March 2021



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From the Summit

I got my first shot. Being cursed by youth, I had to wait until the second group in Phase 2 (that would be the over-65 group).

Like the other million people who became eligible for the coveted shot on February 17, I helped crash the appointment system on day one. I know you've heard the horror stories about that process, but if you do it on a Thursday, when they open up new appointments (or get vaccine dumps), you'll likely be successful, as I was, with not too much revisiting the Mass Vax site.

I got my appointment at Gillette. On the appointed day it was pouring, of course. I got to the parking lot about a half hour early. The lot was packed. I expected the worst of everything: worst lines, worst waits, etc. I was lucky enough to get a space right by the handicap parking, so my schlep through the rain wasn't as bad as for most people. They tell you to stay in your car until 10 minutes before your appointment (they have a huge message board to tell you when that is). It was actually pretty entertaining watching peoples' umbrellas turn inside-out in the wind.

So I followed the other cattle in through the maze. They give you a mask and make you put it on, even if you're already double-masked as I was. You have to assume that triple-masking is better than double masking. The lines, spaced six feet apart, moved quickly. It was cool. The vax room overlooked the field. There were TVs everywhere streaming great Pats stuff. And before I knew it, I was seated in the resting area having had a shot that I didn't even feel!

While resting to be sure you don't have any immediate side-effects, they give you a card with a QR code, which you scan, and before you know it, you're walking out the door with your appointment for your second shot. Really efficient. So go for it! We're getting closer and closer to in-person gathering!

On that topic, we've been having our monthly "social" gatherings via Zoom. I has been fun, and I think we've ironed out most of the technical glitches. So please join us. The next one is Thursday, March 18, at 7pm. You be able to see long-lost friends, and someone will leave the event with a very handsome prize. And I mean handsome!

This Avalanche is following the trend of our last newsletter, with input from various members. Thanks to Tom Burt. Enjoy!



Rick Howe, President

For Your Consideration...

Bike & Barge

Italy 2022

May 7—May 14 \$2399—\$2579 ppdo*

This is a bike and boat trip from Venice to Mantova, Italy. We will be aboard the Ave Maria, a 40 meter vessel with 17 cabins. Come and enjoy all that Italy has to offer. There are 3 cabins that can sleep up to 4 people.

Croatia 2022

May 21—May 28 \$2024—\$2574 ppdo or ppto*

This is an 8-day, 7-night National Parks tour with most meals included. Croatia is a country full of beautiful, well-kept coasts with thousands of islands, reefs, and bays. Numerous Roman ruins, charming hills, and breathtaking beauty await you here.

Germany 2021

August 28—September 4 **2021** \$2049 ppdo*

We are still assessing the possibility of this trip happening. Are you a last-minute-Larry that has the ability to jump on a trip with little to no notice? This might be the trip for you!

*Trips are priced without airfare to give you flexibility over your trip. Additional details will be provided in future newsletters, or Contact Michael.

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Where in the World? Where is scott Northrop?



CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS RESORT? SEE THE ANSWER ON PAGE 13



Have you tried out our

NEW AND IMPROVED



Zoom Meetings yet?

They are held on the Third Thursday of each month. Watch your e-mail for details!

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The Best Adventure, Ever. By Len Hills

LIFE in the realm of COVID has temporarily limited our ability to travel. Our travels this year have been reduced to the reminisces of past travel experiences. In the past 30 or so years, Jean and I have been fortunate to travel to some very interesting places around the world. Often someone will ask me what my favorite travel experience has been. It doesn't take long to decide that, at least for me, it was our trip to Antarctica back in the 1995.

Why this trip? Initially, what got our interest was a chance to see a totally different part of the world, extraordinary wildlife and amazing geography. This was a part of the world that had yet to become an accessible tourist destination. At that time only a total of approximately 50,000 individuals had ever been to the Antarctic. Today, more than 35,000 travelers visit <u>every year</u>. What we were looking for was a remote destination, one full of wildlife. The trip turned out to be just that, and more...

We started with a few days in Buenos Aires, greeted by a local resident who grew up in Gray Gables. It was January, sweltering midsummer for Argentineans, and the city was mostly on vacation. It was a good time to visit. We toured the city with a taxi driver who spoke no English but was a great guide. We enjoyed the people, the architecture, the history, the food, tango shows, and even paid our respects at the grave of Eva Peron (Evita).

On to Ushuaia, about as far south as you can go in South American—Tierra Del Fuego......an interesting place with absolutely no building codes, but a great hotel with a ski slope, chair lift and a glacier. We toured the National Park, watched the condors soar above us, kissed under some natural mistletoe and looked into Chile (the Chileans and Argentineans didn't get along well).

In Ushuaia we met our ship—*The Lavonia*—a 220-foot former Soviet "research" ship. We were also introduced to the crew and expedition guides, as well as a few more passengers. A total of 36 passengers and 36 crew and staff. The crew were our lifeline—our guides, our nature interpreters, our chefs, our housekeepers, our doctor (who spoke only Russian, but was an onboard necessity), and our navigators. Many of the housekeeping staff were Estonians, working for little more than the experience to travel and learn English. They were eager to speak with us and learn words, even as we were trying to pick up some Estonian. During the trip they politely asked if they could borrow some of our CDs for recording, which we were happy to allow. One of the ship's officers was described to us as "politically confused". He was born in Estonia, brought up as a Russian but, due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, found that he was suddenly Estonian, and didn't even speak the language. His statement to us was "everything good now."

We sailed down the Beagle Channel out into the Drake Passage—home of the notorious Roaring 40s—for the two-day trip to the Antarctic Peninsula. Our time was spent listening to lectures, being prepped for our shore landings, becoming familiar with the strict regulations regarding Antarctic wildlife, and making bets on when we would see the first iceberg



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and cross the Antarctic Convergence (where the polar waters mix with the other ocean waters). Other activities included holding on for dear life, life pod drills, and fending off sea sickness, with limited success for some.

With exception of the crew's quarters and engine room, the entire ship was open to us 24 hours a day. There was plenty of room on the Bridge Deck for everyone, and it was the most popular place on the ship.

Our next week was filled with daily shore excursions, zodiac tours among the icebergs, and visits to the polar stations of various countries. Never could we have imagined the beauty of a landscape in shades of black and white, often interrupted by streaks of pink algae living in the ice. Some shore landings were easier than others due to rocks and surf. Once ashore we had to be extremely cautious not to disturb the wild-life and to NEVER step on any plant life. What a human foot could destroy in an instant could take up to 100 years to restore. We found that the expedition leaders worked with other ships in the area to be certain that we were the only visitors at each landing, and to space out landings so that the wildlife did not become stressed by humans. We can only hope that this protocol is still observed, given the increase in 21st century tourism. We never saw another ship, although we knew some were in the area.

The animal life was amazing. Whales were all around the ship—Minke, Finbacks, and Humpbacks provided live entertainment. Seals—cute Weddell seals, ferocious Leopard seals, Crab eater Seals, Fur seals (which chase and bite), and an occasional Elephant Seal colony (stinky). The bird life was incredible! It was recommended that you bring a guide book, and it was worth its weight in gold! Species that we will never see in our hemisphere were all around us. Wandering Albatross, Black Brow Albatross, Skua, Giant Petrel, and numerous types of Terns. The Arctic Tern is one small seabird that migrates from the Arctic to the Antarctic seasonally—some 11,000 miles!









Roaming through the icebergy bits and growlers (small chunks of ice) in our Zodiacs was a daily delight. At first it seemed we were alone, but not for long. Birds were soaring and feeding, seals were basking in the sun, and the landscapes were spectacular yet stark. In retrospect, we realize that these animals had little or no fear of us. They were not hunted, except by each other, and we humans were just another animal. One of the beauties of isolation...

But the best were penguins, lots and lots and lots of penguins. Adelies, Chinstrap and Gentoos. When we visited a research site of England's Cambridge University, we were told by a very proper professor that once you have lived with penguins, you never forget the sound or the smell. We found the observation to be true. Walking in a penguin colony is a unique experience. Regulations do not allow you to get with 3 meters of a penguin, but obviously no one told the penguins. You just stand there, and wait for the little guys to walk by you and perhaps trip on your boots. We think of penguins as cute, with their tuxedo like plumage, but trust me they are pretty messy little creatures. Still, there is something magical about standing in a colony of several million penguins. They walk, sometimes miles, to the water to feed, then walk the back to the nest. Then they do it all over again. And again. Hence the term "Penguin Highway"— always the same route, keeping to the right.

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From the Antarctic Peninsula we ventured south to the continent itself. Our destination was the abandoned Argentinean research station at Paradise Bay, where we learned a bit about the darker side of the continent. We were told about the researcher who, when told he was not returning home on the supply ship and would have to stay another year, decided it was better to burn down the station. That got their attention!

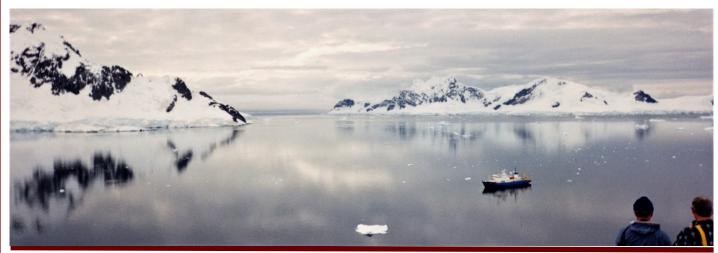
Life on the ship was great. Everyone was acquainted, the food was good, the seas were calm, and the weather great. In fact, we had a Super Bowl XXIX Party with a barbeque on deck. We had no idea who won (except the crew kept making up scores) but it was wonderful! A barbeque with whales all around you!

We made great friends on the ship—a group of very different people. Especially Marta and Dick from Andover, MA celebrating their 50th anniversary. On the way back across the Drake Passage, Dick could be seen out on the open foredeck amidst the 40 foot waves. When asked, Marta said "he's having the time of his life!" Then Larry, a 6' 5" spoiled rich kid in his 30s with a real fear of the life pod. He found out that sea sickness was a real equalizer! And a mother and daughter from Oklahoma City. The daughter was a flight attendant with American Airlines and the mother was a Federal Judge in Oklahoma City. Less that 3 months later came the terri-



ble bombing at the Murrah Federal Building and we wondered if she was involved. A few days after, we received a note that was circulated to the passengers that she had survived the bombing and was okay. It's amazing that after two weeks together on a small ship you form that kind of bond.

In 1995 there was not a lot of "tourist" traffic in Antarctica. Along with the remoteness of the territory,



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there is a comradeship between the expedition boats and crews, as well as those at research stations all over the Antarctic Peninsula. The research stations welcomed our visits and were excited to give tours of their research facilities. The expedition ships were often asked to help pickup and deliver researchers among the stations that were on their itineraries. One such incident lead to our ship having three Chinese researchers on board who were trying to get back to their station for the Chinese New Year. There was quite a commotion on board when it was discovered that one of the researchers and one of the passengers—an older Chinese lady who had joined the ship in Ushuasia—were from the same village in China! It was quite a reunion.

As we headed back north, there was still one experience that we had all been waiting for: Deception Island, which is actually the caldera of an active volcano. The ship was able to enter through a narrow channel called "Neptune's Bellows" in the collapsed wall of the caldera. The volcano had been quiet for about 25 years, so we weren't concerned. Ashore were the ruins of a whaling station, lots of fur seals, and plumes of gases venting through the black volcanic sand. At that time, it was a totally undisturbed place. But the best part? We were able to swim off the beach! A delightful hot swim...until you went below 18." It got frigid real fast! It was like a natural hot tub on top, and fridged cold just below. I dove in and got one hell of a surprise. Polar Plunge!



The trip back was what we had been warned it could be. There were forty foot waves and gray, stormy skies. This time the doors at either side of the bridge deck were closed as a precaution to the forty degree rolls of the ship. Did I mention that the ship lacked stabilizers? Who knew? It seems that storms circle the continent on a 7-day cycle, so if your timing is right, you can really be in for it. As we approached the Cape of Good Hope, all those maritime and whaling stories came to mind. It was really rough. When it came time for the Captain's Farewell Dinner, he turned the ship into the wind so that we could eat, sort of. How do you know it's rough? The table clothes are dampened to keep the dishes from sliding off. There is also a rail on each side of the table, and most chairs are hooked by cables to the deck. One of the passengers actually fell off her chair and broke her arm.

Back in Ushuaia, we said our thank yous and good byes to the ship and crew. We disembarked and made our way to the tiny air strip. At that time it was one of the more dangerous airports in the world. Again, who knew? After a brief stop at a remote air strip in Rio Grande (the middle of nowhere), we were back in Buenos Aries. There was a chaotic change from the domestic to international airport. Just when we thought we were lost, there was Big Larry holding up his expedition hat as a beacon. On to New York!

That trip was over 25 years ago and there have been many travel opportunities since. Some were just as remote. But this particular journey will always be special to me. The wildlife, the people, the landscape, the ship... all of it.

This was my favorite trip. Jean's favorite was at the other end of the world. What's yours?

Len Hills is not only our Treasurer-For-Life, he is also an avid traveler and adventurer, and one of our amazing Trip Leaders. Be on the lookout for upcoming announcements about some amazing Summer/Fall trips to Maine & New Hampshire!

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The Golden Age of TV and What I Enjoyed Watching by Michael Finegold

Large flat screens have made TV watching much more enjoyable. So fire up the LED's, stretch out on the couch, grab a beverage and check out my list. Intrigue, laughter and wanderlust all included at no extra charge. Most are on Netflix. These are not in any particular order so pay no attention to the numbers.

- 1. **Emily in Paris** light hearted and fun plus some good scenes of Paris. An American goes to Paris, not everything goes her way.
- 2. **Gran Hotel** In Spanish English subtitles. Intrigue, murder, scandals, and eye candy for everyone. Who ever thought the hotel business could be so exciting. Amia Salamanca is an up and coming actress with several films to her credit. Stick with it, it will pay off.
- 3. **Money Heist** It takes a bit of planning to rob a bank, but it takes major planning and intelligence to rob a Central Bank. Always one step ahead of the law, the Professor plans the largest heist in history. Does he get away with it? In Spanish with English subtitles.
- 4. **Men in Kilts** If you liked Outlander, then you are going to love Sam Heughan and Graham McTavish as they wander the Scottish countryside in search of adventures. First stop a single malt Scotch distillery, hmm that might be a mistake... Heads up to the ladies, yes they wear kilts. By the way Graham McTavish looks just like Mark Cool.
- 5. The Queens Gambit Why watch a show about chess if you don't play? Because you get to watch a high school student learn chess and become the best in the world in a few short years. Loosely based on the life of Bobby Fischer but with a female lead. Yes I also play, so feel free to challenge me to a game. However I am not any good so you will probably win.
- 6. **Turn** George Washington would not have become our first President if he did not rely on spies to help him win against the British. None of the glory of James Bond, just taking on the most dangerous role one can play during a war. Based on reality.
- 7. **Lupin** A master of disguise and con artist, Lupin steals one of the most valuable diamonds in the world from the Louvre. Entertaining and clever and one step ahead of the law. In French with subtitles, some scenery to help with your wanderlust.
- 8. New Scandinavian Cooking On PBS. Andreas Viestadt is my all-time favorite chef and I am pretty sure you have never heard of him. Unafraid of the elements he will cook outside, in the snow, on a hill with cows or sheep in the background. Rarely using more than one burner and frequently cooking over a campfire he brings Norwegian delights to life. Harvesting fresh herbs, fish or veggies he shows us how it is done with simplicity. A must watch if you enjoy cooking. Pretty good scenery from Scandinavia too. I guarantee you will dump Emeril, Rachel Ray and Guy Fieri like a hot potato after watching Andreas.

I couldn't pull together a top ten list and most of us have no use for them anyway so I hope you enjoy the above selections. By all means send me your favorites so I can enjoy them too!

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Last March a friend told me about Sugarbush offering a weekday season pass to seniors. Looking into it, I was pleased and yet displeased to learn I met the age criteria. The ability to ski Monday thru Friday for \$145? Well that's a no brainer. Thinking COVID would be in the rear view mirror and the ski season would be close to normal, I gladly ponied up my payment.

With the 2020-2021 season under way, it became clear that skiing this season will present a number of logistical problems—primarily travel and lodging. The holidays had come and gone and I was getting anxious to both ski and stay safe doing so. With some intrepidness I took the necessary precautions, signed my Vermont travel affidavit, and booked lodging.

In late January, Lois (non skier, world-class shopper) and I headed north. We were booked for two nights at West Hill House B&B about a mile from the Sugarbush base. The inn is run by Peter and Susan MacLaren, who are the most perfect hosts and are dedicated to making sure their guests are safe and comfortable under the new world order. With nine rooms total they are limiting guests to only four well separated rooms. The rooms were well-appointed and the accompanying breakfast was substantial enough to last a full day on the slopes. Obviously, mask wearing is mandatory with the exception of eating and drinking.

Skiing this season has a slightly different look and feel, but the rules are easy enough to follow with very little divergence from normal. The biggest change is you need to gear-up in the parking lot at most resorts as inside spaces are closed off for that kind of thing. At Sugarbush, there was a large comfortable socially-distanced warming room as well as a food truck located just outside the door. Indoor time limits apply. There were some base area restaurants open as well, with limited seating and reservations needing to be made ahead of time. And yes, bathrooms are open and they are located indoors. Lift lines were nonexistent, but again it was midweek.



You could ride alone or with the group you came with. No pairing up was necessary or allowed. Everything on the mountain seemed to be well thought out and well implemented. The staff was doing their utmost to give skiers the feeling of normalcy.

Massachusetts still required us to quarantine for fourteen days upon returning. That's really the only downside to this little venture. Overall, any hesitations I had about traveling to ski this season were unwarranted and unnecessary. Conditions are so good this year nothing should be holding you back at this point.

Current Conditions

SNOW TOTALS:

111 / 111 Trails open

Season Total: 132"

57 Trails groomed (51%)

Base—Trails w/ snowmaking: 48-72"

14 / 16 Lifts Open

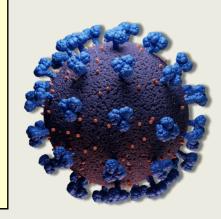
Base—Natural trails: 20-36"

484 Acres Open

Burrent Iravel Guidelin

- Must complete either a 14-day quarantine, or a 7-day quarantine followed by a negative test.
- Vaccinated? You're okay to travel
- No gatherings/lodging between multiple households
- Vaccinated household can stay with non-vaccinated household

Link to more info





Maine has three options for visitors to or from other states:

- Complete a 10-day quarantine upon arrival in Maine, or
- Obtain a recent negative COVID-19 test no longer than 72 hours prior to arrival
- Being exempted from the requirements if you are a resident of NH or VT.

Link to more info

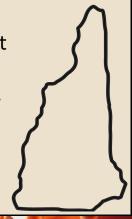


How is your geography?

Can you tell the difference between NH and VT just by the outline of the states?

"There is no travel quarantine requirement for those traveling to New Hampshire from surrounding New England States (ME, VT, MA, CT, & RI)."

Link to more info



All visitors and returning residents are required to:

- Complete a <u>Travel Form</u> prior to arrival
- Quarantine for 10 days, or
- Produce a negative test result that has been administered up to 72-hours prior to arrival

Link to more info



Travel in the Time of Covid

by Linda Barlow-Palo

In January 2020, Paul and I made plans to travel to Grenada for five weeks in January 2021. We thought we had plenty of time to weather the crisis, so we did not change our plans once COVID became a reality. As time went on and the case numbers increased, I became increasingly uncomfortable at the thought of flying on an airplane and staying on a remote island in a developing country. Paul remained cautiously optimistic. In the late fall, I felt that air travel was safe enough as long as we could socially distance in the airport. Grenada, population 112,000, had very few cases of COVID as they had shut down the country completely for a couple of months.



We had to jump through some hoops to get to Grenada. We first had to have a negative PCR test 72 hours before our flight. I found a company in Cambridge that provided these tests and guaranteed results within 24 hours. They were also half the cost of any place doing testing on the Cape. My sisters used the drive-thru venue in Newton and were in and out in 10 minutes. We chose to use the walk-in office in Cambridge and also were in and out quickly. All of us received the results in less than 24 hours.

We rented a car to drive to Boston. As our flight was leaving at 0600, we stayed at a Logan hotel. There were very few guests staying there. Logan itself was deserted, so social distancing was not an issue. I carried disinfectant wipes to sanitize our hotel room, our seats in the airport, and on the plane. Paul thought I was nuts, but I saw others doing the same thing. I am sure the Lysol company is making millions!

There is no direct flight from Boston to Grenada, so we flew via Miami. The flight was full.

We had the luxury of flying business class so there were fewer people in that section. The flight to Grenada had 11 people on it: seven in business class and four in the main cabin.

In Grenada, we presented our previously completed health questionnaire, our negative test results, and an invoice from the quarantine-approved property where we would be staying. We had to sanitize our hands at least six times while in the airport all while wearing masks.

We were fortunate to be staying at a



property that had only four apartments, was enclosed, and had a private beach. We could be outside on the property as long as we maintained social distancing and wore masks. Swimming in the warm, turquoise Caribbean waters was a bonus. Travelers staying in other properties had to stay in their rooms until they were re-tested. Home health personnel tested us on day five, and we were free to leave the property on day seven. We had to adhere to the usual rules. Entry to all businesses required a temp check, use of hand sanitizer, and social distancing.



We have spent 4.5 weeks on the island and have felt very comfortable traveling around. There have been no cases here for a month, so it is safer here than in Massachusetts. Restaurants and grocery stores are within walking distance. We have spent as much time out of doors as possible. We will retest again prior to returning to the US where will use our time in quarantine to try and get an appointment to get vaccinated.

About Grenada...

Volcanic in origin

Average temperature: 82F

Economy: Agriculture & Tourism

 Major exports: cocoa, bananas, nutmeg, and mace Gained independence in 1974

• Population: 112,000

• GDP: 1.2B USD

Link for more info



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Predictably, the skiing has been great this year according to reports. COVID and travel restrictions have made accessing that bounty a bit problematic depending on your level of compliance with state guidelines and comfort level. With that in mind, my son Cam and I, feeling the need for speed and tight boots, planned a western ski tour recently – west of Springfield, MA that is. We had a unique set of controlling parameters: The activity must take place on a Tuesday or Thursday (young Sophie attends Crayon College on those days, freeing Dad to ski with Grandad), early start – early finish (the goal is to get Cam home in time to put Sophie to bed), avoid crossing state lines (no restrictions) and, try to ski places we don't normally go. Well that all put us "out west" in the beautiful Massachusetts Berkshires.

Day one took us down the Mohawk Trail to rural Charlemont, MA and Berkshire East Mountain Resort. Set out in the woods—just off Route 2—and overlooking the Connecticut River, B.East has 1200' of vertical, 37 trails (which, in reality, means there are 8-10 decent routes top-to-bottom), older but usable lifts, terrific grooming, and an easy-going vibe. We arrived at the parking lot by 8:30, giving us a little time to pick up our pre-purchased lift tickets (they use RFID scanner type tickets, total cost \$30). If



you haven't gone this year, the process is a bit different. You'll be doing all your changing, booting, etc. out in the parking lot, so bring a doormat with you to stand on. Might as well bring a lawn chair too. Outdoor bathroom trailer facilities are available. Not so bad....early in the day. The day we were there, the lodge was open for brief visits and indoor bathrooms. No food service. One interesting development: B.East has built about 30 plywood shacks and placed them out in front of the base lodge. They're open to the sunny side and contain a picnic table w/benches and a propane heater. You can rent them for the day or for the season.

We were on the chair just after it opened at 9:00 and skied hard until 2:00, at which point my first-day legs said "enough!" and Cam's timetable said "time to go." Really fun skiing. Enough pitch to be interesting, lots of twisty wooded trails and a few wide open boulevards. Easy in-easy out, nice daylight drive home on Rte. 2 and home for both dinner and bedtime duty. Mission accomplished!



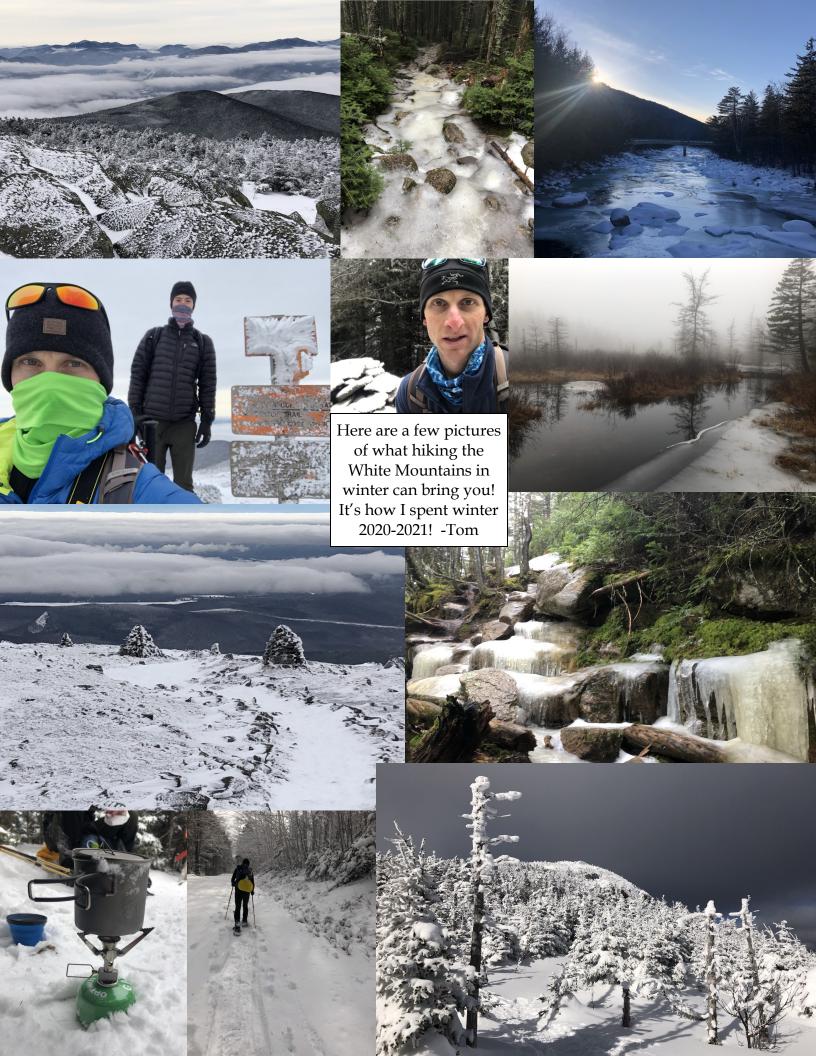
One week later finds us on our way to Butternut in Great Barrington, MA. Another early departure and an easy run down the Mass Pike has us in the front row for parking and on the fourth chair heading up the hill. Butternut is a little smaller, with 1000' of vertical and 22 trails (or about 6 routes down), all of them perfectly groomed top to bottom on this day. Same sort of base setup – lodge is open for brief visits and bathroom. Trailer with toilets outside, and people working out of their vehicles. Great, fun trails with lots of elbow room. It would be a superb place to

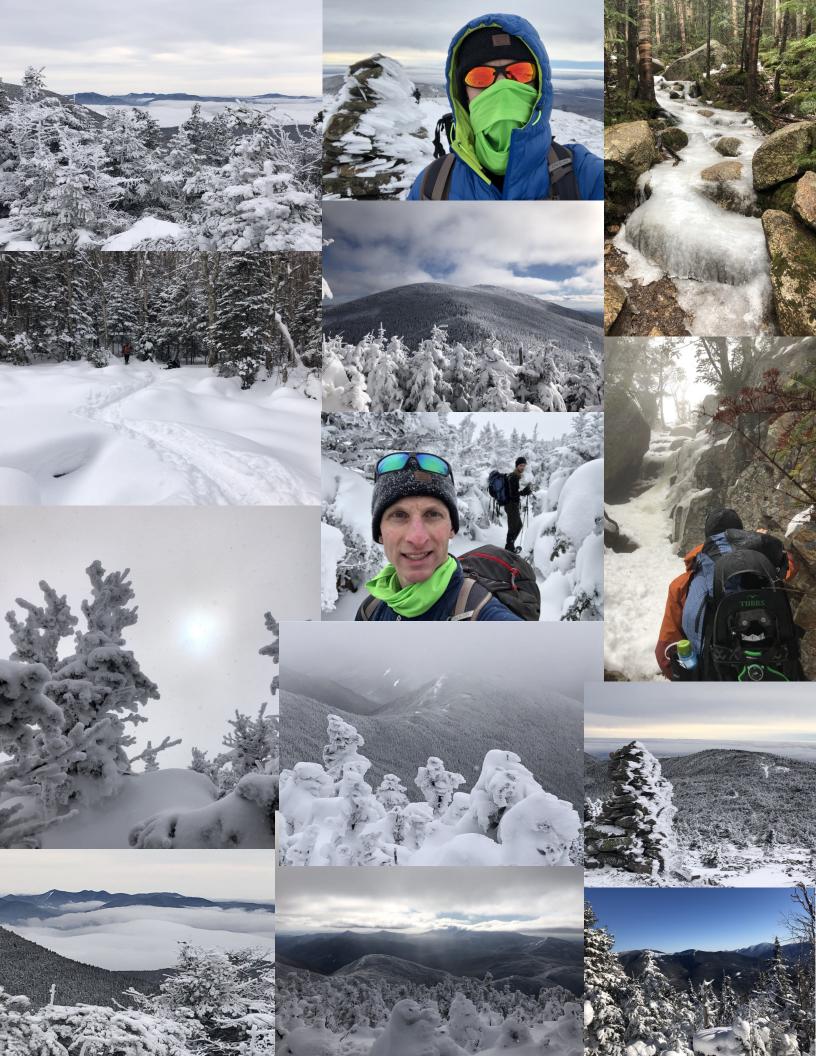
start kids out and take them to a pretty competent level. We skied until 2:00 again, when cold wind and timing forced our hand. Three hours door-to-door caps off another successful mission! Smaller mountains work perfectly for this sort of thing—you can only ski the limited number of trails so many times, so cutting the day short to head home is no hardship. Besides, a full day mid-week lift ticket at Butternut is \$25! It is cheaper if you buy the Indy Pass, which targets small independent resorts.

I certainly look forward to a return to "normalcy" in everyday life and skiing, but short of that I would not hesitate to saddle up and head west again, into the setting sun and the beauty of western Mass.

Where in the World? is Scott Northrop? IF YOU GUESSED BERKSHIRE EAST, YOU WERE RIGHT!

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Who we are...

The Upper Cape Ski & Sports Club is a group of outdoor enthusiasts that love to enjoy a variety of activities with friends. We're a casual and social group, never particularly serious about anything. Skiing and Snowboarding is our primary interest, although we do throw in other activities such as biking, kayaking, traveling, bowling, and more. Our goal is to provide fun and affordable activities that folks of all ages and abilities can enjoy. Families are always welcome, as are non-members.

Contact Us?

■ By Mail:

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