

Mount Marcy, NY, 5,344 ft. – July 4, 2005, HP #4: Via South Meadows

We had left the Washington DC area two days before on this, my first, trip to the Adirondacks – making today the third day of our trip, and the first day of our overnigher up Mt. Marcy.

Following a drive through Lake Placid and a stroll down its main street, with the afternoon disappearing, it was soon time to locate the starting point of our hike. The plan was to begin the hike from South Meadows, where we would leave the car, and backpack 2.8 miles along an old fire road to Marcy Dam. We would camp near the dam, and then pick up the classic Van Hoevenberg Trail to the peak the following morning. The advantage of starting at South Meadow as compared to the Van Hoevenberg Trailhead at Adirondak Loj is free parking.

Curiously, “Adirondak Loj” is not a foreign language spelling, but just a peculiar spelling for “Adirondack Lodge”. As the story goes Melvil Dewey – the inventor of the Dewey Decimal System – was at one time the owner of the lodge. Dewey liked phonetic spellings, and so he named his lodge “Adirondak Loj”.

The old fire road leading to Marcy Dam was basically flat, gaining only 100 feet, making the backpacking relatively easy. The mosquitoes, however, made the flat walk rather unpleasant. We took it slow and made it to the dam within an hour and a half. By the time we settled on a camping spot and got the tents set up it was dark. After a snack, we played a game of "tie the food bag up in the tree." Each of us was given two tries to throw a 5-50 cord, with a stick attached to one of its ends, 20-feet up and through a fork in some tree branches. Our laughter, at missed attempts, excited the dog camping across from us causing him to howl along with us. On the eighth throw we finally succeeded.



By 8:00 a.m. the next morning, July 4th, we set out on the Van Hoevenberg trail. After about one-mile the trail passed a turn off for Phelps Mountain, and another mile and a half further along it crossed Phelps Brook by means of the three-pole-bridge. Between those two landmarks we encountered the beautiful Indian Falls. Since the prior half mile had been quite rocky and steep, we decided to relax and take in the views. Once rested, on we went up a section of the trail resembling a stone staircase. At an elevation of 4,420 feet, and within a half mile of the peak, the trail passed the Hopkins trail to Keene Valley.

The last section to the summit, about 900 vertical feet, is quite steep. So, before tackling it we stopped at some big rocks, and ate our lunches, deciding to leave our day packs there to be picked up on the descent. Just shy of the peak we passed a large cairn, and soon there was nowhere higher to go.

The so-called Summit Steward (a young college student whose summer job it was to ensure no one walked on roped-off fragile arctic vegetation areas) greeted us and informed us that we were the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th peak-baggers of the day. With our moderate pace, it had taken us four hours from the dam to cover the five miles up to the 5,344-foot summit - gaining over 3,200 vertical feet in the process.

Staying out of the taboo areas we located a geological survey reference marker, and made our way to a plaque, mounted into a rock, commemorating the 100-year anniversary of the first recorded ascent in 1837. We asked someone to take a photograph of our group of Eric, Yenny, Jason and I standing in front of it.



The descent to Marcy Dam required about as much time as the ascent, however we did take a much longer rest at Indian Falls where we dared a dip in the ice-cold water only to be foiled by the clouds covering the sun as soon as we got in. While at the falls a guy and his girlfriend offered to filter some water for us. The unfortunate fellow had a big red circle on his shoulder indicating a tick was under his skin.

By the time we got back to camp we were rather tired and hungry and not looking forward to mosquito-thirty (the time of day the mosquitoes attack). Plus, we realized we had another 2.8 miles of hiking to do with the added weight of our camping gear. We ate, relaxed, and rested before packing up. On the bright-side, Eric had by now used up most of the 11 liters of water he had packed in. At 2.2 pounds per liter, he had packed in 24 pounds of water.

Retracing the fire road back to South Meadows we found the mosquitoes to be even thicker than the day before. So, despite our heavy packs and ignoring our tiredness we hurried hoping,

albeit in vain, to avoid them. We did however cover the distance a half hour quicker than on the approach.

It was a long day, having covered almost thirteen miles, which climbed over 3,200 vertical feet. Tired or not, we felt pleased having "bagged" the highest peak in New York!



Photo Album: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/GCqhzLEBQDZG5PrA9>