

Hunter Mountain elev 4040'



The summit of Hunter Mountain can be reached via five different trailheads. The actual summit of Hunter Mountain is actually a mile west of the ski area. Three of these trailheads are located on, or just off State Route 214 between Phoenicia and the village of Hunter. The 4th option is to take the Spruceton Trail from its beginning, along Spruceton Hollow Road. The 5th Option is to take the skyride to the top of the ski area, and then connect to the blue-blazed Spruceton Trail. This is only viable when the Hunter skyride is operating.

Option # 1 : Becker Hollow Trail - The northern most trailhead along Route 214 traverses Becker Hollow. This is the shortest route to the summit (2.3 miles), however it is also the steepest. This blue-blazed trail joins a yellow-blazed spur trail just prior to the summit

Option # 2 : Devils Path Trail - The trail leaving from Notch Lake is the red-blazed Devil's Path heading west. This route climbs over 1,000' in the first mile. It is a very interesting route for more experienced hikers. Many rock ledges will need to be traversed if you choose this route.

Option # 3 : Diamond Notch Trail – The trail begins at the end of Diamond Notch Road in Lanesville. This trail is not as steep as options 1 and 2, but is much longer in distance.

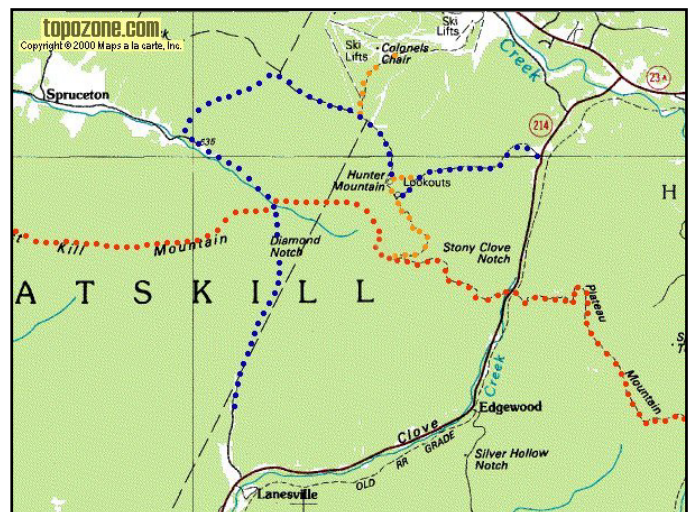
Option # 4 : The Spruceton Trail – The trail begins along Spruceton Hollow Road. This is a moderate 3.4-mile hike to the tower, which passes two great lookout points at the John Robb Lean-to and then again a half-mile later. This is considered the most popular and easiest hike and is described in greater detail on the next page.

Directions to Trailheads along State Route 214 :

From State Route 23A - East of Hunter, turn south on State Route 214 towards Phoenicia. If you are hiking the Becker Hollow Trail, it will be along Route 214 on the right before the road climbs through Stony Clove Notch. If you are hiking the Devil's Path Trail, proceed through Stony Clove Notch, and at the end of Diamond Notch Lake, on your right, are the trailhead and parking area. If you are going to the Diamond Notch Trail, Follow Route 214 to Lanesville. Then make a right onto Diamond Notch Road. Follow until it ends to reach the trailhead.

Directions to Spruceton Trail :

From State Route 23A - Proceed to the hamlet of Lexington, located west of Hunter Turn south on State Route 42. In West Kill, turn left (east) onto Greene County Route 6 (Spruceton Hollow Road) towards Spruceton. Proceed past the trailhead for the red-blazed Devil's Path. The second trailhead is the Spruceton trail, on the left.



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Spruceton Trail

Distance: 6.7 miles (add 2 for Colonel's Chair)

Time: 7 hours

Vertical rise: 2,240 feet

Hunter is a big mountain that is best hiked on the long, gradual trail from Spruceton. The considerable vertical rise of 2,240 feet is distributed evenly over the trail so that it is never too steep from this western approach. County Route 6, Spruceton Road, which leads to the trail, takes you through a very attractive upper-elevation flatland with a high-plains character, surrounded by the peaks of North Dome, West Kill, Rusk, and Hunter. Drive past the trail to West Kill Mountain, which will appear on your right at three miles, and continue for another three miles into the Forest Preserve access parking area, where there are several trail signs. Locate the blue trail on the road's north side, which leads to the John Robb lean-to, Hunter Mountain, Devil's Tombstone Campsite, and Platte Clove Mountain Road. Setting out along a well-defined truck trail, you follow what was once the Jones Gap Turnpike, which was built in the late nineteenth century. The road was later improved to build and maintain the Hunter Mountain fire tower, and it is still in good enough shape to be driven by four-wheel drive vehicles (which are not allowed). After a half-mile the trail turns east and steepens gradually. Forty minutes into the hike you arrive in the saddle between Rusk and Hunter Mountains, at 1.7 miles. You will see an unmarked trail leading downhill to the north through Taylor Hollow, which is no longer state-marked or maintained. This section of the old Hunter Road leads to South Jewett on NY 23A, west of the village of Hunter. Although it still exists, and may appear on older topographic maps, it is not marked and is very difficult to find from NY 23A. Your trail continues east from here, uphill, reaching a good spring on the right within a half-mile. Near the spring, views to the north and southwest are good, with Rusk and West Kill in the foreground. The John Robb lean-to is ahead 0.1 mile on your left at the 3,500-foot mark. Continue for another mile into a flat area of thick evergreens, and you come upon the Colonel's Chair Trail, which branches north following yellow markers. This is part of the old Shanty Hollow Trail, which is no longer in use below Colonel's Chair, having been erased by ski trail construction. It is still possible, however, to hike out from the summit lodge directly into the town of Hunter if you want, by following the ski trails. The mile-long side trip to Colonel's Chair and the ski lifts and summit lodge of the Hunter Mountain Ski Area is worth your time. The trail descends gently into an open



area, with excellent views of North Mountain, High Peak and Roundtop, the Blackhead Range, Onteora Mountain, and the East Jewett range, among many nameless rolling hills. At the lodge, you will see on the northwest side a trail sign showing Hunter Mountain at 2.05 miles. If you walk downhill on that trail in a northerly direction, you notice some red paint on the rocks reading "Lookout Point." Here an unmarked and vague trail leads a short way down to a rocky ledge with more of the same impressive views. The Colonel's Chair, so called for its shape, is named for Colonel William Edwards, an early "tanlord" after whom Edwardsville was first named. The village name later changed to Hunter.

Hunter Mountain

There are picnic tables at the summit lodge, and there are refreshments, food, and communications available year round. To the south, another 1,000 feet in elevation, you can see the fire tower near Hunter's summit. After you return to the blue trail, the summit is a mile along the trail to your left. The heavily rutted trail leads you through a dense forest of spruce and fir with occasional ledges and views to the northeast. From the Colonel's Chair Trail it will take you about forty minutes to walk to the summit. Once you have looked around on this rocky peak and have enjoyed the 360-degree view from its fire tower, by all means continue on the blue trail to the "true summit," where the fire tower and lean-to previously were located. This additional distance takes about ten minutes and is worth the little extra effort. When you reach the old tower site, where the Becker Hollow Trail descends very steeply into Stony Clove, you see a forest of evergreens with some evidence of camping debris strewn about. Go west, a short way through this forest, and you will discover a west-facing ledge that is very private and has excellent views from the north-northwest to the south-southwest, including West Kill, North Dome, Sherrill, Balsam, Vly, Bearpen, and many lesser peaks. This is the place to rest, have lunch, and escape detection. From the steel tower on the top the entire Catskill mountainland is visible. Hunter Mountain is the second highest peak in the Catskills. For a long time it was thought to be the highest, until Arnold Guyot, a Princeton geologist, proved otherwise. It was annexed to the Forest Preserve in 1930. From the old fire tower site you can return to Spruceton the way you came, or use the yellow trail to the Devil's Path for an interesting but longer alternative.



HUNTER MOUNTAIN FIRE TOWER

The Hunter Mountain Fire Tower has the unique distinction of being the highest fire tower in New York State, a 60' tower standing on top of a 4,040' mountain. It is also only one of a few fire towers to be listed on the National Historic Lookout Register as well as the National Register of Historic Places.

The original fire tower on Hunter Mountain was built in 1909, and was one of the first three fire towers that were constructed in the Catskills that year. The original wooden tower was 40 feet tall, and was replaced with a steel tower in 1917. That tower was placed at an elevation of 4,000', a third of a mile from the true summit. The tower was removed and reset at the present site (the actual summit) in 1953.

Hunter Mountain, despite its high elevation, deep notches, and steep slopes, was extensively logged over a century ago. The only virgin forest on the entire mountain is located on the northeastern side - totaling less than one-square-mile! (The Becker Hollow trail leads through it). Much of the summit was burned over as well. White birch, a major tree pioneer species following disturbances, can be found all over the upper slopes of the mountain - indicating extensive logging and forest fires. Of course, the views from the tower are incredible. North/South Lakes, the Blackhead Range, the Hudson Valley, and the southern Catskills (including Slide Mt.) can be seen. Supposedly, if the sun is high enough and with binoculars, it is even possible to see the two streams of water that are Kaaterskill Falls

