



Section 17: Bridges Trail to Lincoln Gap

SNAPSHOT

This section is a mix of rolling back-country trails with a few short, steep climbs and descents, a partially plowed road, snowmobile trails, and an unplowed forest road to the top of Lincoln Gap. A portion of the trail is along the Natural Turnpike, a glacially carved gap between Breadloaf Mountain to the east and Cobb Hill to the west. There are wonderful views of the Breadloaf Wilderness and Mount Abraham along the way.

LENGTH

11.0 miles (17.70 km)

NOTE: Mileage does not include distance from the top of Lincoln Gap to the CT parking area at Lincoln Gap Road. This will add 1.3 miles.

DIFFICULTY

The ski on the Bridges Trail between Forest Road 59 and Forest Road 54 includes a few short, steep, climbs and descents. The ski along FR 54, a partially plowed road and snowmobile trail, is flat and easy. Between Spruce Lodge and South Lincoln Road the route is mostly rolling, with one gladed but wide downhill, and one narrow chute. From South Lincoln Road to Lincoln Gap the trail is all uphill but is not particularly steep.

TRAIL ACCESS POINTS (south to north)

1. Natural Turnpike Parking - Ripton

From the village of Ripton, take FR 59 north and then northeast for approximately 3.5 miles to the intersection of FR 59 and FR 54. Bear left on FR 54 and the parking lot will be immediately on your right. Following yellow "CT Side Trail" blazes, ski south for a tenth of a mile on a narrow snowmobile trail, and then turn left (east) on a wider snowmobile trail and unplowed road (FR 59), to join the CT after 0.5 miles. To ski north on the CT, turn left (north) at the Bridges Trail. To ski south on the CT, ski straight ahead on FR 59.

2. South Lincoln Road (CT crossing) - Lincoln

From the general store in Lincoln, take East River Road approximately one mile southeast toward Lincoln Gap. Turn right (south) on South Lincoln Road (FR54) and go approximately three miles to a point where the CT markers can be seen in a field on the east (left) side of the road. Park along the shoulder of the road where there is good visibility in both directions. Do not park here if snowplows are busy. This is also a good location to drop a bailout car for longer tours.

3. South Lincoln Road (end of plowing) – Lincoln

From access point 2 (above), continue south on South Lincoln Road until the end of plowing. This is also a parking area for trucks with trailers for snow machines. Be conscious to park in a way that will not block trucks with trailers that will need to make a wide radius turn to enter or leave the parking lot.

4. French Settlement Road - Lincoln

From the general store in Lincoln, take East River Road approximately one mile southeast toward Lincoln Gap. Turn right (south) on South Lincoln Road and go approximately 2.2 miles. Turn left (east) on French Settlement Road and go 1 mile to the school bus turnaround. This parking lot can be used on weekends. To head north on the CT, walk or ski the shoulder eastward on French Settlement Road to the end of plowing, then ski up (east) the unplowed portion of French Settlement Road. To head south on the CT, follow blazes on the left side of the school bus turnaround, at first up an unplowed driveway, and then turn right off the driveway and into the woods where you see the CT blazes.

5. Lincoln Gap Road - Warren

From the general store in Lincoln, take East River Road approximately one mile southeast toward Lincoln Gap. After crossing the New Haven River continue straight (east) on Lincoln Gap Road for approximately 2.6 miles to the end of plowing. Do not block the snowplow turn-around. There is not a lot of parking here so larger groups should try to car pool from the Lincoln Community School. Ski up the unplowed portion of Lincoln Gap Road approximately 0.05 miles to access the CT at FR 202, on the right.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION (south to north)

NOTE: This route is shared with snowmobilers and has several road crossings. Please stay alert of surrounding traffic and exercise caution at all times.

From the Natural Turnpike Winter Parking lot (at intersection of FR 54/FR 59), ski south for 0.1 miles on a narrow snowmobile trail, and then turn left (east) onto a wider snowmobile trail (VAST #7A south and FR 59). Ski 0.5 miles to join the CT northbound at the Bridges Trail.

From the **FR 59-Bridges Trail intersection (0.0)**, ski northeast into the woods on the CT. Please sign in at the trail register box so we can gauge the level of trail use on this section. Follow the Bridges Trail 1.25 miles over rolling terrain, then descend a short, steep hill toward a beaver pond. Logs have been laid to facilitate crossing of the pond. The trail then climbs a short hill, runs through a small brushy field, and intersects with a plowed section of **FR 54 (1.5)**, aka the Natural Turnpike.

Cross the plowed road and ski into the woods again. The CT drops down gently, then swings right and soon intersects a snowmobile trail (VAST Corridor #30). Turn right on to the snowmobile trail and follow it uphill. Eventually the trail levels out and then approaches a steep drop. Watch and listen for on coming snow machines, as they may not be able to see you. Ski down the hill, and turn left onto FR 54, heading north through the Natural Turnpike. Ski along

the west side or shoulder of the partially plowed road. Turn left following the forest road north. Plowing ends just beyond the intersection with **Eagle's Nest Road (2.7)**. Continue skiing north on the snowmobile trail (unplowed FR 54).

Just before **Spruce Lodge (3.8)**, the trail veers left (northwest), leaving FR 54 and entering the woods. It starts out level before turning sharply left (west), and climbing a steep uphill through birches and pines. Where the trail levels there are views north to Mount Abraham. Turn right (northward) and follow blazes down a gentle hill, and then left (west) onto a straight, flat section with views to the north of Mount Abe. At the end of this flat section the trail turns right and drops to a bridge, crossing a small stream. The trail then ascends a short hill, and continues on rolling terrain for the next 1.5 miles, with one slightly steeper gladed downhill.

The trail exits the Green Mountain National Forest onto a wide logging road heading downhill to the right (eastward). The CT follows the logging road downhill at first, and then it has two switchback loops off of the logging road. Skiers can either take the switchbacks into the woods or stay on the logging road. Just after the second switchback rejoins the logging road, the trail drops into a narrow but short chute, and then comes into an open meadow. From the southerly end of the meadow, the trail runs down a short hill, passes a barn and a mobile home, and crosses a bridge over the New Haven River to reach **South Lincoln Road (5.7)**. Please stay on the trail and respect this landowner's privacy and property.

BAIL OUT POINT: *South Lincoln Road offers two parking areas that serve as intermediate bail out points. Cars can be parked in a small lot at the end of plowing, or a short distance away where the CT crosses South Lincoln Road and enters an open field.*

To continue northbound, turn left and walk or ski about 75 yards along South Lincoln Rd—the blazed trail is just to the right of the road, and there's also usually a snowy shoulder on the left side of the road. The trail enters a large field on the right (east) side of the road and runs along the treeline until it joins a logging road entering the woods. Follow the logging road over a bridge, and, after a short distance, turn left (north) onto an old road leading gently uphill through evergreens. The CT curves around to the right (east) and then makes a sharp left (north) turn into a dense conifer stand. After a short distance, turn right (east) to join a VAST snowmobile trail.

Follow the VAST trail across **Masterson Road (6.3)** and continue straight ahead. The trail bears right and uphill a bit before it descends steeply to the left and crosses two bridges. Use extreme caution on this section of the trail. It is a blind corner and the terrain is steep.

After crossing the second bridge the CT leaves the VAST trail, turning right (northeast) into a middle-aged birch-beech-maple forest. The trail gradually climbs and soon meets a **woods road (6.7)**. Turn right (east) onto the woods road. Farther uphill the CT bears left (north) again through an older hardwood forest, and eventually intersects **French Settlement Road (7.8)**.

BAIL OUT POINT: *To reach the school bus turnaround and parking area on French Settlement Road, turn left (west) at the intersection and walk approximately 0.1 miles.*

To continue northbound, turn right (east) and walk or ski the shoulder about 0.3 miles to the end of the plowed portion of the road. From the end of plowing, ski uphill (east) on the unplowed portion of French Settlement Road. As the road begins to level off, there is an uninhabited cabin on the left. Please stay on the trail, as the cabin is private property. After passing the cabin, follow the trail straight ahead to a bridge and into the Green Mountain National Forest.

The CT trends uphill and through a young hardwood stand. Near the top of this stretch the trail enters more mature woods and passes through a gate onto **FR 202 (8.3)**. Ski north on FR 202 to its junction with the **Lincoln Gap Road (10.2)**. Turn right (northeast) and either ski or walk 0.8 miles up the road to **Lincoln Gap (11.0)**. To reach the end of plowing in Warren, ski east (downhill) from Lincoln Gap on the unplowed road approximately 1.3 miles.

DISTANCE TO LANDMARKS

Mileage Northbound	Landmark	Mileage Southbound
0.0	FR 59 - Bridges Trail Intersection	11.0
1.5	FR 54 (Natural Turnpike)	9.5
2.7	Eagle’s Nest Road	8.3
3.8	Spruce Lodge	7.2
5.7	South Lincoln Road	5.3
6.3	Masterson Road	4.7
6.7	Woods Road	4.3
7.8	French Settlement Road	3.2
8.3	FR 202	2.7
10.2	Lincoln Gap Road	0.8
11.0	Top of Lincoln Gap	0.0

SIDE TRAILS AND LOOPS

A 3.5 mile loop is made by FR 59, heading east, the Bridges Trail heading north, VAST Route #30 heading west, and VAST Route #7 heading south. Except for the Bridges Trail, this loop may be shared with significant snowmobile traffic.

SHUTTLE DIRECTIONS

Please use caution and common sense when using these directions. Some roads may not have signs. After a heavy snow it may be difficult to locate the trailhead or end-of-plowing. Your GPS will not replicate all of these routes and may direct you to a road that is not plowed, closed and impassable. When in doubt, follow someone familiar with the local area.

Look for blue blazes (Catamount Trail), yellow blazes (Catamount Trail Side Trail) or CT parking signs which may be present. If the road seems impassible, park and explore on foot. Always park clear of access roads and gates. Leave room for others to park including snowmobile trailers. Do not park in snowplow turnarounds.

The location of the Catamount Trail on these maps is approximate. Temporary reroutes are not displayed. Always visit the Catamount Trail Association website for the latest trail information and maps. www.catamounttrail.org

Drive to Natural Turnpike (north to south)

1. From the end of plowing at 2673 Lincoln Gap Road (S17 access <4>)(N44.09080 W72.93727) drive west for 2.7 miles.
2. Turn left on S Lincoln Rd., which is just east of the New Haven River bridge. There may be no road sign here, but it is marked as FR 54 after the turn. Drive 1.1 miles.
3. Bear right onto Ripton Road, then drive 1.6 miles.
4. Bear left at the intersection of Ripton Rd. and West Hill Rd. and drive 3.7 miles.
5. Continue on Ripton Rd., which eventually turns into Lincoln Rd. for 3.7 miles until coming to a bridge. Cross the bridge and bear left on Lincoln Rd. at the intersection with North Branch Rd, and drive 2.8 miles.
6. Turn left on Robbins Crossroad and drive 0.6 miles.
7. Turn left on Natural Tpk. and drive 2.7 miles to the end of plowing at 3614 Natural Tpk. (S17 access point <1>) (N 43.99702 W 72.98167).

Drive to Lincoln Gap Road (south to north)

1. From the end of plowing on Natural Tpk. (S17 access point <1>) drive west 2.7 miles.
2. Turn right on Robbins Crossroad and drive 0.6 miles.
3. Turn right on Lincoln Rd. and drive 2.8 miles to a bridge.
4. Cross the bridge and bear left on Lincoln/Ripton Rd. Drive north for 3.7 miles to the intersection with West Hill Rd.
5. Bear right at the intersection of Ripton Rd. and West Hill Rd. and drive 1.6 miles on Ripton Rd. to the intersection with S Lincoln Rd.
6. Continue north (left) on S Lincoln Rd. for 1.1 miles to Lincoln Gap Rd.
7. Turn right on Lincoln Gap Road and drive 2.7 miles east to the end of plowing (S17 access <4>).