

HIKING TRAILS

Hikers can choose from many one-day or multi-day hikes on 30 miles of the white-blazed Appalachian Trail and the blueblazed side trails. A popular, though strenuous, day-hiking loop runs via the Fire Warden's Trail, Appalachian Trail, and Horns Pond Trail for a total of 12.3 miles. This loop includes several scenic vistas and Old Man's Head, a point of interest just below Avery Peak on a southward spur off the AT. Appalachian Trail (AT) (strenuous/difficult, 17.6 miles) traverses the seven peaks of the Bigelow Mountain range along 17.6 miles of this National Scenic Trail. This classic ridge walk includes significant elevation gain and loss. Eastern section is commonly referred to as the Little Bigelow Trail, a moderate to difficult route passing a lean-to, a series of pools, plus wonderful views of the Bigelow Range. In addition there are 14.8 miles of blue-blazed side trails managed as part of the AT system. Access: East Flagstaff Road and Safford Brook Trailheads. Esker Trail (easy, 4.0 miles) is a flat ungroomed singletrack forested trail that follows the old 1960's haul road. Built for mountain bikes and maintained by NEMBA. Access: Fire Warden's trailhead.

Fire Warden's Trail (moderate to difficult, 4.6 miles) provides the shortest route to Avery Peak or West Peak from the south side of the Bigelow Range. Follow Stratton Brook Pond Road 0.4 mile east to Stratton Brook and another 0.4 mile east to the fork. Take the north fork (left) 0.3 miles to the old trailhead clearing. The trail bears northeast along an old tote road and ascends gradually to the intersection with the Horn's Pond Trail. Moose Falls Campsite is located about I mile further up the Fire Warden's Trail. Shortly after this the trail ascends steeply for the last 0.7 mile until the Fire Warden's Trail ends at the AT. Access: Stratton Brook Pond Road off Route 16/17.

Range Trail (moderate to difficult, 4.6 miles) begins at the western end of the Bigelow Range on a woodland trail, a gradual climb begins at .3 miles along a wide logging road and rises to barren ledges at about 2 miles, passing the waterless Arnold's Well, then up the ledges to several views before topping out at Cranberry Peak. The eastward descent is equally short and steep before moderate terrain leads to the north shore of Cranberry Pond before meeting the AT. Access: Currie Street off Route 16/27.

Safford Brook Trail (moderate to difficult, 2.2 miles) climbs gradually through forested lands crossing Safford Brook about 0.7 miles above East Flagstaff Road. The trail progressively steepens until it reaches the junction with the Appalachian Trail near Safford Notch, an area renowned for its "housesized" boulders. Access: East Flagstaff Road off Long Falls Dam Road from Route 16.

The Approach Trail (easy, 1.75 miles) follows an old road for an easy 0.25 miles before starting the ascent to the hut and conneting with Maine Huts & Trails routes. Access: Stratton Brook Pond Road off Route 16/27.