

The ADK Fire Tower Challenge

Whether it's the view from the summit or the tower, or the experiences en route, "fire tower fever" grips you right away and there's no turning back. Sound familiar? Then you're a person for whom the Glens Falls–Saratoga Chapter has created the ADK Fire Tower Challenge.

There are lots of good reasons to explore these trails and towers, not least because their far-flung locations take you to vastly different parts of both parks and provide a rich learning experience. Consider the spectacular views and the wildlife and interesting vegetation you may see on these trails and summits. And consider that for some 70 years the cabs atop these towers were the outlooks of "fire spotters," observers whose lonesome vigil was broken only occasionally by visits from the public.

The Challenge began in 2001 with ADK's publication of *Views from on High: Fire Tower Trails in the Adirondacks and Catskills*. Now in its second edition, the book describes 30 fire tower trails accompanied by photos, maps, and GPS coordinates for trailheads. It includes an essay detailing the history of Forest Preserve fire towers and a new chapter describing towers located beyond both parks.

You don't need to be a member of ADK to take part in the Challenge. If you wish to join, or purchase *Views from on High*, see ADK.org or call 800-395-8080 (M–F, 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m.). ADK chapters plan a wide variety of activities to help you learn more about nature, the protection of our environment, and outdoor skills.

The ADK Winter Fire Tower Challenge

Enthusiasm for the ADK Fire Tower Challenge burgeoned in the years following its creation, prompting the Glens Falls–Saratoga Chapter to introduce the ADK Winter Fire



In the cab of Bald Mountain tower

Stephanie Graudons

Tower Challenge in 2011. The number and distribution of tower summits remain the same, but the hike dates are limited, falling approximately between winter solstice and spring equinox. The usual guidelines pertain, but see *both* three-season and winter requirements on reverse.

Winter hiking on fire tower trails should only be attempted by those in excellent physical condition who have winter hiking experience, proper gear, and knowledge of the techniques necessary to travel safely on mountain trails in adverse weather. (The Winter Mountaineering School sponsored by ADK is an excellent place to learn the necessary skills. Visit winterschool.org.)

Hikers should carefully assess the abilities of their hiking companions and never travel with a group size smaller than four. The group will be only as strong as the weakest member.

Winter hiking with children is generally not recommended on these trails. Parents choosing to undertake this rigorous challenge with younger family members should carefully assess the abilities of their children.

By submitting your completion materials for the ADK Fire Tower Challenge, you consent to ADK and ADK's Glens Falls–Saratoga Chapter excerpting your submission for promotional or publicity purposes.

I would not have changed a step I took over the past 9 months. I loved every minute of the hiking. I've learned so much about myself and what I'm capable of.

—Patti B

Each and every hike I participate in is a lesson in what nature has to offer. Some days it's just a great day out with friends enjoying the views, having some laughs, and photographing everything. Other days we find ourselves being tested in various ways. No matter the lesson, we take away the memories, sense of accomplishment and camaraderie developed along the way.

—Jen S

Take the Fire Tower Challenge



Working for Wilderness

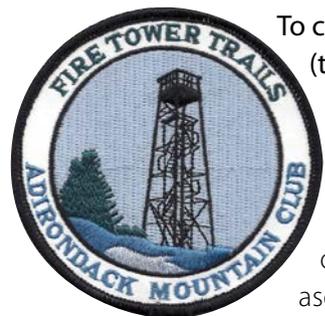


Sponsored by the Glens Falls–Saratoga Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club



Above: fire tower in the cab of Bald Mountain tower Carl Heilman II
Cover: Sunrise from Hurricane Mt.

Taking the Challenge



To complete the Challenge (three-season and winter) and receive the official full-color patch:

1. Climb and document, by date, ascents of at least 23 fire tower summits: 18 of 25 Adirondack Park summits and all 5 Catskill Park summits. Climbing each tower is not required, nor is it recommended for those towers that need additional restoration measures for safe public use.
2. Note that each mountain should have a standing fire tower on the date of your ascent.
3. In addition to recording the dates of your climbs on the list provided, we hope you'll use extra sheets of paper to describe points of interest: your impressions, companions, weather, wildlife sightings, and whatever else merits your attention. We really want you to share your experiences with us, so please be expressive. Please circle your final Challenge hike.

Winter Challenge Additions and Caveats



To complete the Winter Challenge and receive the official "rocker," a patch shaped like the rung of a rocking chair (above), note the following:

1. Winter Challengers must complete their tower-trail hikes between December 21 and March 21, inclusive.
2. Do not climb the towers themselves between these dates. Fire towers are extremely unsafe in the winter, when high winds can pose additional risks and stairs are often covered in ice and snow. Additionally, crampon spikes do irreparable damage to the wooden steps.

I thought the Challenge might be a good "mid-life crisis" project for myself. I had no idea I would absolutely fall in love with the experience...

Over a 253-day period, I hiked a total of 18 dates, covering 149.08 miles, 351,098 steps and 2955 flights of stairs (according to my FitBit)... 6 people and 2 dogs directly shared in this adventure with me. —Patti B

I'm having so much fun working on the ADK Fire Tower Challenge. It has taken my family and me to new places and rewarded us with amazing views.

—Catherine F

Submission

Send the attached list and additional pages—with name, postal address, and e-mail address on each—along with a check for \$5 per patch. Winter Challenge completers should enclose \$3 per rocker. (Winter completers add \$5 per patch, in addition to \$3 per rocker, if you are a first time ADK Fire Tower Challenge finisher.) Both the patch and the rocker are free for completers 15 years of age and younger.

Make the check payable to:
ADK Glens Falls–Saratoga Chapter

Mail to:
ADK Fire Tower Challenge
c/o ADK Glens Falls–Saratoga Chapter,
PO Box 2314, Glens Falls, NY 12801

Allow 4–6 weeks to receive your patch.

Your ADK Fire Tower Challenge Log

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
E-MAIL _____
PHONE _____

Please circle last fire tower hike.

Adirondack Park Fire Towers

- Mount Adams Date: _____
- Mount Arab Date: _____
- Azure Mountain Date: _____
- Bald (Rondaxe) Mountain Date: _____
- Belfry Mountain Date: _____
- Black Mountain Date: _____
- Blue Mountain Date: _____
- Cathedral Rock Date: _____
- Goodnow Mountain Date: _____
- Gore Mountain** Date: _____
- Hadley Mountain Date: _____
- Hurricane Mountain Date: _____
- Kane Mountain Date: _____
- Loon Lake Mountain Date: _____
- Lyon Mountain Date: _____
- Owls Head Mountain Date: _____
- Pillsbury Mountain Date: _____
- Poke-o-Moonshine Mountain Date: _____
- Snowy Mountain Date: _____
- Spruce Mountain* Date: _____
- Stillwater Mountain* Date: _____
- St. Regis Mountain Date: _____
- Vanderwhacker Mountain Date: _____
- Wakely Mountain Date: _____
- Woodhull Mountain Date: _____

* Closed during hunting season (see www.adk-gfs.org for exact dates and more info).

Catskill Park Fire Towers

- Balsam Lake Mountain Date: _____
- Hunter Mountain** Date: _____
- Overlook Mountain Date: _____
- Red Hill Date: _____
- Mount Tremper Date: _____

** Because this is a hiker challenge, we ask that Challenge completers summiting Gore and Hunter do so on the trails (rather than a ski lift).

Looking west from Hadley Mountain tower Bob Meyer