

NEW ENGLAND

Best Beginner Hike in Every New England State

New to hiking in the Northeast? No problem: We've got the best beginner hike in every New England state for a short trek with big views.

Heather Tourgee · August 31, 2021 · Read Comments (7)



★★★★☆
3.83 avg. rating (76% score) - 6 votes

Please note that many establishments throughout New England have modified their hours and/or operations in response to COVID-19. Please check with individual businesses and organizations for the latest information before making travel plans.

While it's easy to be intimidated by New England's outdoor scene, you don't need to climb all 67 of the region's 4,000-foot peaks to enjoy hiking some of its most beautiful terrain. Here are our picks for the best beginner hike in every New England state — all of which you can do without climbing equipment, and most of which clock in at less than an hour.

The Best Beginner Hike in Every New England State

Best Beginner Hike in Connecticut: Haystack Mountain

Where: Norfolk
Favorite trail: Haystack Tower Loop Trail
Summit elevation: 1,716 feet
Elevation gain: 239 feet
Distance: 2 miles (loop)
Summit views: 360 degrees, from tower
Why we love it: The panoramic view from the Rapunzel-esque tower atop Haystack Mountain is worth the half hour or so it will take to do this hike. The path is by no means flat but still doable for nearly all ability levels. A 2016 *Yankee Editors' Pick* for "Best Short Hike."



A breathtaking view on the Lincoln Woods Trail.
Heather Tourgee

Best Beginner Hike in New Hampshire: Lincoln Woods Trail

Where: Lincoln
Elevation gain: 283 feet (very gradual)
Distance: 2.9 miles
Views: The trail is mostly wooded but still offers views of the Pemigewasset River, waterfalls, and White Mountains.
Why we love it: It lets you hike in the Whites Mountains without scaling a huge peak. The well-marked visitors center just off the Kancamagus Highway is your gateway to this popular trail, which runs alongside the Pemigewasset River. Most of this hike is very flat and wooded (it's based on an old railroad bed). Side trails give you the option of making your excursion as strenuous as you'd like.



The Champlain Valley and the Adirondacks as seen from Snake Mountain.
Heather Tourgee

Best Beginner Hike in Vermont: Snake Mountain

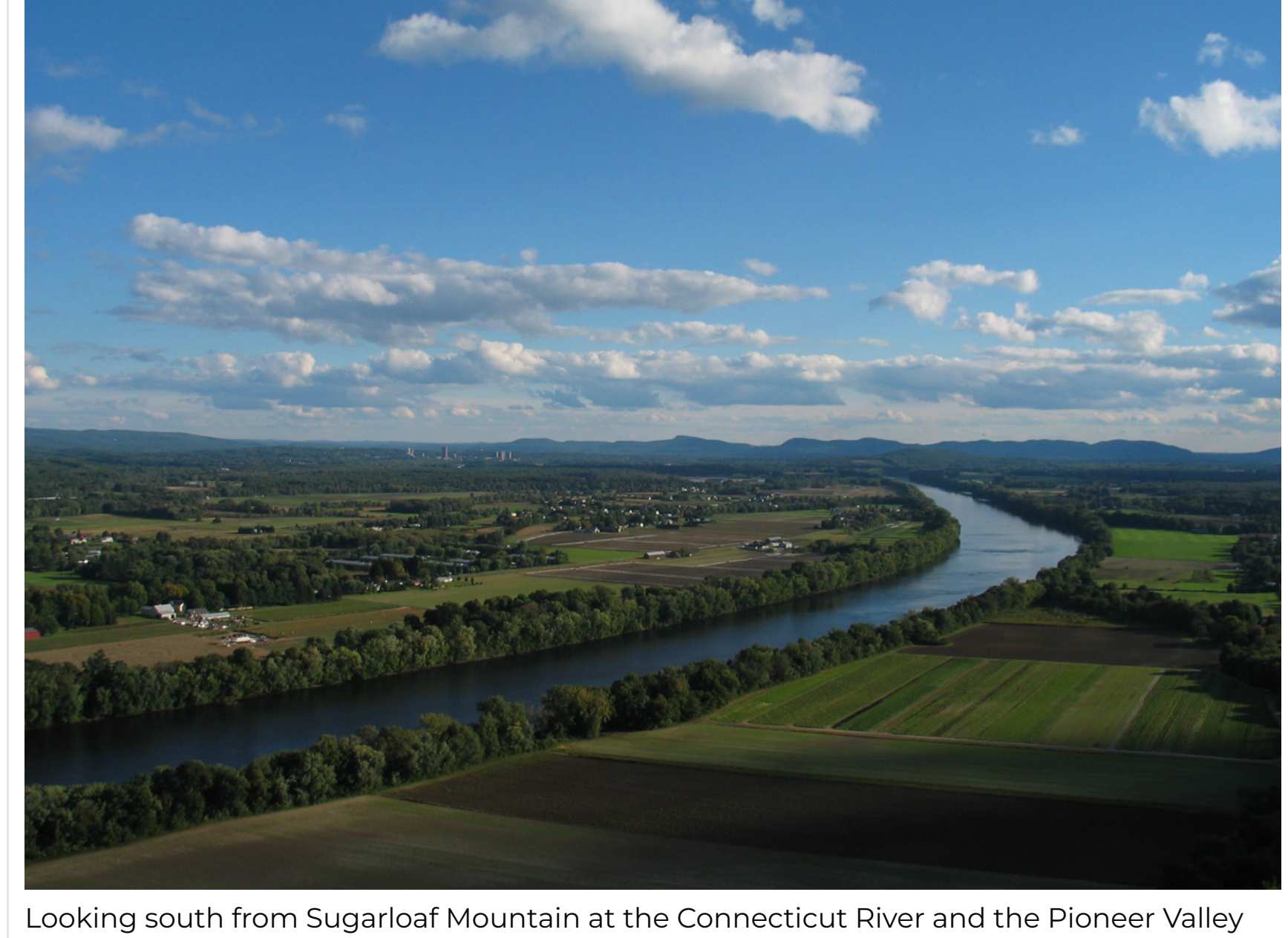
Where: Addison
Favorite trail: Old Carriage Road
Summit elevation: 1,287 feet
Elevation gain: 980 feet
Distance: 1.5 miles to summit
Summit views: 180 degrees, west-facing (perfect for sunset hikes)
Why we love it: Vermont's Green Mountains are home to some spectacular views and steep climbs, but when you're short on time and energy, you can't beat Snake. Park in the lot on Mountain Road and walk less than a quarter mile to the well-marked trailhead on the left. Follow the Old Carriage Road to the top, where you'll find a cement platform from the 1870 Grand View Hotel that was once sited here. A great spot for picnics!



On a clear day, views from Mt. Agamenticus reach as far as Mount Washington.
Courtesy of The Mount Agamenticus Conservation Region

Best Beginner Hike in Maine: Mount Agamenticus

Where: South Berwick
Favorite trail: The Big A
Summit elevation: 692 feet
Elevation gain: 337 feet
Distance: 1.7 mile (loop)
Summit views: 360 degrees
Why we love it: Most visitors to Maine's south coast head straight for the beach, and rightly so. But a detour to Mount Agamenticus, just a stone's throw from Ogunquit and Wells, will reward you with one of the best "bang for your buck" hikes in the Pine Tree state. It's ideal for families, offering a wide path and benches to rest, and there's a nature center at the top.



Looking south from Sugarloaf Mountain at the Connecticut River and the Pioneer Valley
Photo by Ben Frantz Dale / CC BY-SA 3.0

Best Beginner Hike in Massachusetts: Sugarloaf Mountain

Where: South Deerfield
Favorite trail: South Sugarloaf Trail
Summit elevation: 791 feet
Elevation gain: 452 feet
Distance: 1.4 miles (to summit)
Summit views: 360 degrees
Why we love it: Though it's a dwarf compared with the Maine mountain of the same name, this Sugarloaf has arguably the better view-to-effort ratio. Park on Sunderland Street (Route 116) or Sugarloaf Road to access the trail. It's very short but gets steeper as you near the top. Once at the summit, you can climb the lookout tower for a sweeping view of the Connecticut River and Pioneer Valley.

Best Beginner Hike in Rhode Island: Black Point Trail

Where: Narragansett
Elevation: Sea level
Distance: 0.5 mile (one way)
Views: Incredible ocean views
Why we love it: This hike isn't technically a mountain, but we still love walking this wildflower-lined path in the coastal town of Narragansett. It follows a boulder-strewn stretch of shore south toward Scarborough State Beach, passing the ruins of a carriage house for a since-destroyed estate. Scrambling out onto the rocks to listen to crashing surf and spy on sea creatures in the tide pools is a pastime that predates the Civil War. Named a 2015 *Yankee Editors' Pick* for "Best Short Hike."

What is your favorite beginner hike in every New England state?

This post was first published in 2017 and has been updated.

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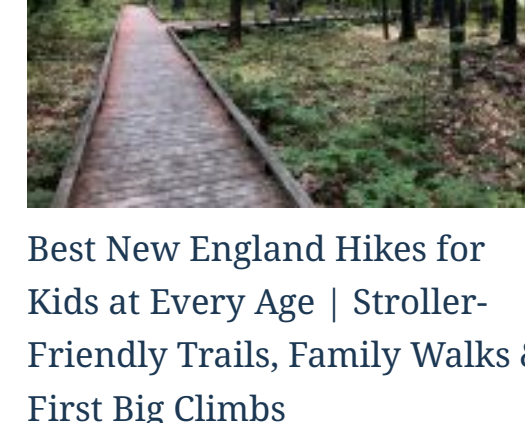
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Comments

Reader L. May 4, 2022
West rattlesnake in Holderness. No question about it. A 30 minute hike with a fantastic view of Squam Lake.
Reply

InsightHiking July 2, 2019
Hey Heather Tourgee, Superb. These article is very much helpful and informative for a new hiker or who wants to be hike. Thanks for sharing.
Reply

Jeffery F. July 23, 2018
We hiked up Haystack Mountain a couple weeks ago. There's a tower at the top that has wonderful views. It's definitely worth the hike. There's a road that you can drive up to the trail head or you can park at the gate and hike up the road to the trail head. We read that the gate is closed quite often, but it was open when we were there. If it's open, the hike ends up being only about 20 minutes long from the parking area.
If you want to park at the bottom (near the gate) and walk up the road and then the path, it will take about 40 minutes. Not a strenuous walk or hike, but a good hike nonetheless. Once you're at the top there is a tower that you climb up the stairs and have a 360° view. Again, definitely worth the hike. We also saw a sign for a trailhead at the gate at the bottom, but weren't sure if that took you to the same tower at the top.
If you are looking for a nice, not too strenuous hike that will take about an hour total from the parking area (including time in tower)- probably about 2-hours from the gate at the bottom-hike up Haystack Mountain. Please check out these best hikes also. You won't be disappointed.
Reply

Dana F. June 16, 2018
Don't forget Mt Willard in Crawford Notch, NH. Kathy and I have done many times!
Reply

Susan H. June 12, 2018
I love New England!
Reply

Bobby S. June 12, 2018
How about Monument mountain in Great Barrington,MA
Reply

David B. May 7, 2022
Love that hike. Always include hiking to Devil's Pulpit.
Reply

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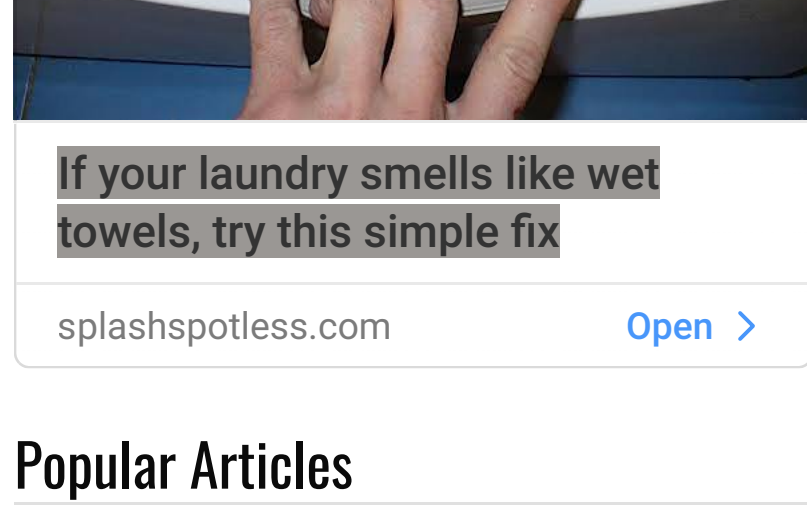
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