

DRIVING TIPS

The Whiteface Mountain Veterans Memorial Highway is perhaps the easiest mountain toll road to drive in America. However, it does require a special level of care and awareness for all drivers in all vehicles. Please read and follow these tips.

If a major problem occurs, pull off the road and notify a passing vehicle that you need assistance. Be as concise as possible about your location and problem. A staff member will render assistance.

1. Follow the signs and obey the speed limit. Excessive speed going up or down the mountain can cause safety problems and will disturb the experience for others.
2. Watch your vehicle's warning lights and gauges. If problems like overheating are indicated, take action to avoid damage or accidents. Overheating can be addressed by pulling off the road at the next indicated parking area and allowing the engine to run until the light or gauge indicates that it is safe to move on. It helps to turn off the air conditioning and to turn on the heater. Do not open the radiator cap unless the engine has cooled considerably. Add fluid only if significant coolant has been lost.
3. Never stop in the travel lanes. Whether for sightseeing, picture taking, or to address a mechanical problem, pull all the way off the road.
4. Be aware of other vehicles on the road. If you are holding up a line of vehicles, pull over at the next indicated area and let them by. Do not tailgate or pass unless the vehicle in front of you pulls over and waves you on.
5. Watch the road. The scenery is indeed awesome and distracting. If curiosity gets the best of the driver, pull over to view or switch drivers.
6. Do not ride the brakes while descending. Use a lower than normal gear and let the engine do much of the braking. Pump the brakes if necessary and consider pulling off at a designated parking area to let brakes cool down. The distinct aroma of overheated brakes is a cue to pull over and wait. Never throw water on your wheels or brakes, even if they are smoking or smell.
7. Remember, too, that even after passing through the toll house, there are another couple of miles of downgrade to negotiate.

WHITEFACE MOUNTAIN
Route 86, Wilmington, NY 12997
Offices: 518.946.2223
Memorial Highway Information: 518.946.7175
www.orda.org

State of New York
George E. Pataki, Governor
Olympic Regional Development Authority
Charles A. Gargano, Chairman
Ted Blazer, President & CEO

WHITEFACE MOUNTAIN



VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY

WHITEFACE MOUNTAIN

Drive to the top

The Whiteface Summit is the only one of the Adirondack High Peaks accessible by car.

THE RIDE TO THE TOP OF 4,867 FOOT HIGH WHITEFACE MOUNTAIN, NEW YORK'S FIFTH-HIGHEST PEAK, is a truly breathtaking and unforgettable experience. Nowhere else is the beauty and vastness of the Adirondacks so apparent and so easily accessible. From the treeless summit of Whiteface one can see hundreds of square miles of forest, lakes and mountains stretching from Canada to Vermont. A visit to the legendary Adirondacks is not complete without a drive to the top.

The paved road rises over 2,300 feet in five miles from the toll house. On the way up numerous parking areas are indicated that allow for the leisurely enjoyment of the many scenic vistas. At the summit itself, a number of surprises await—including a castle built from native stone, an elevator deep inside the mountain top, and a truly spectacular 360-degree panoramic view of unparalleled beauty.

Along the Highway

THE FIVE-MILE PAVED ROAD TO THE SUMMIT AFFORDS GRAND VIEWS OF THE ADIRONDACK HIGH PEAKS, Lake Champlain, the Adirondack Park, Lake Placid and on a really clear day, Canada. You will also view a continuous natural wildflower garden growing alongside the roadside, a living museum of natural forest history, and anorthosite bedrock roadside boulders that are over a billion years old.

Along the way are nine designated spots where you are encouraged to stop to enjoy the view and discover more about the mountain surroundings from the posted information signs. To aid in your enjoyment, an interpretive cassette is available at the toll house at no cost. An attendant at the summit will collect the tape as you reach the parking area.

The Toll House Area

A PICTURESQUE ALPINE-STYLE GATEHOUSE CONSTRUCTED IN 1934 AND LAKE STEVENS, A SMALL, PRISTINE POND, ACCENTUATE THE ENTRANCE TO THE HIGHWAY.

Lake Stevens, named for 1932 Olympian bobsledder Hubert Stevens, is stocked annually to provide fishing opportunities, especially for children. Everyone is invited to enjoy its scenic beauty and picnic areas. The Lake Stevens tree trail offers a self-guided ten-minute walk around the pond. All 34 species of trees native to the northern Adirondacks (fourteen conifer and twenty hardwoods) can be found on this short nature trail. Inside the toll house is an informational center detailing the early history of the area and the flora and fauna of the northern Adirondacks.

If you wish to visit the Lake Stevens Nature Area on your way back from the summit, please park on the north side of the lake or ask an attendant at the toll house for parking assistance.

A Weather Advisory - Weather can definitely affect the driving and sightseeing experience. You may want to call ahead or check with the toll house attendants about visibility. The weather can change quickly so don't be immediately discouraged by cloud cover. Also, the temperature and climate at the summit is often quite different from in the valleys, so bring warm clothing.

HISTORY

It would be impossible to construct a paved road with the nature and magnitude of the Whiteface Mountain Veterans Memorial Highway today.

The environmental and financial hurdles would be formidable. Fortunately for all, over a half century ago a few people had the vision and fortitude to pull off a very impressive feat.

The automobile was a relatively new concept in the 1920's. Even so, Saranac Lake resident M.A. Leonard and Wilmington resident Frank Everest believed that a road to the summit of Whiteface Mountain, New York's fifth-highest peak, was a great idea. After much lobbying in Albany, this very ambitious project was endorsed by the necessary powers in 1929. Then-Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt ceremoniously turned the first spade of earth that September. It is said that his personal endorsement was in part a result of the anticipated ease of access for people with physical disabilities.

The highway, funded by bond money, began construction in 1931, creating scores of jobs for engineers, construction workers and stone masons during the early years of the Great Depression.

After four years of construction and a total outlay of \$1,250,000, the road officially opened to traffic on July 20, 1935. Roosevelt, now president of the United States, returned on September 14, 1935, to dedicate the Highway as a memorial to the New York State Veterans of the Great War (WWI).



"This is a tribute from the citizens of the state of New York which would be appreciated by those fallen comrades of ours who served their state and their nation so well. It is fitting that we should dedicate it in their names. It will stand as a tribute to them through all the centuries to come." (Dedication Address, September, 1935). The elevator, Castle and Summit House were completed three years later.

In 1985 New York State Governor Mario Cuomo rededicated the Whiteface Memorial Highway to veterans of all wars.

Summit Tunnel, Elevator and Castle The highway ends at the Whiteface Castle, just below the actual summit. This two-story structure was built from the granite that was excavated during the highway construction. The upper floor provides superb scenic views through its many windows, and includes a cafeteria that serves lunch and snacks, and a gift shop. Rest rooms are found on the lower level.

There are two ways to reach the Whiteface Summit and either presents a very unique and memorable experience.

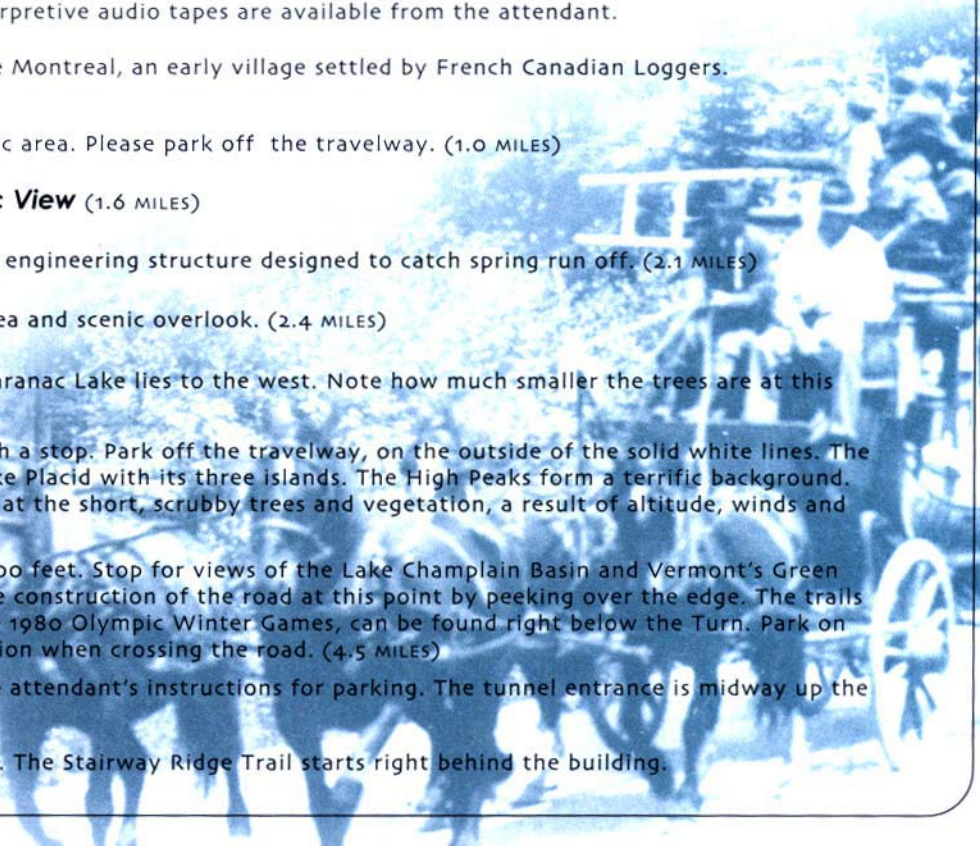
Hardy souls can climb the Stairway Ridge Trail, which starts at the Castle. Only a fifth of a mile long, this steep climb over boulders features incredible views virtually all the way up and down. Descriptive markers along the climb describe the surrounding vegetative growth, including flag trees, lichens, and dwarf alpine flora that only grows on a glacial summit. Proper footwear is essential.

The alternative route is totally unique and features a most unusual elevator deep inside the mountain. Reached by a 426-foot long tunnel bored into the mountain, the elevator climbs 276 feet up to the stone Summit House. Inside the tunnel, the temperature stays at about 45 degrees year round.

MILEAGE MARKERS

Along the way are nine designated spots where you may stop to enjoy the view and discover more about the mountain surroundings from the posted information signs at each site.

Toll House The start of your journey. Interpretive audio tapes are available from the attendant.

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- #1 Local Forest History** Site of Little Montreal, an early village settled by French Canadian Loggers. (.03 MILES FROM TOLL HOUSE)
 - #2 Union Falls Lake Overlook** Picnic area. Please park off the travelway. (1.0 MILES)
 - #3 Whiteface Mountain Panoramic View** (1.6 MILES)
 - #4 Water Catchment Basin** Unique engineering structure designed to catch spring run off. (2.1 MILES)
 - #5 The Big Turn Lookout** A picnic area and scenic overlook. (2.4 MILES)
 - #6 Slide Picnic Area** The town of Saranac Lake lies to the west. Note how much smaller the trees are at this elevation. (3.3 MILES)
 - #7 Lake Placid Turn** Definitely worth a stop. Park off the travelway, on the outside of the solid white lines. The Castle is visible above; below is Lake Placid with its three islands. The High Peaks form a terrific background. Here, too, you can get a good look at the short, scrubby trees and vegetation, a result of altitude, winds and thin soil cover. (3.7 MILES)
 - #8 Wilmington Turn** Elevation of 4,300 feet. Stop for views of the Lake Champlain Basin and Vermont's Green Mountains. Also note the incredible construction of the road at this point by peeking over the edge. The trails of Whiteface Ski Center, site of the 1980 Olympic Winter Games, can be found right below the Turn. Park on the inside of the Turn and use caution when crossing the road. (4.5 MILES)
 - #9 Summit Parking Area** Follow the attendant's instructions for parking. The tunnel entrance is midway up the parking area. (5.0 MILES)
 - #10 The Castle** Elevation of 4,610 feet. The Stairway Ridge Trail starts right behind the building.

The Summit Area The summit of Whiteface is barren of trees, affording visitors a 360-degree panoramic view of the surrounding wilderness. Except in times of low cloud cover or fog, it is always spectacular.

The upper terminal of the elevator is located inside the round, stone, multi-windowed Summit House. Beside it stands a single silo, housing the equipment of the state's Atmospheric Science Research Center. Visitors are allowed to stroll around the summit and enjoy two separate and distinct experiences as described below.

The first one obviously is the great visual experience. Here are breathtaking views of Lake Champlain and Vermont's Green Mountains to the east, the St. Lawrence Valley and Canada to the north, Lake Placid and the Adirondack High Peaks to the south, and the Saranac Lake River Valley to the west. This is a view that hasn't changed much in the past thousand years.

The second unique experience can be found right at your feet. The vegetation is a relic from the glacial period that occurred over 12,000 years ago. These are among the oldest plant communities in New York State and are similar to what is found at sea levels hundreds of miles closer to the Arctic Circle. Additional information on this unique alpine world is available in the Summit House.