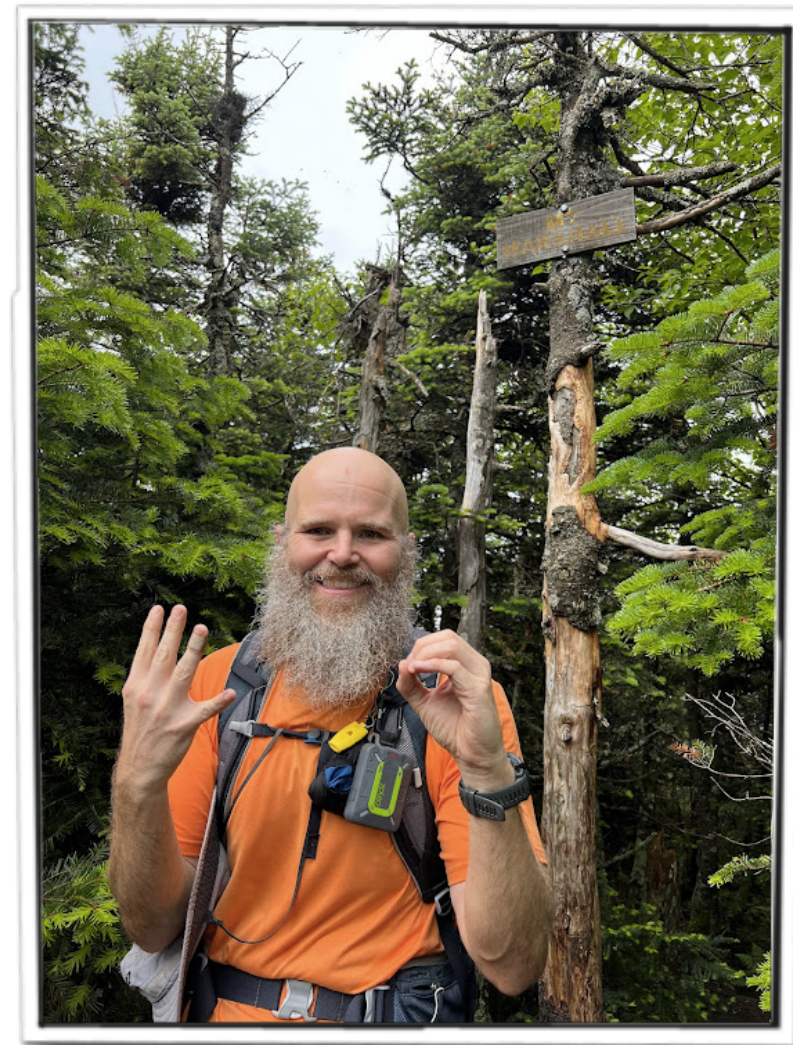
On our last day, we had a choice to either complete a high peak hike that would tick off three summits or a hike that would tick off one. The former would almost certainly be a very long day in the mountains, and the trailhead was equidistant from Long Lake and Lake Placid. The latter trail could be accessed from two different trailheads in the Adirondack Park, and hiking it from the Upper Works would mean retracing ~6 miles of the Calamity Brook Trail we did earlier in the week. In the end, we decided to hike to the summit of Mount Marshall, opting for a shorter day and one peak, even though it would mean a re-hike of ground we'd already covered. We woke at 3:30am. As Mike was gathering his gear, he noticed his water bladder leaking. We determined it was not sealing properly and so that meant he would have to carry only water in Nalgene bottles. Definitely not convenient! We brought water purification tabs and a filter with us in case we needed to fill up at a stream.

We arrived at the Upper Works parking lot and set off through the forest on a gorgeous morning. The trail was surprisingly not too muddy, even after all of yesterday's rain.





The turn for the summit of Mount Marshall took us off the Calamity Brook Trail and onto an unmarked herd path. It was somewhat hard to follow at times because we were walking through a lush forest. Honestly, the path was fantastic and much preferable to the other high peak hikes we'd done this trip. It was never too steep and there was a ton of scenery to admire. This ended up being my favorite hike of the whole trip! Although it was a little cloudy, there were still nice views at the top! Savoring the fact that we had completed 40 high peaks with only 6 to go, we took a rest at the summit and then headed down.



Summit #40!



We arrived back at our car in a very respectable 10 hours, leaving plenty of time to enjoy the rest of our day! We also took stock of the gear damage which hit Mike the hardest this trip. I sense a trip to REI in our future!

Mount Marshall:

- 15.78miles
- 2,972 ft elevation gain
- 9 hr 48 min hiking time
- High peaks = 1

1. Lost toenail (Mike had to have the nail on his big toe removed a week after our trip!)
2. Ripped side pouch on backpack
3. 2 stripped shoe laces
4. Broken water bladder



This house stands right next to the Upper Works trail-head parking lot and is where Teddy Roosevelt and his family were vacationing when President McKinley's condition worsened, and he ultimately passed away, leading Roosevelt to become the 26th US President.



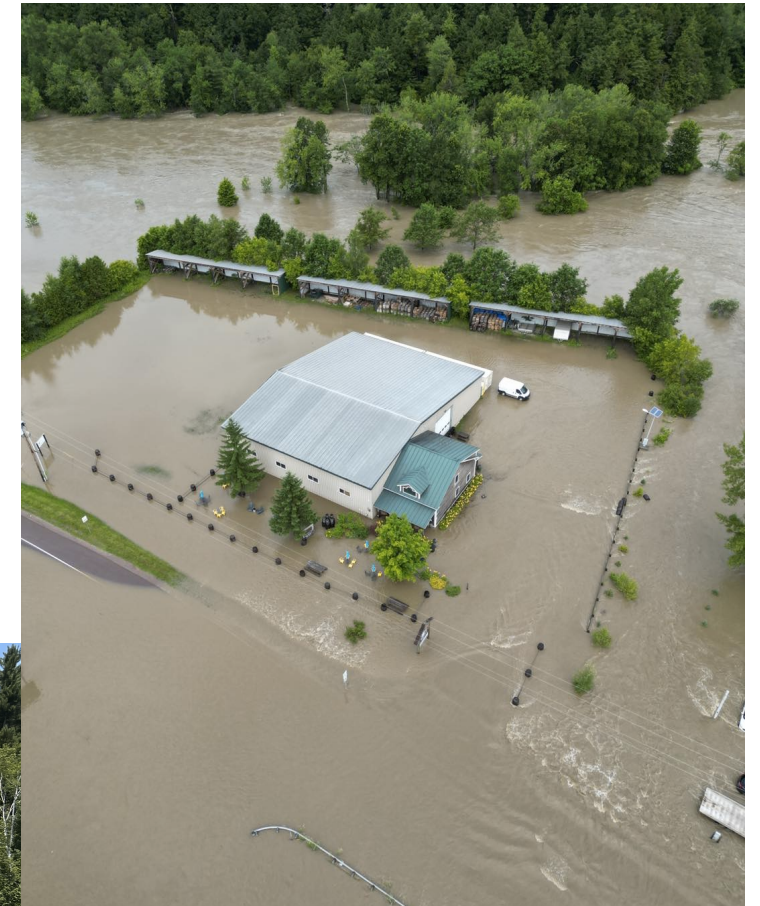
Once back at the cabin, we relaxed during our last afternoon and watched another movie, this one about the cave rescue in Thailand of the soccer team. It was fascinating! Then, it was time to pack up and prepare for the drive home the next day. Another successful Adirondacks trip!

POSTSCRIPT

On our way home, we were lucky to only drive through one torrential rainstorm near West Point. That same day, however, Long Lake and nearby Vermont were pummeled with rain that led to historic flooding. Just a mile down the road from where we were staying in Long Lake, a bridge washed away and the road buckled. Long Lake itself had severe flooding and was cutoff for a period of time. Many places we love to visit in Vermont suffered damage as well. We feel lucky to have left when we did and our hearts go out to those affected by the damage.



Damage to Rt. 28-N and town
of Long Lake



Aerial view of the flooding in Jeffer-
sonville, VT where we stay each
Christmas