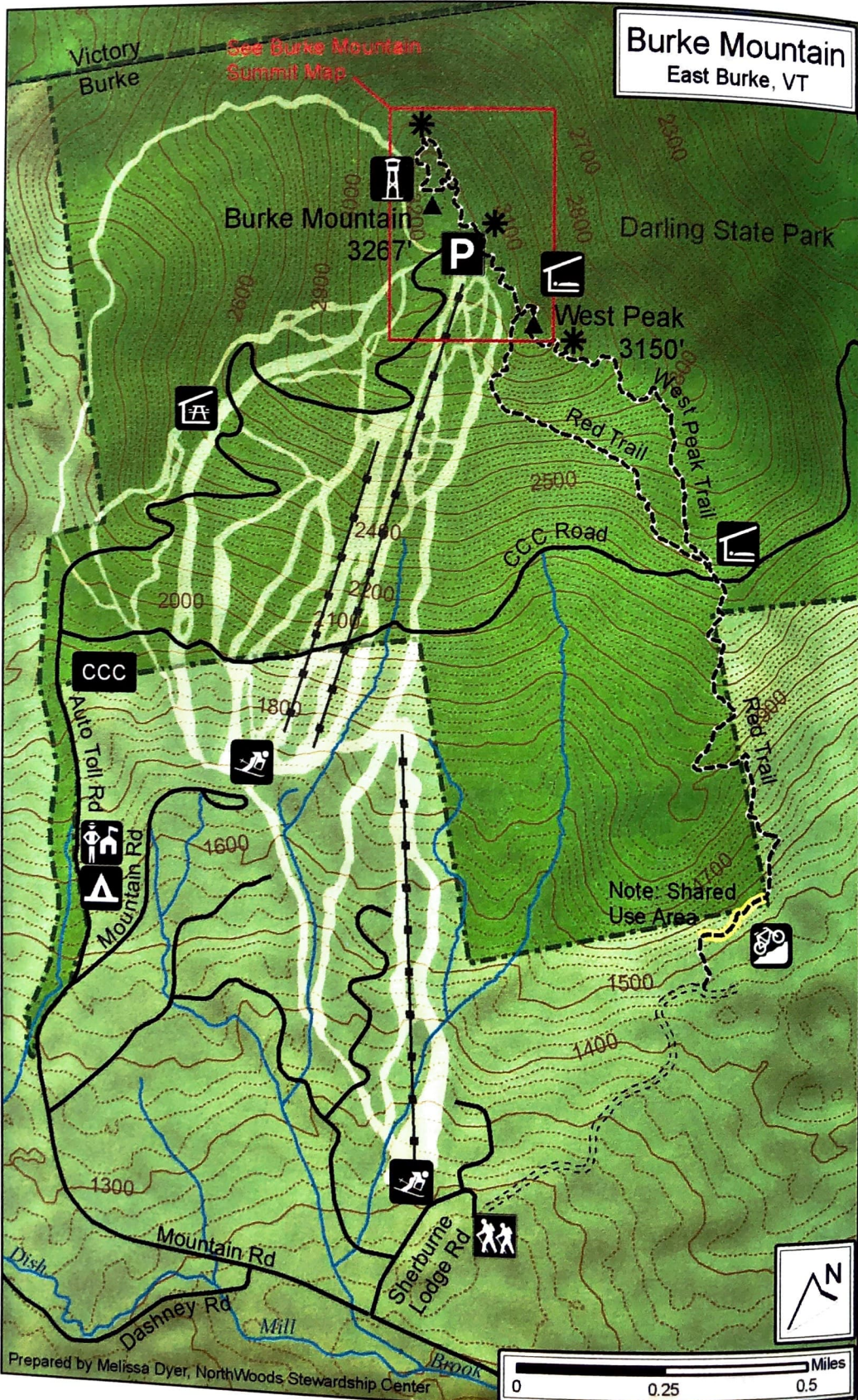


Northeast Kingdom Mountain Trail Guide





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which climbs from the CCC Road up to the mountain's less-developed western summit. Remnants of their work, including lean-tos and picnic areas in use today, can be found throughout the area.

The Red Trail, a newer route, accesses the CCC Road from the base of the mountain and continues up, following an alternate route to the West Peak, where it joins both the West Peak and Summit Trails.

The trailhead for Burke Mountain is located in the lower parking area of the Sherburne Base Lodge at the Burke Mountain Ski Area. From Vermont Route 114 in East Burke Village, follow the Mountain Road east approximately 1.1 miles to Sherburne Lodge Road on the right. The trailhead begins at the far edge of the lower parking area near a State Forest kiosk.

**RED TRAIL-** From the trailhead (0.0 mi.), the Red Trail leaves the parking area near a kiosk and follows a woods road where, passing around a gate, it climbs gradually and soon skirts the edge of a recent clearing (0.3 mi.). Continuing on, the road bends south and, a short distance further, reaches a signed junction (0.6 mi.) where the Red Trail turns left and enters the woods. At first following an old logging trace, the trail soon bears left and crests a low rise before joining a well-worn mountain bike trail, the Kirby Connector (0.7 mi.).

**NOTE:** *The Kirby Connector is a SHARED USE TRAIL. Please show courtesy to other trail users and yield to on-coming bicycles.*

Turning right, the trail follows a well-drained and level plateau with a steep and open hardwood slope on the left. Soon the trail crosses a blazed boundary and enters Darling State Forest (0.8 mi.) and a short distance ahead reaches a second trail junction (0.9 mi.). Here, the Red Trail turns left and proceeds onward towards the mountain summit while the Kirby Connector bike trail bears right, leaving the State Forest. This marks the end of the brief shared use section of trail.

From the junction, the Red Trail climbs gradually through rich open hardwoods, crossing a number of small steps and waterbar structures before passing a number of towering ash and sugar maples. Turning left, the trail winds moderately, then steeply uphill, turning right at the base of a rocky slope (1.0 mi.) and then, switching back to the left, climbing over a loose rocky grade. At the top of the slope, the trail

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moderates somewhat and climbs easily to a low gap where a break in the ridgeline forms a wooded col (1.3 mi.).

Continuing from the col, the Red Trail (now firmly located along the mountain's western ridge) begins to climb in earnest. From this scenic locale, which features open hardwoods and ledge outcroppings, the trail scrambles up a steep slope and begins to pass over a series of 'benches' as it works its way up the ridgeline. Winding upwards, the trail moderates slightly and parallels the top of a steep slope where large red spruce and limited views present themselves. After climbing over exposed bedrock and skirting the edge of a mossy outcrop, the trail descends briefly and then climbs once more over open bedrock to a prominence (1.6 mi.) that offers a broad vantage of the forested basin below and to the left. From here, the trail once again climbs to a softwood knoll and, a short distance ahead, reaches a level bench and the junction with the CCC Road (1.7 mi.).

**CCC Road-** The CCC Road is reached via the Burke Mountain Toll Road, approximately 0.5 miles beyond its junction with the Mountain Road. Beginning very near the site of the 1930's CCC encampment, the CCC Road was constructed as a fire road and crosses the mountain's mid-slope on the west side before bending south and east towards Victory.

Constructed in the typical manner of the Civilian Conservation Corps (albeit somewhat weathered by the ages), the CCC Road is a well-laid sidehill route with large drainage structures and detailed stonework. From the Auto Road junction (0.0 mi.), the CCC Road passes through forested slopes before emerging into the first of several alpine ski trails (0.1 mi.), where there are excellent views to the west- particularly of Bald Mountain, Willoughby Gap and the chain of hills extending south towards Sutton and Wheelock.

Crossing under Burke's summit quad chair lift (0.5 mi.), the CCC Road soon reaches the Willoughby (Ski) Trail and, on the other side, enters the forest again (0.7 mi.). From here the trail passes a number of gladed trails cut on the slope to the left but, leaving the ski area boundary, soon enjoys a relatively long span of uninterrupted forest. While the road's utility has been diminished with the passing of time, it is impressive to behold the quality and



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craftsmanship that went into constructing this fire road.

The CCC Road crosses paths with the Red Trail (1.2 mi.) near a log lean-to constructed on the mountain circa 1934 and continues southerly, at one point passing between a low knoll and a large rock boulder slope on the left. At 2.0 miles, the trail reaches a second log lean-to and shortly thereafter a side trail (2.1 mi.) that climbs up from the Kirby area (this route closely approximates the historic Burrington Trail). Continuing around the mountain, the CCC Road turns to the east and eventually reaches the State Forest Boundary (2.6 mi.) and, following a town road, reaches the junction with the Kirby Mountain Road in Victory (4.6 mi.).

Continuing beyond the CCC Road, the Red Trail climbs several rock steps and enters an open birch grove, reaching a CCC log lean-to and the junction with the West Peak Trail. The lean-to is built in the classic 'Adirondack' style, a stout, three-sided log structure with a stone fire pit, and offers shelter to campers and skiers. It is a Carry-in, Carry-out facility. Please remove all trash and follow Leave No Trace practices.

From the CCC Road and lower Lean-to site (1.7 mi.), the Red Trail continues to climb towards the West Peak, following a parallel course that lies just north of the mountain's western ridge. The trail enters the forest on the north side of the lean-to, passing between a large boulder and ledge outcrop before climbing up and over a small knoll overlooking the CCC lean-to. Following a sidehill slope through open hardwoods, the trail passes several mossy outcrops and a brief view of the West Peak above. Rounding a bend, the trail enters a shallow ravine and, crossing a stream, climbs steeply up the far bank before leveling once more.

Crossing a seasonal stream on a log bridge (1.9 mi.), the trail soon enters an open white birch glade where moderate grades persist. Continuing on, however, the trail begins to climb more steeply and, passing over a small ledge, soon enters an increasingly softwood forest (2.0 mi.). Climbing a number of log steps and crossing several seasonal drainages, the trail passes an opening where a short spur leads north to an open ski slope (2.3 mi.) and soon turns up the mountain slope, making a determined ascent up a series of winding switchback turns. With the open slope of the Willoughby Trail nearby on the left,

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the Red Trail begins to crest the height of land and soon reaches a five-way insection and the junctions with the West Peak and Summit Trails (2.4 mi.).

From here, the West Peak summit and second CCC log lean-to are accessed by a short spur trail on the right or by following the more round-about and scenic West Peak Trail (ahead and to the right, signed and marked in blue). Directly ahead, the Summit Trail leads to the true summit of Burke Mountain and provides access to the fire lookout tower, summit marker, several scenic vistas, the Toll Road parking area, and the Profile Trail loop. An informal spur trail on the left leads to an open ski slope a short distance away.

**Total distance:** approximately 2.4 mi., elevation gain: 1950 feet

**WEST PEAK TRAIL-** The West Peak Trail (also referred to as the Blue Trail due to its marking color) is one of the oldest trails on Burke Mountain, constructed by the CCC in the 1930's. The route follows the mountain's western ridge and makes a determined climb to the West Peak. It preserves the isolated and undeveloped sense of the lower Red Trail and explores a number of scenic landscapes and vistas. For these and a number of other reasons, it is, in the opinion of many, the preferred route to the mountain summit.

From the CCC shelter and Red Trail junction (0.0 mi.), the West Peak Trail scrambles up a steep slope and continues to climb up the ridge-line, offering limited views through the trees, including the first glimpses of Willoughby Gap to the west. A short distance ahead, the trail views the West Peak for the first time.

Soon the trail enters a mountain thicket dominated by ferns, hobble-bush, yellow birch, mountain maple, mountain ash and choke cherry. Climbing over a rock ledge, the trail levels and crosses a mountain stream (0.2 mi.) before continuing up a ridge surrounded by white birches. Crossing a second seasonal stream, the trail climbs up a draw and passes a wooded and rocky prominence on the right (0.3 mi.).

Continuing up a rocky ledge, the trail passes into the higher elevation forest where the pungent smell of softwoods fills the air. From this point on, the trail begins to pass alternately over weathered bedrock,



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roots and thin mountain soils as it wends its way among small fern glades, open forest and rock ledges. Similarly, the trail makes a series of steep rocky climbs followed by moderately level sidehill traverses as it switches back and forth up the slope.

Soon the trail emerges onto the rocky shoulder of the West Peak where the harsh climate, thin soils, and stunted softwoods create numerous trailside vantages. Climbing a rocky slope, the trail rises to a fine southwestern prospect (0.6 mi.), offering extensive views from the Sheffield/Sutton Range south to Wheelock Mountain, Stannard Mountain and the Kittredge Hills and across the Passumpsic Valley to Kirby Mountain's forested slopes in the immediate foreground.

From here, the trail climbs past stunted softwoods, weathered bedrock, lichens and grasses and soon enters a larger softwood forest where it reaches the summit of Burke Mountain's West Peak (elev. 3150 ft.) and a second CCC lean-to (0.7 mi.). Here in a small dark clearing, the West Peak Trail continues by the shelter to the southeast and a short and informal spur trail leads northeast towards the Red Trail, the Burke Mountain Ski Area, and the mountain summit.

Passing the lean-to, the West Peak Trail soon emerges from the softwood forest and again passes over weathered bedrock surrounded by stunted evergreens. Here, the first of three open vistas affords long-range views to the south and east. Kirby Mountain's long forested ridge is immediately recognizable with the lower Passumpsic River Valley spreading out to the south. Below to the east lies Victory Basin and Miles Mountain with the White Mountains in the distance. The Connecticut River Valley is just visible above Kirby Mountain and Interstate 93 can be seen winding southeast towards Franconia Notch. Here, Cannon Mountain (and its open ski slopes) is obvious on the south side of the notch while Mount Lafayette and Garfield rise to the north. Due east, Mount Washington and the Presidentials rise in the distance and, to the far left, the Burke Mountain summit is visible with its communications and fire towers.

Descending briefly, the trail passes a second, lower vista and then, rounding a bend, a third viewpoint. Both vantages offer similar views from slightly different aspects. Turning north, however, the trail levels and, passing limited views of the mountain summit to the right, soon reaches the upper junction with the Red Trail (0.8 mi.).

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Here, at a five-way junction, a number of trails converge. To the left, leading uphill, a short spur leads to the West Peak Lean-to. Ahead, the Red Trail, marked with a sign and blazed in red, leads back down the mountain. To the right, a short and somewhat poorly defined spur leads past abandoned stone firepits to an open ski slope. To the east (opposite the Red Trail), the Summit Trail leads away towards the summit area, fire tower and Profile Trail.

**Total distance:** approximately 0.8 mi., elevation gain: 840 feet

**SUMMIT TRAIL-** The Burke Mountain Summit Trail begins at the upper junction of the Red and Blue Trails near the West Peak and accesses the main summit area of the mountain. Wending along relatively level, high elevation terrain, the Summit Trail also passes many interesting features as it skirts the busy ski and broadcast facilities atop Burke Mountain. The Trail, unmarked with paint blazes but signed at key intersections, travels across an area that has seen active human occupation and development since the 1800's. Past relics are ubiquitous- some obvious (such as the Toll Road, ski lift, and summit broadcast station) and some more subtle (abandoned campsites, weathered signs, and seldom visited vistas). Remarkably, it is still possible to hike to the summit of Burke Mountain and remain relatively undistracted from these developments.

From the junction with the Red and West Peak Trails (0.0 mi.), the Summit Trail begins its winding course and descends ever so slightly southeast into the saddle between the mountain's two peaks. Parallel- ing a nearby ski trail on the left, the trail passes the remains of several CCC-era firepits and, bending towards the ski trail, an old wooden sign indicating a long-abandoned campground. A log lean-to, identical in design to those on the Red and West Peak Trails, sits quietly in the underbrush, its roof dislodged and tipped forward.

Turning away from the shelter, the trail bends south and passes an opening that provides limited views. Climbing a series of old rock steps (likely of CCC construction), the trail again approaches the ski area boundary, this time emerging (via a very short spur) at the edge of one of the open slopes directly adjacent to the summit parking area (0.1 mi.). The opening offers views to the west where Willoughby Gap and Bald Mountain are clearly visible. The ski patrol hut sits on the far side of the ski trail. Turning back into the woods, the trail



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skirts the edge of the parking area and, descending briefly, passes an outcrop overlooking Kirby Mountain. Bending left, the trail crosses open bedrock and soon reaches a spur junction. (0.2 mi.).

**South Vista Spur-** Beginning at the summit parking area on Burke Mountain, the South Vista Spur Trail leaves the clearing on the southeast side directly adjacent to a large Darling State Park trailhead sign. Entering the softwood forest, the spur immediately crosses the Summit Trail and continues south (past a 'Vista' sign) approximately 150-feet to a small ledge outcropping that offers fine views to the south. The Kirby Mountain ridgeline fills the foreground while Cannon Mountain and the Franconia Notch area are visible in the distance.

Continuing past the vista spur, the Summit Trail continues eastward, passing a bootleg trail that returns to the summit parking area and following a sidehill grade that skirts the main summit area. After a short distance, the trail soon reaches the lower junction with the Profile Trail (0.3 mi.).

**Profile Trail-** The Profile Trail (sometimes also called the Under Profile Trail) loops around the east side of the mountain where it passes beneath an impressive rock face (profile) before climbing over the mountain's true summit. From the lower junction with the Summit Trail (0.0 mi.), the Profile Trail descends slightly and follows a nearly straight, sidehill course as it circles the east side of the summit knoll. Descending a series of old rock steps, the trail passes close to an outcrop and bears left through thick young softwoods. Climbing now, the trail follows the base of a tall ledge and, rounding a bend to the right, passes under a large overhanging outcrop, some 30-feet in height (0.1 mi.). Continuing, the trail bears left again and climbs over mossy rocks to a junction with the Profile Vista.

**Profile Vista-** From the Profile Trail, a short spur leads southeast approximately 120-feet to the top of the Profile Rock itself.

**CAUTION:** *the open rock atop the Profile Vista drops precipitously to the forest (and rocks!) below, posing a serious risk to hikers. Please enjoy this area responsibly- keep children close and leash dogs.*



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The view from Profile Rock is extensive, providing unimpeded views to the north, east and south. In the north, Gore Mountain looms low in the distance with Deer Hill (a small local prominence) in the foreground below and Seneca, East, East Haven, and Umpire Mountains to the right. New Hampshire's Percy Peaks and West Mountain are visible in the distance just to the left of Umpire. To the east, the Kilkenny and Pliny Ranges stretch southward in New Hampshire with the Presidential and Franconia Ranges further to the south. In the foreground, Victory Basin lies eastward with Miles Mountain on its far southern edge and Kirby Mountain nearby to the south.

Returning to the Profile Trail, the route continues past the spur junction and quickly climbs onto open bedrock where it passes over the true summit of Burke Mountain (0.2 mi.). Limited local views are available nearby. Descending briefly and bending to the left, the trail soon reaches the upper junction with the Summit Trail where a spur leads to the summit fire tower nearby.

From the lower junction with the Profile Trail (0.3 mi.), the Summit Trail climbs upward, bending left then right, and passes by a large outcrop. Winding up once more, the trail soon reaches the upper junction with the Profile Trail, located in a low pocket between rock outcrops (0.4 mi.). From here, the true summit of Burke Mountain (accessed via the Profile Trail) is located a short distance to the right. The fire lookout tower (accessed via a short spur trail) is located just 50 feet to the northwest.

Climbing to the fire tower, the former lookout offers outstanding views of the surrounding countryside in all directions, notwithstanding nominal obstructions from the nearby broadcast tower and its antennae. To the west, in the foreground, is Burke's West Peak and, beyond, Willoughby Gap (with Mount Hor to the south and Mount Pisgah to the north). Continuing north is Bald Mountain, Job's Mountain (with its southeastern cliff face), Bluff Mountain (in Island Pond) and Gore Mountain in the distance. Seneca and Bull Mountain lie at the northern extent of the Passumpsic River Valley. East Mountain (elevation 3420 feet, the highest mountain in the Northeast Kingdom) is recognizable by the boxy remains of the former Air Force radar station on its summit; East Haven Mountain sits just below in the foreground. The faraway summit of Monadnock Mountain is visible



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in the distance behind East Mountain.

To the northeast, the mountains of northern New Hampshire are visible, the Stratford Range west of the Nash Stream Valley and the twin summits of the Percy Peaks. In Vermont, West Mountain and neighboring Umpire Mountain are visible while, beyond to the east in New Hampshire, the Kilkenny and Pliny Ranges stretch south and meet the Presidentials, dominated by Mounts Madison, Adams, Jefferson and Washington. Victory Basin, due east in the foreground, is defined by the low chain of mountains that lie (north to south) on its eastern edge: Stone, Adden, Tug, Temple and Miles. In the background, the Franconia Range, Interstate-93 and the Connecticut River Valley stretch into the south.

Due South, Kirby Mountain lies nearby while the patchwork landscape of the lower Passumpsic River Valley reveals the population centers of Caledonia County, the communities of Lyndon and St. Johnsbury. In the southwest, the hills of Groton are visible and connect to the north with the Kittredge Hills and Stannard, Ide, and Wheelock Mountains. Further west, the Sheffield/Sutton Range is backed by Norris, Granby, Frost, and Hardscrabble Mountains. Beyond lie the peaks of the Green Mountains.

From the base of the fire tower, a Tower Access Trail leads north and west away from the summit and returns to the Toll Road parking area.

**Tower Access Trail-** From the fire tower, the access trail descends a series of well built steps and soon reaches the gravel drive used to access the summit broadcast building on Burke. Following the gravel way, it soon turns to pavement and, passing the gated entrance, joins the Auto Toll Road just north of the summit parking area.

**Total distance (Summit Trail):** approximately 0.4 mi., elevation gain: 150 feet



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