

SEIZE THE FREEZE: 8 EARLY-WINTER HIKES

BY II MARC CHALUFOUR

Some hikes are rewarding in almost any condition, whether the ground is frozen solid or covered by deep snowpack. When we asked AMC Books authors for their favorite early-winter hikes, they volunteered a coastal walk, a summit climb, a lake loop, and everything in between. Frozen and frosty or snowy and slick, these recommended hikes defy winter's unpredictability. Whatever the weather, get out there!

1. SHAW MOUNTAIN

Piscataquis County, Maine

The newly cut Shaw Mountain Trail, built by AMC in 2015, begins on Lower Crossover Road and gradually ascends Shaw Mountain. The 0.75-mile route to the top is a great short hike or snowshoe, with big payoffs: views of Second Roach Pond and beyond across Maine's remote Nahmakanta region to Katahdin. A work in progress, the trail will eventually begin at AMC's Medawisla Lodge & Cabins (opening in 2017), pass over Shaw Mountain, and descend to Frenchtown Road for a length of 8.7 miles one way.

DISTANCE: 1.5 MILES ROUND TRIP
INFO: OUTDOORS.ORG/MEDAWISLA

2. LA VERNA NATURE PRESERVE

Bristol, Maine

Forest and wetlands await hikers at this 120-acre preserve, but the real highlight is a coastal section of trail with views over Maine's trademark rocky shoreline. Follow Hoyt Trail to La Verna Trail then turn left onto Ellis Trail, which leads to the coast.

Multiple overlooks provide views of Muscongus Bay along the two-thirds mile of coastal route. In the distance, Bar, Ross, Haddock, and Monhegan islands are visible. Continue onto Tibbits Trail, completing the loop back to La Verna Trail.

DISTANCE: 3.6 MILES ROUND TRIP
INFO: AMC'S BEST DAY HIKES ALONG THE MAINE COAST (AMC BOOKS); PEMQUIDWATERSHED.ORG

3. PEAKED AND MIDDLE MOUNTAINS

North Conway, N.H.

Though modest in height, Peaked (1,739 ft.) and Middle (1,857 ft.) mountains offer great views in almost every direction. Pick up Peaked Mountain Trail at the Pudding Pond Trail parking area and follow it to the junction at 0.7 mile. From there, head right onto Middle Mountain Trail. At 1.4 miles you'll pass a side trail that leads to Peaked Mountain Summit; take that now or on your return trip. Middle Mountain summit is another 0.7 mile from this junction.

DISTANCE: 5.2 MILES ROUND TRIP
INFO: WHITE MOUNTAIN GUIDE, 29TH ED. (AMC BOOKS); WMGONLINE.ORG; NATURE.ORG

4. ELLISVILLE HARBOR STATE PARK

Plymouth, Mass.

This little-known state park covers just 101 acres yet features meadow, woodland, salt marsh, and coastline. Birds and mammals are attracted to these habitats, and seals are a common sight offshore. A short trail leads from the parking area through a meadow and out to the road. Head right to connect to a

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path that leads to the beach. There you can walk across the sand to a tidal creek that empties from the salt marsh. Seals often wait in these waters for small fish en route from the marsh to the sea. Pack your binoculars: This is also a great spot for birding, with a variety of species feeding in the marsh and swimming off the shore.

DISTANCE: 3 MILES ROUND TRIP
INFO: AMC'S BEST DAY HIKES NEAR BOSTON (AMC BOOKS); MASS.GOV/EEA/AGENCIES/DCR/MASSPARKS

5. MOUNT JO

North Elba, N.Y.

The easy climb up Mount Jo (2,876 ft.) begins at the High Peaks Information Center. Follow the red-blazed Indian Pass Trail past Heart Lake and turn right onto Mount Jo Trail. The climb is steep for short stretches, but you'll be rewarded at the top. When you reach the ridge, take a short detour east to the summit. From there, the vista features many of the region's high peaks, including Mount Marcy (5,344 ft.). To complete the loop, return to the junction and bear right; Long Trail loops around the western flank of the mountain, back toward Heart Lake. Interpretive signs along the route describe the area's natural and human history.

DISTANCE: 2.3 MILES ROUND TRIP
INFO: DISCOVER THE ADIRONDACKS (AMC BOOKS); ADK.ORG

6. LAKE AWOSTING

New Paltz, N.Y.

This long but easy loop is great for hiking, snowshoeing, or skiing. For the full loop, start on the Upper Awosting carriage road, which

PEAKED MT



▲ New Hampshire's Peaked and Middle mountains provide long views to the Moat mountains.

begins near Lake Minnewaska, and head south. Views of the Catskill Mountains highlight the 3-mile hike to the edge of Lake Awosting. There you will follow the shoreline to the far side of the lake before bearing left on the blue-blazed Long Path. More views, at Margaret Cliff and Castle Point, grace the return trip before the path gives way to the Castle Point carriage road for the final stretch.

DISTANCE: 10 MILES ROUND TRIP
INFO: *AMC'S BEST DAY HIKES IN THE CATSKILLS & HUDSON VALLEY*, 2ND ED. (AMC BOOKS); PARKS.NY.GOV/PARKS/127

7. ANTIETAM NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD

Sharpsburg, Md.

A tranquil winter walk along Antietam Creek and through the surrounding fields belies this area's bloody history: The 12-hour battle waged here on September 17, 1862, was the deadliest day of the Civil War, with more than 23,000 casualties. From the parking area, head across Burnside Bridge for a 1-mile loop east of the creek then connect to Snavelly Ford Trail along the creek, following a clockwise loop that eventually returns to the parking area. History buffs will appreciate the interpretive Final Attack Trail and Union Advance Trail, while nature lovers will want to look for a rare tree species along the creek: the spiky-barked water locust.

DISTANCE: 3.5 MILES ROUND TRIP
INFO: *AMC'S BEST DAY HIKES NEAR WASHINGTON, D.C.* (AMC BOOKS); NPS.GOV/ANTI

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8. MOUNT VERNON TRAIL

Mount Vernon, Va.

The final 3.4 miles of the 18.5-mile Mount Vernon Trail offer a little bit of everything, from history to wildlife. Starting from the parking lot at Fort Hunt Park, head west along the Potomac River toward the first president's former estate. The trail passes beneath a Depression-era bridge and offers views of a 19th-century fort. Osprey, hawks, and even bald eagles feed in the water here. The trail, open to hikers and bikers, passes over boardwalks, through wetlands, and eventually turns away from the river and heads uphill to the estate. Extend your hike by exploring Fort Hunt, which was used from the Spanish-American War through World War II.

DISTANCE: 6.8 MILES ROUND TRIP
INFO: *AMC'S BEST DAY HIKES NEAR WASHINGTON, D.C.* (AMC BOOKS); NPS.GOV/GWMP