

Exploring the Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway

by Stephen L. Priest

What is the SRKG?

The Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge-Greenway (SRKG Greenway) Trail is a hidden gem of New Hampshire. The SRKG Greenway is 75-miles of trail in Merrimack County divided into fourteen-day hiking trails surrounding Lake Sunapee, crossing Sunapee, Ragged, and Kearsarge mountains. The SRKG trails are maintained and supported by volunteers, local towns, land conservation organizations, local snowmobile clubs, and private ownership. In other words, the SRKG Greenway is a group project of those committed to the maintenance and enjoyment of this area of New Hampshire.

The general color map accompanying this article puts the SRKG trails into perspective.



Figure 1: Map of the entire SRKG Trail www.srkg.com

I was introduced to the SRKG through a group called **Outdoor Recreation for Seniors** (ORFS) which is based at the Chapman Senior Center in New London, NH. It all started when I picked up the Chapin monthly newsletter that a friend had left on their coffee table, and noticed listings every Tuesday for either a hike or a paddle – all within 50-miles of New London.

My wife and I began hiking and paddling with the group. On one of the ORFS hikes, I noticed a trapezoid trail marker with a circle identifying it as the SRKG. My first complete SRKG hike was when a fellow ORFS asked me to join him to hike SRKG Trail 7- NH 4A to Wilmot Center, or as he calls it, the Bog Mountain Trail.

Little did I know that two years later, I would complete the SRKG fourteen trail loop.

How Long to Hike all Fourteen Trails?

The SRKG is a majestic 75-mile loop of fourteen trails across the lakes region. Individual trails can be hiked in one day or over multiple days. I completed Trails 4 and 7 on separate day hikes, followed by a two-year hiatus to finish the last twelve trails within five months.

Some individual trails can be divided and completed over days, such as when I hiked the 7.3-mile **Trail 3 Sunapee Town Hall to Deer Hill Road** over three separate days and the 8.4-mile **Trail 5 Springfield/New London Road to Great Brook Bridge** in two days. Consider that all the trails are one-way hikes. So, if you want to hike an entire trail segment in a day, you either have to spot a car at the destination trailhead or hike the trail both ways. No camping is allowed on the SRKG. So, overnights are not an option.

Along the way, I discovered four elements that have brought the SRKG to life for me:

- 1) The SRKG Trapezoid Blaze/Trail Marker;
- 2) The *SRK Greenway Trail Guide's* narrative for each trail;
- 3) Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Trail Summary on the SRKG website; and
- 4) The SRKG Maps for each of the 14 Trails.

The SRKG Blaze/Trail Marker

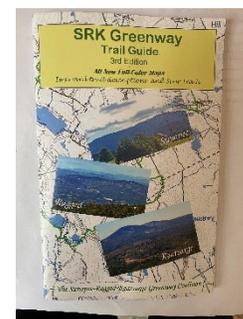


Figure 2:
*SRKG
Trapezoid
Trail Blaze*

The unique SRKG trail marker, some may call it a trail blaze, is often referred to as the "trapezoid" because of its unique design. This "trapezoid" marker has kept me on the trail for all 75 miles. If the trapezoid was not within sight, it was time for me to stop, look around, and maybe backtrack until I located it. It was my safety net, "I was on the trail

SRK Greenway Trail Guide

The **SRK Greenway Trail Guide 3rd Edition**, published



and sold on the SRKG web site (www.srkg.com) and in local bookstores, was invaluable. I carried the *Trail Guide* with me on all fourteen hikes.

The **Guide** describes each trail in a clockwise fashion. I mainly followed the **Guide's** hike direction. Still, I did one hike in a counterclockwise direction (5.4-Mile Trail 1 Newbury Trail to Old Province Trail, Goshen) because I noticed the Old Province trailhead was at a higher elevation than the Newbury trailhead, and thought it would be an easier hike going downhill. As an aside, this was a mistake; the rockbound one-plus-hour downhill hike severely tested my quads.

Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Trail Summary

The *SRKG trails are for day hiking only. Overnight camping is not permitted.* An excellent resource for locating the SRKG trailheads and parking areas is the SRKG website: <http://www.srkg.com/trails-guide-summary/>

Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Maps

Sunapee Ragged Kearsarge Greenway publishes an excellent map entitled the *SRK Greenway Trail Guide*. The map is 12x18 inches that folds to 3x4 inches and is printed on Tyvek so it can hold up to water and hard use. The map is linked to the *Trail Guide*, and together are indispensable. In addition, you might find it useful to consult other available maps for more detail or a better idea of the surrounding area.

Trail 9 Canada Road via Ragged Mountain to Proctor Academy

All of this background is great, but will never give you a good idea what hiking the Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway is really like.

While I cannot take you on all fourteen trails of the SRKG hikes, let me share the 6.1-mile Trail 9 New Canada Road to Proctor Academy, Andover. I selected this trail as it was the last of the fourteen trails I needed to complete the Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway (SRKG) 75-mile loop. The hike was extra special as family and friends accompanied me.

Starting at 7 am at the northern trailhead at New Canada Road, Wilmot, NH, we hiked up, over, and around Ragged Mountain for 5.5-hours before finishing the 6.5-mile trail at its southern trailhead at Proctor Academy, Andover, NH. We found the trail very well marked.

The weather was clear and 72 degrees with wet and slippery trail conditions from the previous night's rain. Our first two hours climb was up the woods of Ragged Mountain with an unexpected talus rock field, climbing up for nearly three miles. Finally, we reached the clearing at the ski summit of the Mountain. We enjoyed our lunch on the hut deck with a scenic view of New Foundland Lake and surrounding countryside.

After lunch we continued our hike to the Proctor Academy Trailhead. The view at the ledge on West Peak at 4.1 miles was particularly impressive. Stretched in front of us were the ski slopes of Mt Sunapee, the Ragged Mountain tower we had just left, and a clear view of Kearsarge Mountain. And to top this off, we were able to discern a section of Lake Sunapee. Wow!! For a simple outdoor enthusiast, this point of view was remarkable! Check out the below picture with the three red circles identifying

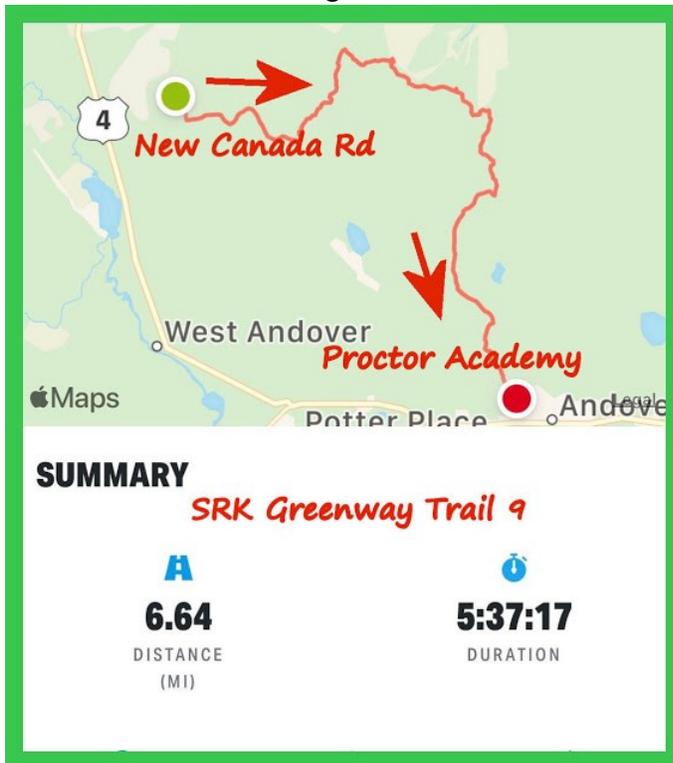
each of the three mountain peaks. There in front of us is the entire SRK Greenway 75-mile loop!



Figure 4: The Panoramic View from the Ledge on West Peak.

As in all my prior SRKG hikes, I carried the SRKG Trail Guide. As we passed six-miles, we were getting tired and looking for the end of the trail. The Guide listed 6.1 miles – meaning one-tenth of the mile until we celebrate my 14th hike on the SRKG. This "one-tenth of a mile" was a steep loose gravel downhill through woods and went on for what seemed like forever. When we finally emerged into the Proctor Academy parking lot, the southern trailhead sign read "6.4-mile trail!"

Overall a very well signed trail. The SRKG Trail Guide lists this trail as "Difficult." I would agree, but it is not overwhelming.



Trail 9 section is used by the SRKG and maintained by the Ragged Mountain Fish and Game Club and Proctor Academy. Well done to all caretakers.

I now never have to say, "I wish I had hiked the 14 Trails of the Sunapee-Ragged Greenway."

Figure 5: My Final Hike to Complete the SRKG Trail. Trail 9 New Canada Rd, Wilnot, via Ragged Mountain to Proctor Academy, Andover, NH.

Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Trail Summary			
Trail	Trail Name	Distance & SRKG Assigned Level of Difficulty	Est. Time
1	Newbury Harbor via Mt Sunapee to Old Province Road, Goshen	5.4 mi. Moderate	4.5 hrs.
2	Old Province Road, Goshen to Sunapee Town Office	7.3 mi Moderate	4 hrs.
3	Sunapee Town Office to Deer Hill Road, Springfield	7.3 mi Moderate	3 hrs.
4	Deer Hill Road to Springfield-New London Road (NH 114)	4.1 mi Easy	2.5 hrs.
5	Springfield-New London Road (NH 114) to Great Brook Bridge	8.4 mi Difficult	6 hrs.
6	Great Brook Bridge to NH 4A in Wilmot	3.2 mi Easy	2 hrs.
7	NH 4A in Wilmot via Bog Mountain to Wilmot Center	4.4 mi Moderate	3 hrs.
8	Wilmot Center via Eagle Pond to New Canada Road	4.1 mi Easy	2.4 hrs.
9	New Canada Road via Ragged Mountain to Proctor Academy, Andover	6.1 mi Difficult	3.5 hrs.
10	Proctor Academy to Winslow State Park, Wilmot	6.0 mi Moderate	3.5 hrs.
11	Winslow State Park, Wilmot via Mt Kearsarge and Lincoln Trail to Kearsarge Valley Road	5.8 mi Difficult	4.5 hrs.
12	Kearsarge Valley Road, Sutton to Wadleigh State Park, Sutton	3.9 mi Easy	2.5 hrs.
13	Wadleigh State Park, Sutton to Chalk Pond Road, Newbury	5.4 mi Moderate	3.5 hrs.
14	Chalk Pond Road, Newbury to Newbury Harbor	4.4 mi Moderate	2.5 hrs.



Figure 6: Celebration at Proctor Academy Trailhead

My recent book, *Hiking New Hampshire's Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Trail*, supplements the *SRKG Trail Guide* with an introduction and video for each of the fourteen trail hikes. The videos give you a "what it feels like" to hike the SRKG, while the *Guide* remains the continual reference with maps and content for locating a trailhead, when to turn, and where you exit the trail. I used this *Guide* to stay on the path when turns were not readily visible and locate recommended spur trails for additional enjoyment and education. One spur trail is the Trail 9 Overlook on West Peak described above.

If you are interested, you can find my book on Amazon at *Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Trail: 75-Miles on a Fourteen Trail Loop* by Stephen L. Priest

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B08MDN1S16>. It is free for Kindle Unlimited readers.

I also maintain a website that can be reached by [Hiking New Hampshire's Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Trail: 75-Miles on a Fourteen Trail Loop](http://www.hikingnewhampshire.com) or <http://tiny.cc/mjh6tz>.

Finally, I would like to thank the **Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Coalition** that has graciously given full permission to use pictures, text, and maps from the *SRK Greenway Trail Guide 3rd Edition*. As noted above, they maintain an excellent website at www.srkg.com.

