

Climbing Mount Waldo in Frankfort - July 2017 update

Difficulty: moderate to difficult

Distance: 3.5 miles RT

Vertical rise: 950 feet

Map: Maine Atlas and Gazetteer, Map 23, D1

Mount Waldo is notable from around Penobscot Bay as a huge white coastal dome. On a clear day at the summit, you can see far out in the ocean, far west into central Maine, even Mt. Katahdin to the north on an exceptionally clear day. It is the highest part of the Mt. Waldo granite pluton (underground bedrock mass), which encompasses Mt. Ephraim in Searsport as well.

When the North American and Eurasian plates were grinding together 350 million years ago, crushing some minor plates between them, the molten Mount Waldo granite body resulted from heat and pressure deep in the crust. Where the continents crashed together, along the Sennebec Pond Fault, the Mt. Waldo granite welded them together. Later, when the continents broke and drifted apart, the granite held parts of the continents together, and they broke apart in new ways.

Directions: Drive US 1 north from Belfast. From the bridge across the Passagassawakeag River, it is 9.9 miles to US 1A. Turn left on US 1A, drive 5.2 miles, and turn left on Spout Hill Road. From here it is 1.9 miles to Mt. Waldo Road.

The Old Quarry Trail can be found at the end of the Mt. Waldo Road. About 30 yards beyond the last house, there is a small parking area on the left. From here, the trail follows the old railroad bed half a mile to the old quarry. Granite blocks were carried by rail down to a wharf on the South Branch of Marsh Stream at the present site of the boat launch, where remains of the storage buildings are still visible. Fort Knox in Prospect was built with stone from this quarry. Caution should be taken on the cliffs around the quarry pond. Do not jump or dive into the pond. Several deaths and injuries have occurred over the years from diving into unseen boulders.

You can hike from the quarry to the summit on a mountain biking trail if you can find it. Climb the north quarry face, the one with the most graffiti, and walk behind it and past it, gradually passing the quarry pond on your left. Watch for an old woods road, and follow it a few yards, looking for pink ribbons on your left. If you can locate the pink ribboned trail, it will lead you 1.24 miles to the summit. The trail follows the contours of the mountain, making a gradual ascent over bare ledges and through rich woods. Total distance is 3.5 miles RT, 3 hours RT.

While at the summit, you will see north Penobscot Bay to the south, Islesboro, North Haven, and Vinalhaven its largest islands. Southeast the Mount Desert Range forms the horizon behind Blue Hill. Due east, Schoodic and Tunk Mountains bump out of forested landscape. Glimpses of the Penobscot River Valley and smaller lakes and ponds surround the mountain. Look down and notice the coarse-grained white granite under your feet, smoothly polished by glaciers.

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