



BEST QUICK TRIPS (1-3 hours)



9 PLACES FOR RESPITE AND RENEWAL

By Ryan Smith

Got an hour or two to spare? Get out and discover the following Forest Society reservations and easements to reset your day with some relaxation and exercise. These properties are closer than you think and you'll rarely see the crowds that many popular state parks do. You'll wish you discovered these places sooner, but better late than never. Lace up and go!

1. HIGH FIVE

Perfect for families looking for a quick nature escape, High Five's Wilson Hill boasts dramatic views to the north of many other Forest Society reservations, including Hedgehog Mountain [see page 10], Wilkins-Campbell Forest, and Tom Rush Forest. The less than one-mile round-trip hike winds through a field of milkweed, a favorite of butterflies, before reaching the grassy top.

PARKING: Sky Farm Road, Deering

WHEN TO VISIT: Spring-Fall (trailhead unplowed in winter)

ADMISSION FEE: Free

INFO: forestsociety.org/highfive

Above: Sunset as seen from High Five Reservation's Wilson Hill in Deering.

Opposite page: Visitors to the Merrimack River Outdoor Education & Conservation Area enjoy a peaceful walk through a silver maple floodplain forest.

2. HIGH BLUE

Two short, scenic loop trails originate from Scovill Road: A west loop through a mixed deciduous forest to an outcropping with semi-obstructed views of the Connecticut River Valley and an east loop through a spruce-fir forest to the top of Derry Hill with views of Pack Monadnock. For an interpretive experience, try out NH Forest Explorer on your smart phone.

PARKING: Scovill Road, Walpole

WHEN TO VISIT: Spring-Fall (trailhead unplowed in winter)

ADMISSION FEE: Free

INFO: forestsociety.org/highblue
forestsociety.org/forest-explorer

3. HEALD TRACT

A patchwork of conserved properties lines the Souhegan River valley offering ample recreation opportunities in every season. Visitors new to Heald Tract will want to make a short trip to Heald Pond [aka King Brook Reservoir] via the Heald Pond Trail off Heald Road. Pack some binoculars to look for wood ducks, herons, frogs, and turtles in the vegetation along the shoreline. Lengthen your visit with a trip up nearby Fisk Hill.

PARKING: Heald Road, Wilton

WHEN TO VISIT: Spring–Fall (trailhead unplowed in winter)

ADMISSION FEE: Free

INFO: forestsociety.org/healdtract

4. MERRIMACK RIVER OUTDOOR EDUCATION & CONSERVATION AREA

Only a 10-minute drive from downtown Concord, the Forest Society's headquarters is also home to a pleasant trail system that meanders through an interesting floodplain forest. Visitors can bask on steep banks overlooking the Merrimack River or travel deeper into the reservation on the 1.5-mile Les Clark Nature Trail. To see the property from the water, put-in a kayak or canoe upriver at the Sewall's Falls Boat Launch [see page 32].

PARKING: Portsmouth Street, Concord

WHEN TO VISIT: Year-round, daily, sunrise to sunset

ADMISSION FEE: Suggested donation: \$3/hiker; \$4/hiker and dog

INFO: forestsociety.org/conservationcenter
forestsociety.org/forest-explorer

5. WEEKS FOREST

An outing on Weeks Forest's two loop trails [lower and upper] feature scenic and ecological attractions for little effort—perfect for young, aspiring hikers. The trails travel through a variety of wildlife habitats from open fields to recently logged forests. Take note of the ephemeral vernal pools, breeding habitat for frogs and salamanders, in spring.

PARKING: Gilford Town Offices, Route 11A, Gilford (trailhead directly across the street)

WHEN TO VISIT: Year-round, daily, sunrise to sunset

ADMISSION FEE: Free

INFO: forestsociety.org/weeksforest



6. MUSTER FIELD FARM MUSEUM (CONSERVATION EASEMENT)

Muster Field Farm is a working farm and museum. The large, open fields, where militias mustered during the 18th and 19th centuries, are used to demonstrate farm operations and equipment during Farm Days in August. More than 200 of the museum's 250 acres are under a conservation easement with the Forest Society.

PARKING: Harvey Road, North Sutton

WHEN TO VISIT: The museum grounds are open year-round, daily, sunrise to sunset. The Matthew Harvey Homestead is open Sundays from 1–4 p.m. in the summer. The farmstand is open from 12–6 p.m. in the summer.

ADMISSION FEE: Free [excluding certain special events]

INFO: musterfieldfarm.com

7. EMERY FARM (CONSERVATION EASEMENT)

Emery Farm has been a part of the fabric of New Hampshire's seacoast for generations and has been locally run and operated by the same family for more than 350 years. The Forest Society holds three easements on nearly one hundred acres of land. Swing by the newly refurbished farm store for local fruits, vegetables, and seasonal items, including pumpkins and Christmas trees.

PARKING: 147 Piscataqua Road [Route 4], Durham

WHEN TO VISIT: Check website

ADMISSION FEE: Free

INFO: emeryfarm.com

8. GLEN OAKES TOWN FOREST (CONSERVATION EASEMENT)

This 389-acre town property offers a wide variety of forest and wildlife habitats to explore on nearly 4 miles of well-marked trails. The Forest Society holds an easement on the land, which acts as an important buffer to the environmentally important Spruce Swamp, a large wetland of regional significance in the coastal watersheds of New Hampshire.

PARKING: Andreski Drive, Fremont

WHEN TO VISIT: Year-round, daily, sunrise to sunset

ADMISSION FEE: Free

INFO: trailfinder.info/trails/trail/glen-oakes-town-forest

9. MULLIGAN FOREST (CONSERVATION EASEMENT)

Located just north of the well-traveled Pawtuckaway State Park, visitors to Mulligan Forest will find a quieter experience on more than 5 miles of trails that connect to the North and Bean rivers, Big and Little Mulligan ponds, and interesting Black Gum swamps.

PARKING: Stevens Hill Road, Nottingham

WHEN TO VISIT: Year-round, daily, sunrise to sunset

ADMISSION FEE: Free

INFO: nottingham-nh.gov/conservation-commission/pages/mulligan-forest