

Day 6: 12th October, Monday ~ Mt. Washington, Essex Junction.

Over the years several hotels have been built at the foot of Mt. Washington, all have burned, however another one is being planned.

It is 28°F. We board a half dozen small vans. Our guide tells us it is so windy, we can only go to the 6 mile point, it is 7½ miles to the summit which is capped in clouds. The forecast is for 7 inches of snow tonight. We are in the lead van and are introduced to Suzy, a freelance photographer shooting fall scenes for next years Yankee magazine.



[Start of the road to the summit.](#)

The summit of Mount Washington is 6,288 feet. The privately owned road begins at Great Glen 1,500 feet above sea level. The trip by company van is ½ hour each way. Mount Washington has the second highest death rate, after Mount Everest. The Appalachian Trail crosses the Auto Road on its way from Maine to the Carolinas.

Our guide lets us out at the six mile point where the wind is ferocious. “Quick, get back in the van. We have been cleared for the summit!” This is the first time in a week they have been able to go all the way.

We safely navigate *Oh my God curve*. The clouds break and we have a magnificent view 70 miles to the ocean. Claiming to be "Home of the World's Worst Weather," the weather on Mount Washington is notoriously erratic, due to the convergence of storm tracks, from the South Atlantic, Gulf region and Pacific Northwest and the steep rise of the mountain. Meteorological observations were conducted by the U.S. Signal Service, a precursor of the National Weather Service, from 1870 to 1892. Regular reporting resumed in 1932. In April of 1934, observers measured a wind gust of 231 mph, which remains a world record for a surface station. The meteorological staff work seven days on duty, seven off.



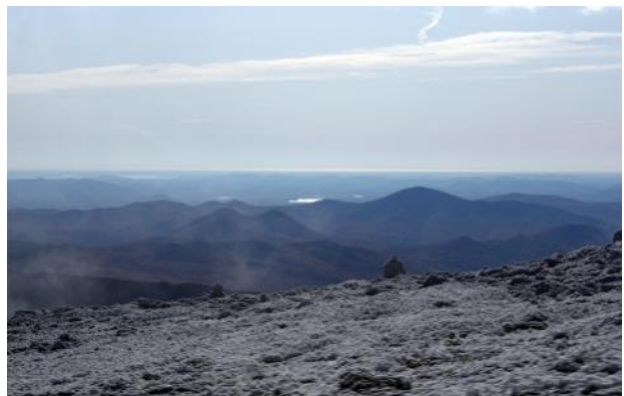
Presidential Range.

Since 1869, the Mount Washington Cog Railway has provided tourists with an alternate way to the summit. This is part of the Presidential Range. Our driver points out the peaks Jefferson, Adams & Madison.

Above the tree line everything is covered with *rime ice*. These are ice feathers which precipitate out of the atmosphere. The buildings at the summit appear in black and white. It is too dangerous to get out of the van.



Above the tree line.



In the distance, the ocean.



1932 Observatory.



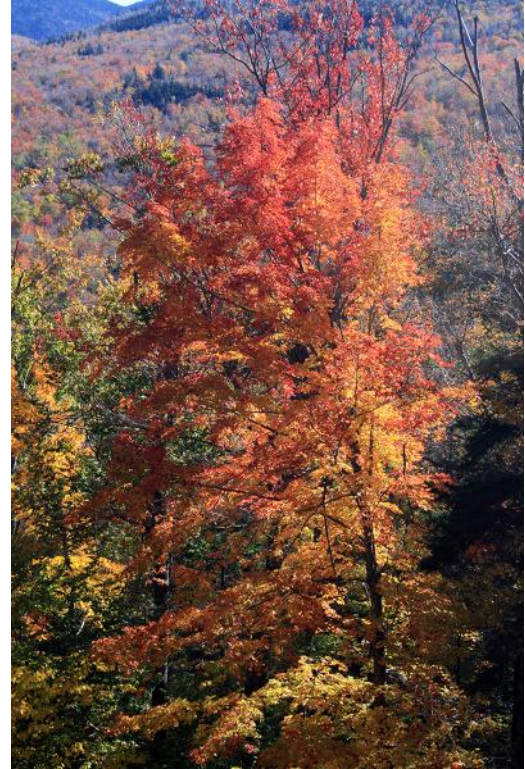
Rime Ice covers everything.



Built in 1880, our lunch is at the Sunset Hill House in Sugar Hill, Vt. The original big house is gone, this building was the servants quarters.



Sunset Hill House.



At the Morse farm, Burr Morse entertains us with a (sometimes comic) slide show describing how maple syrup is prepared.

“Old timers say that we get a run of sap for every day of January thaw. Most years we get a January thaw and its duration can be measured in one, two, or three days. The sugar season, which occurs mid March thru mid April, always consists of one, two, or three runs.”



“On the average, it takes 40 gallons of maple sap to make 1 gallon of pure maple syrup. We drill 1 tap hole in each of our maple trees, which gives 10 gallons of sap in an average year. So, 4 maple trees, 40 to 200 years old, are needed to make one gallon of pure maple syrup.” Maple sap is 2% sugar and weighs 8.35 lbs. per gallon. Maple syrup is 66.9% sugar and weighs 11 lbs per gallon. One gallon of maple syrup makes 7 lbs of maple sugar. There are 3,000 maple trees on the farm.

Burr Morse.

When we reach the Inn at Essex, we are greeted with apple fritters and cider. To me this is a misnomer, cider is fermented apple juice, but here that would be called *hard cider*.

This was home to the Vermont Culinary Institute, a place where students train to be chefs. For dinner, our tables are arranged facing a preparation area in the atrium. Chef Donna asks for volunteers and demonstrates how parts of our dinner are prepared. Dressing for the salad, gnocchi and caramel sauce.



Chef Donna.



Anne & Birney.



The Gang.