



Bootprints

The Bimonthly Newsletter of the
Pioneer Valley Hiking Club

President's Corner:

How to Lose 7 Hikers in Less Than 2 Miles

by President Erin Squires

This year the White Mountain Sampler was led by Lori Tisdell and Jeanne Kaiser. The location was moved to Lincoln, NH. There were 50 members who signed up for the weekend. Many had positive comments about the new location and the accommodations.

I signed up for the Basin hike which was going to bring us all the way up to the Kinsman Falls. It was a short hike, less than 2 miles. Right off the bat I lost the leader of the hike. No worries as I was able to step in as the leader with no map and a slight idea of where we were going. There were 11 hikers signed up for the hike and now I was down to 10 hikers.

We all met at the Basin. We admired the power of water and sand for a few minutes and then off we went. First on the wrong trail but we were quickly corrected and then set out on the correct trail that would bring us to the falls.

Our first stop was Aliya Cascades. The trail was muddy with roots snaking around everywhere. For a short hike it had all the difficulty of some of the more difficult 4,000 footers. It was at our second lookout stop at Aliya Cascades that I lost 4 more hikers. It was a mud bath!

Down to 6 hikers we carried on to the Kinsman Falls. I was confident that I could bring back the remaining 6 hikers safely to our cars. Little did I know...

The trek up to Kinsman continued on with mud, slick rocks and tangled roots. The sound of rushing water down Cascade Brook was a song to our souls. It was a lovely hike with enough challenges to keep us alert and purposeful on our journey.

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“With all the recent rain the falls was at its full glory.”

~ Erin Squires

President’s Corner *continued from page 1*

The arrival at Kinsman Falls was well worth the ascent. With all the recent rain the falls was at its full glory. We soaked in the amazing view while slapping at mosquitos. It was better than we expected. We were in high spirits and moved even further up the trail to be on top of Kinsman Falls. From there we could see where the trail crosses Cascade Brook that leads to the Lake of the Clouds hut. The day before it was unpassable but on this day you could rock hop across. That’s when we lost 2 more hikers.

Now there was 4. We did make it safely out. No falls, no slips, and no stumbles. Our spirits were high and we were happy to have had a beautiful day to enjoy the lovely views.

Oh-no! Search and Rescue teams were called in to find the missing 7 hikers. We knew where they were the entire time. It sounded like a great title to an article.

Thank you Lori and Jeanne for organizing the White Mountain Sampler. From all the feedback I heard it was a hit!

--Erin Squires

White Mountain Sampler 2.0

by Lori Tisdell

When Al Goodhind announced his retirement from leading the White Mt. Sampler last year, Jeanne Kaiser and I knew we could not let it fade away. We decided immediately to organize it for June, 2025. I am pleased to say we had a wonderful response from the club! We had 50 attendees, many new to the Sampler and lots of returnees.

Jeanne and I decided to change the location to Lincoln, a shorter drive with equally plentiful hiking prospects. We scheduled it for the usual weekend after Father's Day. Generally, a fair-weather weekend. We received lots of positive feedback about the location with so many hiking trails, lodging, touristy attractions, restaurants, etc. We chose Pollard Brook as the suggested lodging, a resort close to everything in Lincoln, but far enough away from the hullabaloo of bike week!

Friday was a little iffy weather-wise, but morning rain changed to afternoon sunshine and comfortable temperatures. We had the usual Friday evening meeting at the picnic/outdoor area of the resort. Some of us ordered pizza from Enzo's. The hike leaders talked about their hikes as usual from previous Samplers and everyone socialized afterwards.

Saturday was a gorgeous day for hikers to enjoy spectacular views, waterfalls after the rain on Friday, and the company of friends. The hikes were Mt. Garfield (Sandy Segó), North and South Kinsman (Chip Pray/Brenda Doucette), Zealand Hut and Zeacliff (Ron Morrissette/Debbie Bombard), Sandwich Dome and Jennings Peak (Jim Brown), and the Basin and Aliya and Kinsman Falls (Erin Squires/Heather Wyman).

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Going to Zealand

(Photo by Debbie Bombard, supplied by Lori Tisdell)

"Jeanne and I decided to change the location to Lincoln, a shorter drive with equally plentiful hiking prospects."
~ Lori Tisdell

"Saturday was a gorgeous day for hikers to enjoy spectacular views, waterfalls after the rain on Friday, and the company of friends."
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“Jeanne and I hope everyone had a good time and enjoyed the weekend.”

~ Lori Tisdell

White Mt Sampler continued from page 3

A number of us enjoyed afternoon swims after their hike and relaxing by the pool. A large group of us gathered by the pool in the evening for pizza and wine. Other groups went to dinner at the local restaurants, of which there were many.

I woke up Sunday morning to a soothing patter on the hotel's metal roof. Soothing until I realized it was raining! In fact, it was pouring! Fortunately, it ended around 9:00 AM so we didn't have to drive home in it. Erin, Gary, and I stopped at a new breakfast place in Woodstock called Dijon Crepes that was excellent. There were delicious, sweet, and savory-filled crepes and croissants.

Jeanne and I hope everyone had a good time and enjoyed the weekend. We have already talked about organizing it again next year and tweaking it based on some of the feedback and how it went this year. We currently plan to go to Lincoln once again, after that, we'll see!

--Lori Tisdell

Mt. Garfield

by Sandy Segó

On June 21, four intrepid hikers set off for Mt Garfield. We left Pollard -Brook at 7:00am, and arrived at the trailhead about 7:30. Cars were already filling the parking area, showing how early some people start their hikes.

Mt Garfield is a 4,500-foot mountain in the Franconia Range of the White Mountains, and to get to the summit we used the Garfield Trail, which is 5 miles. The temperature was in the 50s when we started, but it was projected to get into the 70s, and be sunny. Perfect weather for a summit with a 360-degree view!

The trail up Garfield starts off great – soft dirt and plenty of trees. About ½ mile in, there is a water crossing – really 3 in short succession. Despite all the rain we have had this year, we were able to rock hop over and continue on our way. The trail gets more rocks and roots as you go along. It is a steady uphill climb but isn't too steep, and there are some switchbacks. It is only the last two-tenths of a mile that you have to deal with boulders. But compared to many of the 4,000-footers, it is a pretty straightforward hike.

While there were some bugs flying around, it wasn't bad as long as you kept moving. So we tried to keep our stops brief. There really aren't any features or views as you go up the trail. A few hikers passed us as we were going up, and we chatted with a couple of guys that we kept leapfrogging with.

The summit was amazing! It was a sunny day with an amazing view of the Pemigewasset Wilderness. We enjoyed our lunch and an incredible view of the White Mountains. We took lots of pictures, and decided that the bugs were really on one side of the summit.

We headed back down the same trail, passing other hikers who were on their way up. The trail seemed to get longer, and we were happy to finally reach the water crossing, because we knew we would be at See *Mt. Garfield continued on page 6*

“But compared to many of the 4,000-footers, it is a pretty straightforward hike.”

~ Sandy Segó



*“This was another
great hike at the White
Mountain Sampler!”
~ Sandy Segó*

Mt. Garfield *continued from page 5*

the cars soon. There were still plenty of cars for this popular hike when we finished.

This was another great hike at the White Mountain Sampler! I want to thank Jeanne Kaiser and Lori Tisdell for taking on the task of organizing this event with the support of Erin Squires, Ed Marrone, Brenda Doucette and Judy Alfano. The Sampler has been a staple of the PVHC for many years and one that I always look forward to. I think the change in location has revitalized the event. It was great to see new people attending and it is always fun to hear about all the different hikes people did when we get together.

--Sandy Segó

Two Hikes, One Unforgettable Day
Zealand Trails and Leadership Tales
 by Ron Morrissette

The Invitation

Just a day after the new year, I asked Lori Tisdell (one of the event leaders) how I could help with the newly revamped White Mountain Sampler trip. She immediately replied, "We will be looking for people to lead hikes if that's something you'd like to do."

Why I Chose This Hike

Zeacliff Outlook, in my opinion, offers one of the most spectacular panoramas in the White Mountains. My heart was simple: to bring people into a place I love, and to enjoy it together.

Finding a Co-leader

Early on, I decided to offer a shorter option to Zealand Falls Hut so that more people—regardless of hiking ability—could be part of the day. The trail to the hut shares much of the same route and is a beautiful destination in its own right. To make that possible, I needed someone to lead the hut group. After some initial uncertainty, I was greatly blessed to have Debbie Bombard step into that role.

Prepping the Group

The Friday night meeting—where I introduced the hike and answered questions—pushed me out of my comfort zone. Still, it went surprisingly well. Seventeen people signed up in total—twelve for the Zealand Falls Hut hike, and five for the full push to Zeacliff.

Did I take on too much? Two hikes in one? I reminded myself, I had Debbie with me!

See *Two Zealand Hikes* continued on page 8

"Zeacliff Outlook, in my opinion, offers one of the most spectacular panoramas in the White Mountains."

~ Ron Morrissette

"Early on, I decided to offer a shorter option to Zealand Falls Hut so that more people—regardless of hiking ability—could be part of the day."

~ Ron Morrissette



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Zealand Falls Hut & Zeacliff Outlook

Two Hikes in One

Hike 1	Hike 2
3.5 Miles	7.5 Miles
4:30-5:00	1:30-4:00

The Zealand Falls Hut and Zeacliff Outlook hikes are one of the most beautiful hikes in New Hampshire's White Mountains, offering amazing scenery and excellent challenges. The Zealand Falls Hike is a 3.5-mile out-and-back hike with a 1,000-foot elevation gain. The Zeacliff Outlook hike is a 7.5-mile out-and-back hike with a 2,000-foot elevation gain. Together, they offer a full day of hiking with spectacular views of the White Mountains, including Mt. Washington, Mt. Cannon, and Mt. Adams. Both hikes are well-maintained, with the Zealand Falls Hike being a popular choice for hikers looking for a challenge and the Zeacliff Outlook being a great choice for those looking for a more scenic hike.

Zealand Falls Hut & Zeacliff Outlook Hike Overview

- Hike 1: Zealand Falls Hike** (3.5 miles, 1,000 feet elevation gain)
 - Start at Zealand Falls Hut (1,000 feet elevation) and hike up to Zealand Falls (1,500 feet elevation).
 - Return to Zealand Falls Hut via the same route.
- Hike 2: Zeacliff Outlook Hike** (7.5 miles, 2,000 feet elevation gain)
 - Start at Zealand Falls Hut (1,000 feet elevation) and hike up to Zeacliff Outlook (3,000 feet elevation).
 - Return to Zealand Falls Hut via the same route.

Trail Features:

- Scenic Views:** Stunning views of the White Mountains, including Mt. Washington, Mt. Cannon, and Mt. Adams.
- Wildlife:** Opportunities to see various birds, including raptors, and other wildlife.
- Historical Sites:** Zealand Falls Hut, a historic structure built in 1880.

Trail Conditions:

- Trail 1:** Well-maintained, but can be rocky and steep in places.
- Trail 2:** Well-maintained, but can be rocky and steep in places.

Trailhead:

- Zealand Falls Hut:** Located on Zealand Falls Road, 1.5 miles north of Zealand Falls.
- Zeacliff Outlook:** Located on Zeacliff Road, 1.5 miles north of Zealand Falls.

Map for Hikers:

- Start at Zealand Falls Hut (1,000 feet elevation) and hike up to Zealand Falls (1,500 feet elevation).
- Return to Zealand Falls Hut via the same route.
- Start at Zealand Falls Hut (1,000 feet elevation) and hike up to Zeacliff Outlook (3,000 feet elevation).
- Return to Zealand Falls Hut via the same route.

Note: Hike 2 is a more challenging hike than Hike 1. Hike 2 is a more challenging hike than Hike 1.



I enjoyed creating this guide (above) for the 2025 White Mountain Sampler to help hikers decide which adventure best suited them.

Saturday Morning

At 6:12 a.m., I got a text—one more hiker, Jeanne Kaiser, was joining **the Zeacliff crew**.

By **8:00 a.m.**, sixteen of us met in the back parking lot at Pollard Brook—right on time and without a hitch. We caravanned in four vehicles, planning to meet Al and Karen at the trailhead around 9:00 a.m.



The Parking Predicament

When we arrived at the trailhead, we circled the lot and realized, to our dismay, that there were no available parking spots. For a moment, I wondered—would we have to cancel our plans? Thankfully, all our drivers managed to find legal spots along Zealand Road. See *Two Zealand Hikes continued on page 9*

Two Zealand Hikes continued from page 8

Stay Safe

We formed our typical club trailhead circle. After a few awkward words from me about the hike, everyone shared their name and hometown. Al Roman spoke up and said, "Is there anything else you want to tell us?" I hadn't prepared for that question—and I knew I should have had more to offer: better instructions, clearer guidance.

"Stay safe," I replied.



On the Trail

With spirits high and packs ready, we hit the trail. I chose to stay toward the back because I felt that's where I was most needed. The Zealand Trail leading to the pond was absolutely delightful. While the description "mostly flat" sparked some debate as we trekked among the roots and rocks. We enjoyed the richness of trail life: beautiful views of the ponds and surrounding peaks, pink lady's slippers, bunchberry flowers, and fluttering tiger swallowtails dancing through shafts of light. Then came the final steep, rocky climb up the Twinway trail to the hut. It was a bit more challenging than my memory of it. This seems to happen to me often.



See *Two Zealand Trails continued on page 10*



Two Zealand Hikes continued from page 9

At the Hut

By the time I reached the hut, Al and Karen had already set out toward Zeacliff. I was glad they felt at ease to move ahead and fully enjoy the journey at their own rhythm. The rest of us enjoyed a relaxing break—eating lunch, dipping our feet in the falls, browsing shirts and snacks, and using the restrooms.



The Push to Zeacliff

After a long rest, four of us saddled up for the final push to Zeacliff, while the other twelve prepared for the trek back to the trailhead with Debbie. We later heard they made a safe and scenic return.

The next leg began with crossing over White Falls Brook (requiring a small leap), followed by what I'd describe as a continuous climb—just over 1,000 feet of elevation gain in under a mile, with plenty of steep, rocky scrambling. Our conversations along the way helped ease the physical challenge and drew us closer to one another. We crossed paths with Karen and Al as they returned from Zeacliff—sharing trail updates and enjoyed a moment to reconnect.

The climb continued.

See *Two Zealand Trails continued on page 11*



Two Zealand Hikes continued from page 10

The View

The sign: small, understated, pointing the way.

The view? We stepped through—and were met with a sweeping panorama of the eastern Pemi-gewasset Wilderness—so glorious that photos could not dare to capture its beauty!

The bugs? Unrelenting. Let's go!



The Return – Safety First

We made our way back to the hut for one more short break. Soon we were back on the “flat and easy” trail...

Safety first. **Really?**

Reality—it was me.

My slow-motion fall: cheek met rock.

“Are you okay?”

Instinct took over. I jumped up, brushed myself off, and told my hiking companions I was fine. But was I really? I stood still for a moment and waited, evaluating myself. Thankfully, I was okay. A little shaken, mostly embarrassed—and humbled that it was I who fell. We moved more slowly now, more carefully, back to the trailhead. Adventure completed!

See *Two Zealand Trails* continued on page 12



Two Zealand Hikes continued from page 11

Final Thoughts

The feedback I received was mostly very positive. Still, as the leader, I can't help but notice everything that didn't go according to plan. So I asked others: What stood out—good or bad? Not surprisingly, their memories had little to do with distance or difficulty. Here's what they remembered most:

- A variety of stunning views: a peaceful pond with a family of ducks, another with a beaver dam, distant mountain backdrops, and an uprooted tree once balanced over a rock—now creating a round, natural frame
- Dozens of pink lady's slippers (New Hampshire's state flower), and a low-growing plant with a single row of pointed blooms lining the trail
- A single monarch butterfly that seemed to accompany us all the way to the hut
- Rocks. Rocks. And more rocks.
- Marveling at the elevation while sitting on rocks at the hut, feet dipped in cold water, gazing out above the trees
- Mossy boulders and fallen trees—lush and enchanting
- Insects (still finding new bites)
- The understated sign quietly pointing to Zeacliff
- Breathtaking views from the outlook
- How kind, encouraging, and helpful everyone was along the trail
- Great fun, great company—and the chance to meet folks like Carla!

Did everything go according to plan? No. But I set out to share the beauty I had witnessed with my fellow hikers—and to keep everyone safe. Yes, that was accomplished.

See Two Zealand Trails continued on page 13



Two Zealand Hikes continued from page 12

Gratitude & Thanks

I'm grateful for the opportunity and privilege to lead this adventure—and for all it taught me about planning, listening, and the quiet strength it takes to care for others well. Things didn't unfold perfectly, but what mattered most was given—beauty, connection, and care. And I believe God's steady hand was with us every step of the way. A heartfelt thanks to each of you who helped make this hike so special:

Zealand Falls Hut Group

Especially Debbie Bombard—without whom this adventure would not have been possible;

Nancy Seguin • Monica Bourgault • Carla Reissman • Anna Viadero • Paula Christian • Celeste Rosselli • Nora Dryjowicz • Jonathan Jay • Carol Permar • Tom Permar

Zealiff Outlook Crew

Cheryl Stevens • Jeanne Kaiser • Brenda Jorgensen • Al Roman • Karen Markham

Each of you brought encouragement, kindness, laughter, and presence. I'm thankful for every step we shared.

--Ron Morrissette



White Mountain Sampler Hike: Sandwich Dome and Jennings Peak

by Dick Forrest

One of the nicest hikes I've been on recently was a hike in the southern White Mountains of New Hampshire (NH) in the Sandwich Range called Sandwich Dome, or Sandwich Mountain (#1 on the 52 with a View list). There is a short spur trail off of the main trail that takes you to Jennings Peak (#9 on the 52 with a View list), which has a nice view of Sandwich Dome. This hike, which included both peaks, was 8 ½ miles round trip and was led by Jim E. Brown, former PVHC president. This hike was one of this year's White Mountain Sampler hikes. (The PVHC White Mountain Sampler has been an annual event of our club for over 25 years. In past years, led by Al Goodhind, we have been lodging in North Conway, NH, but this year, our new event leaders, Jeanne Kaiser and Lori Tisdell, took our club members to a new location in Lincoln, NH.)

"And this year, the weather was picture perfect. There was a gentle breeze blowing through the trees for most of the hike."

~ Dick Forrest

"The hike leader, Jim Brown, did a stellar job of leading this hike."

~ Dick Forrest

Why did I like this hike so much?

This was the third time I have climbed these peaks. And this year, the weather was picture perfect. There was a gentle breeze blowing through the trees for most of the hike. And the air temperature was comfortably in the 70's.

The hike leader, Jim Brown, did a stellar job of leading this hike. There were 11 hikers, almost evenly divided between men and women. In fact, for the most part, he kept the group together up and down the wilderness trail. Oftentimes, he would come back to the back of the pack, where I and others were, to make sure everyone was safe and enjoying the hike. Other times, he would wait for the slower hikers to catch up to the lead hikers in the group. For instance, I had not done a lot of hiking just prior to this hike, and I was one of the slower hikers. So I appreciated Jim's solicitous, caring actions as hike leader.

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Sandwich Dome continued from page 14



Sandwich Dome/Jennings Peak Hike

photo by Barbara McGowan, supplied by Lori Tisdell

The view from the top of Sandwich Dome, from my perspective, was not one of the best but it had a good view of the White Mountains to the north. (Since this mountain was number #1 on the 52 with a View list you would think that it would have a better view from the summit.) But that didn't matter to me since I knew what I was in for. The length of the hike, for me, made it a real butt-kicker. My leg muscles felt quite heavy at the end of the hike. I could tell that that was not true for others in our group. However, working out in a gym prior to the hike helped me recover more quickly.

One of the benefits of hiking with this group of people is that several of us and a couple of spouses went out to dinner together after the hike and got to know and feel more comfortable with each other, as some of us were relative strangers.

Jim Brown told me that I got him started on the 52 with a View list when I led a hike to Table and Pine at a White Mt. Sampler several years ago, two mountains on the 52 with a View list. I quipped that I had never taken him to Table and Vine (a well-known wine, spirits, beer and liquor store in West Springfield, MA). Ha, ha!

Thanks, Jim, for your great leadership and making it one of the best White Mountain Sampler hikes that I've been on.

--Dick Forrest

*"Thanks, Jim, for your great leadership and making it one of the best White Mountain Sampler hikes that I've been on."
~ Dick Forrest*



Smurfy advice for the trail...

Hiking Sticks

by John "PaPa Smurf" Klebes

When I started hiking as a small child we would pick up a walking stick or branch to use while hiking. I still see people hiking with homemade walking sticks or even intricate carved wooden staffs. Many times I've even found a stick or two left at the trailhead for the next hiker to use. We have a couple who intentionally leave carved walking sticks behind on Minnesota's North Shore trailheads with a face carved in the top of them as trail magic. I've heard stories of other trail magic hiking sticks showing up along the Appalachian Trail and other long trails, as well.

While you don't see as many people today hiking with wooden hiking poles it's definitely popular to hike with dedicated trekking poles. And for good reasons. Hiking poles provide many benefits from protecting your knees in downhill climbs, helping to push you up those steep inclines by distributing the weight over both your arms and legs, to improving your balance and keeping your back straight.

Why use hiking poles?

I've been using hiking poles since I first started to do backpacking. Never having had good balance I found the hiking poles invaluable to improving my balance and stride while hiking with the added weight of a backpack. Even without a backpack I found myself tiring easily without my hiking poles while climbing uphill and being less confident climbing down. They were also a vital safety feature for crossing streams on slippery rocks, fording streams, climbing over rocks and roots, and crossing slippery bog bridges. I don't hike any steep terrain or go backpacking without my trusty hiking poles.

I'm no medical expert but I've been told by many fellow hikers that they wished they had started hiking with poles sooner to protect their knees as they aged.

See *Hiking Sticks* continued on page 17

"Hiking poles provide many benefits...."

~ PaPa Smurf

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Choices and Features

You have many hiking pole choices available. From simply choosing a nice wooden branch from the forest to the latest high tech, carbon fiber, ultralight and collapsible technologies. For years I used a set of lightweight, used downhill skiing poles that I bought for \$2 at a garage sale. Turns out used downhill ski poles are a wonderful inexpensive option.

For years I saw people hiking with the latest high quality trekking poles from Leki, Black Diamond, Komperdell, MSR, REI and others. Top-of-the-line vendors have made many improvements over the years from the original friction lock collapsible poles, to more reliable flip-lock adjustable poles, to many advancements in lighter weight materials, sturdier and more durable designs, and improved grip materials. In addition, there have been a number of inexpensive options that have become available from places like Costco, Job Lots, and even Walmart and online.

Features:

Collapsible – While a simple straight fixed length pole works fine they take up a lot of space - you can't fit them easily in the car or a suitcase while traveling. Collapsible poles are also nice when you are hiking on roads and flat ground where you might not want to use them and can easily put them in your backpack.

Adjustable – Ideally you would want the right length of poles for your body dimensions. In addition, it's useful to have shorter poles for climbing uphill and longer poles for downhill climbs. Traversing steep slopes can be aided by having a longer pole on your downhill side and shorter pole on the uphill. It's a great feature to be able to adjust the length of your poles in addition to just be collapsible for storage. A recent improvement that I really like is the newest designs that have an extended grip area. You have the normal contoured grip but also an extended grip area below the main grip. While hiking it's See *Hiking Sticks* continued on page 18



PaPa Smurf

“You have many hiking pole choices available.”

~ PaPa Smurf

“Top-of-the-line vendors have made many improvements over the years....”

~ PaPa Smurf



*“...every ounce saved
improves your hiking
experience.”*

~ PaPa Smurf

Hiking Sticks *continued from page 17*

easy to drop your grip down the pole to effectively shorten the pole without adjusting it's length. This feature also allows the possibility of using a fixed length pole and just adjust how far up or down you grip it; thus eliminating the clamping adjustment means that is the most unreliable part of hiking pole.

Weight – every ounce saved improves your hiking experience. That said, it's a trade-off between light weight and durability. Thick aluminum or even steel poles are very strong but you have to carry that extra heavy pole with each step. Thin aluminum poles are more the norm in better brands making a good durability/weight trade off. Lately there has been major advancements in carbon fiber and ultra lightweight alloys that make extremely light poles that are also durable. But they come at a high cost and when they do fail, they fail catastrophically. Aluminum can bend a little but it takes a lot to break them. Carbon flexes some but will snap and fracture.

Grips – a good grip is more comfortable. Most grips are hard plastic and can get slippery when your hands are wet from sweat or rain; but they are very indestructible. Cork provides a good grip in wet conditions but can be nicked, cut, and damaged a little easier. Soft foam grips feel good at first but many wear down quickly with heavy use. Another feature that is nice is a second grip surface below to allow repositioning your grip lower.

Straps – they keep you from dropping and losing your poles. I've seen people lose a pole crossing streams and drop them off cliffs. It's more common than you would think. Also, if used properly, they provide additional leverage when pushing off on your poles. Look for straps that have enough adjustment to accommodate winter gloves. Many cheaper poles have very short straps that might not be long enough for thick gloves.

Tips – for hikers the most valuable tip is a high carbon, steel point that grips into the grain of rocks to provide a no-slip contact. Plain steel points work well but wear out eventually and will start to slip without
See Hiking Sticks continued on page 19

Hiking Sticks *continued from page 18*

good contact to the rocks. Be careful with rubber tips on hiking poles. Some companies make walking rubber tips that provide a good grip on many surfaces but don't work well on steep rocky surfaces. They are meant more for walking on roads and hard flat surfaces to minimize wear on the sharper rock tips and make them quieter. Also, be sure they are attached well so they don't slip off when you most need them. The rubber walking tips should not be confused with a rubber protective cover that comes with many hiking poles. These are not meant to hike with but simply protect your pole tips when stored. If they slip off or tear off while hiking you will be in for a bad fall.

Baskets – Poles by their nature like to pick up leaves that stick and accumulate on the end of your poles. Small summer baskets added to the ends of hiking poles mostly eliminate this annoyance. Most vendors include small baskets with poles and they are highly recommended. They might also include, or offer separately, larger winter baskets that are designed to keep the poles from poking all the way down in deep snow. They can be very valuable in winter but are overkill on most hikes.

Anti-Shock features – some vendors incorporate a rubber or spring-loaded shock absorption device to redistribute the stress on your knees and store and release energy to improve performance. The main advantage is that they tend to be less jolting on your elbow, wrist and knees when used on firm ground or rocky terrain. On softer ground they can feel mushy. Spring-based systems usually have a selector that lets you lock off the feature but poles with rubber shock absorbers are always on. I find it's a minimal advantage, adds weight, and is another failure point but a feature that might be of interest to try for yourself.

Techniques For Hiking with Poles

Choose a pole length that on even ground will keep your elbow at a right angle of 90 degrees. You can adjust the length a little longer on downhill and shorter for uphill climbing if they are adjustable, but See *Hiking Sticks continued on page 20*

“Choose a pole length that on even ground will keep your elbow at a right angle of 90 degrees.”

~ PaPa Smurf



“On the downhill, adjust them longer and be sure to place the poles below you first before descending.”

~ PaPa Smurf

“When hiking relatively level terrain or gentle uphills, you can use your poles to help propel yourself forward, saving energy.”

~ PaPa Smurf

Hiking Sticks continued from page 19

too long or short is hard to hike with and can stress your body.

The proper way to use the straps is to put your hands up through them and to push down on the straps with the palms.

When hiking uphill, adjust the length a little shorter or grip the poles lower so you can leverage an uphill push with your hands off the poles to help climb.

On the downhill, adjust them longer and be sure to place the poles below you first before descending. Always try to have three points of contact; two poles and a foot, or two feet and a pole. Then either move one pole or one foot at a time. This way you can adjust your weight between the three points of contact should one fail, like a bad pole placement or slip of the foot. Place two poles, move one of your feet, then the other foot; then reposition one pole then the other for the next steps. Put some of your weight onto the poles and be ready to shift weight onto or off of your feet or hand, if something slips.

On a traverse, you should adjust the length or grip to have the downhill pole longer and uphill pole shorter so that the poles keep you straight and upright on the uneven ground.

When hiking relatively level terrain or gentle uphills, you can use your poles to help propel yourself forward, saving energy. Plant your pole behind your back foot, which is the foot on the same side as the pole you're planting, and when you swing your arms in a normal walking gait, push off from the opposite pole. By engaging your arms while hiking you are also giving yourself a more full-body workout than just working your legs.

Maintenance

Something that is often overlooked is keeping your poles clean. The most common failure is a the mechanism that holds the length adjustment. If you have a friction hold, for example you twist the pole to lock in the length, take the pole sections apart and clean the
See *Hiking Sticks continued on page 21*

Hiking Sticks *continued from page 20*

surfaces. There is usually a plastic wedge that expands and grips the inside diameter of the pole. Dirt and oxides from the aluminum accumulate on the inside surface. The dirt acts like a lubricant and allows the friction hold to slip. Take a wet rag or paper towel and roll it up and insert it into the open end of the pole and clean it as best you can. Also clean the plastic wedge locking end of the pole that goes inside. The more expensive brands also sell replacements for the plastic wedge locking means. If you find your poles still slip after cleaning, these can be inexpensively replaced. Keep the inside of the pole diameter clean and dry and never apply a lubricant to the inside of the poles.

For flip-locks, the outside surface of the pole that mates with the locking mechanism should be cleaned. You can also adjust the tension nut to make the flip-lock hold tighter as parts wear.

Inspect rubber walking tips for wear and cracks and stop using them if they don't stay on tightly. A rubber tip that slips off will find you falling to the ground, too. Inspect metal tips for wear and if they still have a good edge for gripping rocks. They can wear down to a nub after heavy use and no longer provide a safe grip. Remove dirt from the tip.

Dirt should be removed before storing poles as it can hold moisture that promotes rust on non-aluminum metal parts.

Inspect straps for wear. A strap that breaks from damage or dry rot can mean a fall.

Protect your knees, improve your balance, and increase your enjoyment by considering using trekking/hiking poles on your next hike.

--PaPa Smurf

(If you have a suggestion for future topics or a hike-related question you would like covered in this column send a note to john.klebes@gmail.com)

*“Protect your knees,
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~ PaPa Smurf*



“For those over 60, hiking offers a way to stay physically active, mentally sharp, and emotionally fulfilled.”
~ Philip Werner

Hiking Over 60: A Guide to Enjoying the Trails at Any Age

by Philip Werner

In today's world, age is less of a limitation and more of a number. This is especially true when it comes to outdoor activities like hiking. For those over 60, hiking offers a way to stay physically active, mentally sharp, and emotionally fulfilled. Whether you're returning to a once-beloved activity or just discovering the joys of the trail, hiking is one of the most accessible and rewarding ways to connect with nature and yourself. This article explores everything you need to know about hiking after 60: why it's worth your time, how to prepare, and how to do it safely and joyfully.

Why Hiking is Perfect for the Over-60 Crowd

1. Physical Health Benefits

As we age, maintaining cardiovascular health, muscle strength, balance, and flexibility becomes even more important. Hiking, as a low-impact aerobic activity, checks all these boxes:

- **Cardiovascular Fitness:** Even moderate hiking can elevate your heart rate, promoting heart and lung health.
- **Muscle and Bone Strength:** Uphill climbs and uneven surfaces engage various muscle groups and improve bone density.
- **Balance and Coordination:** Walking on natural terrain sharpens reflexes and stabilizes your balance, reducing the risk of falls.
- **Weight Management:** Hiking helps burn calories, making it easier to maintain a healthy weight.

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2. Mental and Emotional Wellness

The benefits of spending time in nature are well-documented:

- **Reduced Stress and Anxiety:** Natural settings reduce cortisol levels and promote a sense of calm.
- **Improved Mood:** Exposure to sunlight boosts serotonin and vitamin D levels, helping to ward off depression.
- **Cognitive Clarity:** Walking in nature has been linked to better memory, attention span, and creative thinking.

3. Social Connection

Group hikes or hiking clubs offer a valuable opportunity to make new friends and foster social bonds, an important aspect of mental health in later life. The Appalachian Mountain Club hosts many volunteer-led hikes for all levels of difficulty and experience. Check out their schedule of hikes led by trained volunteer trips and courses. You don't have to be a member to join in the fun, although you might want to join to help support their mission.

Getting Started: Preparation and Planning

Hiking doesn't require elite fitness or expensive gear, but a little preparation goes a long way.

1. Check with Your Healthcare Provider

Before starting a new physical routine, it's wise to consult your doctor, especially if you have conditions like arthritis, diabetes, or cardiovascular concerns. Your doctor can help assess your readiness and may even recommend it as part of your health regimen.

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“Group hikes or hiking clubs offer a valuable opportunity to make new friends and foster social bonds, an important aspect of mental health in later life.”
~ Philip Werner



Hiking Over Sixty continued from page 23

2. Start Small and Build Up

If you're new to hiking:

- Begin with easy trails on level ground.
- Gradually increase the distance and elevation.
- Listen to your body—rest when needed and hydrate regularly.
- Hiking, which involves walking over uneven surfaces, is very different than urban walking, so give yourself some time to acclimate to its physical demands.

3. Set Realistic Goals

Define what success looks like for you. It might be walking 3 miles twice a week, reaching a specific peak, or simply enjoying nature for an hour every Saturday.

Essential Gear for Hikers Over 60

The right gear enhances safety and comfort, especially for mature hikers.

1. Footwear

- Invest in high-quality hiking boots, trail shoes, or trail runners with good arch support and ankle stability. Don't be afraid to experiment with different footwear.
- Consider using insoles, like Superfeet, especially if you already wear them in your street shoes. They can provide additional arch support or cushioning, not provided in hiking footwear.

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“The right gear enhances safety and comfort, especially for mature hikers.”

~ Philip Werner

Hiking Over Sixty *continued from page 24*

- Break in new shoes at home or during short walks before you take them hiking.
- Avoid blisters by wearing wool or synthetic socks. Cotton socks trap perspiration and can cause terrible blisters.
- If you feel friction inside your shoes or a hotspot, **STOP**, even if you're in a group. Put a piece of tape over the spot to prevent a blister from forming. No one will think less of you for paying attention to your feet.

*“If you feel friction inside your shoes or a hotspot, **STOP**, even if you're in a group.”*

~ Philip Werner

2. Clothing

- Wear moisture-wicking wool or synthetic fabrics to stay dry. Avoid cotton clothing which provides little sun protection.
- A hat and sunglasses also protect against sun exposure.
- Dress in layers to adapt to changing weather. For example, carrying a sweater and a rain jacket can keep you warm or dry across a wide range of conditions.

3. Trekking Poles

These are especially helpful for those over 60:

- Provide balance on uneven terrain.
- Reduce strain on knees and hips during descents.
- Improve posture and upper body engagement.

See Hiking Over Sixty continued on page 26



Hiking Over Sixty continued from page 25

4. Backpack Essentials

- Water bottle or hydration system: Stay hydrated, especially in hot or dry climates. Try to drink a liter or water every 2 hours.
- Healthy snacks: Nuts, fruit, or an old-fashioned sandwich.
- Navigation tools: Paper map (preferred) or a smartphone with offline maps.
- First aid kit: Include medications, blister care, and basic supplies.
- Weather protection: Lightweight rain jacket.

Safety Tips for Older Hikers

1. Know Your Limits

Your endurance and pace may differ from others. That's okay. Take breaks, don't rush, and turn back if you're feeling unwell or overtired.

2. Tell Someone

Always let someone know your planned route and expected return time, especially when hiking solo. This is especially important in rural areas without good cell phone connectivity.

3. Avoid Slippery or Steep Trails

Stick to trails appropriate for your skill level. Many trail apps and guidebooks state difficulty and conditions. Use them to plan accordingly.

4. Be Weather-Wise

Check forecasts before heading out. Avoid hiking during extreme temperatures, heavy rain, or thunderstorms.

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Hiking Over Sixty continued from page 26

5. Watch for Wildlife and Plants

Stay aware of your surroundings. Know how to respond to wildlife and avoid contact with toxic plants like poison ivy or oak.

Finding Trails That Suit You

Not all trails are created equal. Thankfully, there are many ways to find ones suitable for older adults:

- **AllTrails** and **Hiking Project**: Apps with user reviews, difficulty ratings, and trail maps.
- **Local Parks and Nature Reserves**: Often have well-maintained, easy-to-moderate trails.
- **National and State Parks**: Many offer senior discounts and guided walks.
- **Hiking Clubs**: Organizations including the Appalachian Mountain Club or local walking groups welcome adults of all ages.

How to Stay Motivated

1. Team Up

The surest way to start hiking regularly is to team up with a friend and start hiking together once or twice a week together. You'll motivate each other and learn faster if you share notes about your experiences and the new hiking skills that you pick up.

2. Track Your Progress

Use apps or journals to log hikes, distance, and feelings. It's rewarding to see how far you've come.

3. Join a Community

Being part of a larger hiking group provides motivation, accountability, and friendship. Most experienced hikers welcome newcomers, regardless of age or experience.

See *Hiking Over Sixty* continued on page 28

"The surest way to start hiking regularly is to team up with a friend and start hiking together once or twice a week together."

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Hiking Over Sixty continued from page 27

4. Celebrate Milestones

Whether it's your 10th hike or your longest distance yet, celebrate it. Treat yourself to a nice meal or a new piece of gear.

Adapting to Changing Abilities

Aging doesn't mean giving up hiking—it means hiking smarter.

- **Knees aching?** Shorter hikes, gentler inclines, and poles help.
- **Vision issues?** Choose well-marked, wider paths.
- **Balance concerns?** Trekking poles, flat trails, and hiking with a buddy add confidence.

Listen to your body and adapt. Flexibility in expectations leads to long-term enjoyment.

FAQs: Hiking Over 60

Q: Am I too old to start hiking?

Absolutely not. Many people start in their 60s, 70s, or even later. Start small and build confidence over time.

Q: What if I hike alone?

It's best to start with a partner or group. If you must hike solo, choose well-populated trails, carry a phone or satellite messenger, and tell someone your plans.

Q: What if I have arthritis or joint pain?

Talk to your doctor. Hiking can often help manage arthritis, especially with proper footwear, poles, and gentle terrain.

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Hiking Over Sixty continued from page 28

Final Thoughts: The Trail Awaits

Hiking after 60 is not only possible—it's one of the most life-affirming activities you can undertake. With thoughtful preparation, the right gear, and a positive mindset, the trails open up a new chapter of exploration, health, and fulfillment.

Age might change how we hike, but it doesn't have to stop us from doing it. Whether it's a quiet walk through your local woods or a challenging mountain ascent, hiking connects you to the world around you—and perhaps more importantly, to yourself.

So lace up your shoes, grab your trekking poles, and step into the journey. The best trail might just be the one you're about to take.

--Philip Werner

About the Author

Philip Werner is the author of [Hiking Over 60: A Modern Guide to Hiking Gear and Techniques for Active Adults](#) (PhilipWerner.com) available in bookstores and online. Aged 65, he's an avid hiker who's climbed all 48 of the New Hampshire 4000 footers in every calendar month of the year, also known as "The Grid." In the past, he's been a 4-season hiking leader for the Appalachian Mountain Club, a trail maintainer for the US Forest Service, a Master Educator for Leave No Trace, and a backpacking guide with Andrew Skurka Adventures.

"Hiking after 60 is not only possible—it's one of the most life-affirming activities you can undertake."

~ Philip Werner



Future Club Events

2025

July 26-27 - (NH) Beginners Backpack at Dort Shelter, Chesterfield, NH, organized by Karen Markham

August 9-17 - (VT/NH) AT NOBO Section Hike organized by Lars Brown

August 10 - (MA) Club Picnic organized by Gary Dolgoff and Lori Tisdell

August 19-30 - (NH) 52 With a View organized by Jim E. Brown

August 31-Sept 5 - (ME) Lily Bay State Park Maine Camping Trip organized by Karen Markham

September 18-21 - (NY) Johns Brook Lodge Backpack organized by Karen Markham

October 20-24 - (MA) Cape Cod Trip organized by Cheryl Stevens & Debbie Bombard

December 6 - (MA) Holiday Party organized by Karen Markham, Al Roman & Lani Giguere

PVHC 2025-2026 Executive Board



Left to Right: Brenda Doucette, Secretary; Judy Alfano, Treasurer;
Erin Squires, President; Ed Marrone, Vice President

Important Membership Renewal Notices

The following memberships are up for renewal:

July Renewals

Rick Briggs
 Jeff Brown
 Kathy Brown
 Elizabeth Case
 Pam Chandler
 Amy & Len Cohen
 Tina Garde & Mike Gross
 Constance Janik
 Jeanne Kaiser
 Wendy & Jerry Long
 Patrick Love
 Patricia Meyerson
 Jeffrey & Marian Parentella
 Norm Plante
 Fred Riotte
 Robert Schechtman & Lisa Frigo
 Kathy Schlichtig
 Sandy Segó
 Ina St. Germain
 Carol Wood
 Bill Wright

August Renewals

Virginia Ahearn
 Harry Allen
 Marie Bienvenue & Al Gagliarducci Jr.
 Stephanie & Santiago Bustos
 Patricia Davison
 Deidre Doherty
 Thomas Harrington
 Joseph and Judith Haseltine
 Karen Hidalgo
 Gabriela Horvay
 Dan Klimoski
 Rita Liberti
 Susan Lucks
 Jeanne Lynch
 Donna (Mo) Mosley
 Ann (MaryAnn) Mundy
 Daniel Price & family
 Carla Reissman & Ted Kennedy
 Shari Scott-Smith
 Joe & Noel Stella
 Gabriele (Gabi) Strauch
 Deidra Torff
 Patricia Watson
 Nina Wilder

Please renew early, and renew by mail. (Make checks payable to Pioneer Valley Hiking Club (PVHC)) Mail your renewal with your name and any address or phone number changes to:

Pioneer Valley Hiking Club
 PO Box 225
 West Springfield, MA 01089
 (Dues are: \$25 individual member, \$40 family, and \$15 for students)

Pioneer Valley Hiking Club Officers

Erin Squires, President
 Ed Marrone, Vice President
 Judy Alfano, Treasurer
 Brenda Doucette, Secretary
 Ray Tibbetts, Founder

Standing Committee Chairs

Hike Schedule: Jos Brannan & Lori Tisdell
 Backpacking Advisor: Rick Briggs
 Trail Maintenance: Chip Pray & Rob Schechtman
 Club Website Editor: Dick Forrest
 Non-Member E-mail Coordinator: Rob Schechtman
 Quartermaster: Mike Carrier
Bootprints Newsletter Editor: Dick Forrest

Bootprints is a publication of the Pioneer Valley Hiking Club. Please email your story/event contributions to Dick Forrest at: dforrest@charter.net

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

May

Monica Bourgault
 Regina Crimmins
 Laura Deforge
 Ann Matthews & Clark (Skip)
 Colleen Murray
 Michelle & Don Salva
 Sara Scagliarini & Richard Rabor
 Therese Williams

June

Raymond Bourbeau
 Wendy Dudas
 James (Brad) Permar
 Donna & Dave Slozak
 Brian & Rita Toole
 Pamela Wright



UPCOMING EVENTS AND THE USUALS

- Mondays Morning hike
- Tuesdays Morning bike ride
& Evening hike
- Wednesdays Morning hike
- Thursdays Morning hikes (2)
- Fridays Occasional hike
- Saturdays Morning hike
- Sundays Morning hike
- Aug 5 Club Meeting
- Sept 2 Club Meeting
- PVHC [https://teamup.com/
ksz8qkbizhndt3qjt7](https://teamup.com/sz8qkbizhndt3qjt7)
- Schedule of Events

IMPORTANT NOTICES

Next Club Meetings

August 5, 2025, 7 p.m. at **ROC**
 September 2, 7 p.m. at **ROC**

**ROC - Red Oak Church, 337 Piper Road, West
 Springfield**

Deadline for submissions to the next *Footprints*
 is August 20, 2025

**** Check out our club website at:**
www.pioneervalleyhikingclub.org

Members may join the PVHC Email List by
 sending a message to:
pvhc.hikingclub@gmail.com



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