

WELCOME TO SPRUCE MTN. TRAIL!

This 1.3 miles (one way) moderately difficult trail leads to a fire tower with sweeping 360 degree views of the Southern Adirondacks, Hudson River, the Vermont border into the Green Mountains and Southern Saratoga County.

What is Letterboxing?

Letterboxing is an old English tradition dating back to 1854 when people began leaving a self-addressed postcard or note in a jar, hoping for them to be returned by mail by the next visitor. Today we've adapted this English tradition and put it to use on Saratoga PLAN's nature preserves and trails. Each preserve has a letterbox ranging in difficulty for participants and gives each type of adventurer an exciting opportunity to explore our preserves and have fun while doing so. **When you find the letterbox, feel free to take a postcard, and mail it back to us with your comments about your journey. You can also take the stamp from within the letterbox and mark your PLAN Preserve Passport on the appropriate page (Passports are available from the Saratoga Plan office on Spring Street). Once you have collected at least five stamps (or listed three species observed during each visit) stop by PLAN's offices in Saratoga Springs for a FREE Saratoga PLAN t-shirt!**

We hope you enjoy your letterboxing experience on this trail! Interspersed within the clues *in italics* are observations and questions to enhance your trail experience.

LETTERBOX CLUES FOR SPRUCE MTN. TRAIL

1. **Start your journey at the trail head just off the parking area.**

Notice the beautiful stream and tumbling rock formation to the left of the parking lot as you approach the trailhead. Be sure to sign into the trail at the kiosk just a short way up the trail.

2. **Continue to follow the well-traveled/marked trail up a rather steep section which levels off after a short climb.**

The trail follows a stream on your left for a short distance. About 33 adult paces past the kiosk, notice a small pool in the stream. If you inspect the pool, you'll see small patches of bubbling sand and water and a strong smell of sulfur as the stream bubbles to the surface from underground.

3. **Continue climbing upward as the stream cuts through a low stone wall**

Depending on the time of year, you'll see different animals and plants. Can you identify any of the many birds you'll hear? During the summer months, be careful not to step on a well-camouflaged toad along the trail-they're everywhere!

4. **The trail continues gradually uphill.**

Notice the many large boulders on the sides of the trail, which are glacial erratics, left behind by retreating glaciers thousands of years ago.

5. **After roughly 45 minutes of hiking, you'll come to an area where large patches of ferns cover both sides of the trail.**

Look to your right to see a large stone cairn set approximately seven feet off the trail.

6. **Emerge from the fern lined trail to the clearing and fire tower at the top of the mountain**

The 73-foot fire tower (the tallest in New York State!) on the 2009 foot summit of Spruce Mountain was built in 1928 and manned until 1988. Climb the fire tower to catch the spectacular view.

7. **As you approach the fire tower from the trail, look to your left to see a fallen tree, scattered trunks and a stump which hikers have covered with small rocks.**

8. **Investigate the stump to find the letter box!**

GREAT WORK!

We hope you enjoyed your letterboxing adventure at the Spruce Mountain Trail. If you'd like to continue exploring the rest of the trail, feel free to do so. Please make sure to return the letterbox as you found it before heading back out the way you came.

Thank you!

- Your Friends at Saratoga PLAN

The mission of Saratoga PLAN is to preserve the rural character, natural habitats and scenic beauty of Saratoga County so that these irreplaceable assets are accessible to all and survive for future generations. To learn more, please visit us at www.saratogaplan.org.



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Preserving Land and Nature

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