

Approaching the St. Regis summit

ADK JOURNAL ST. REGIS MOUNTAIN A TWO FOR ONE HIKE

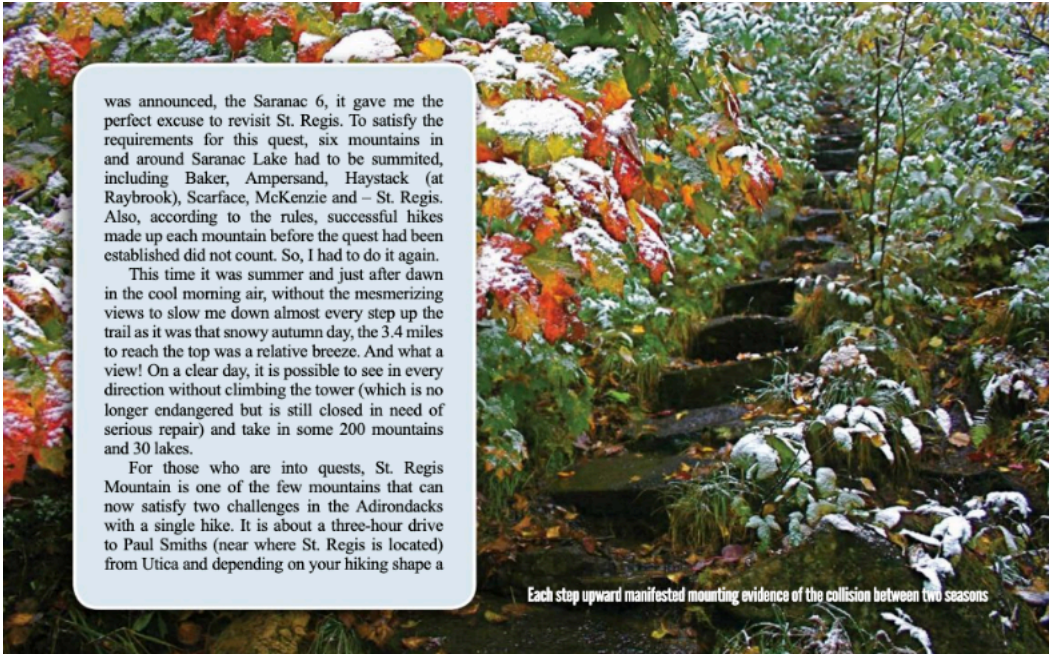
STORY AND PHOTOS BY GARY VANRIPER

The first time I hiked St. Regis Mountain, it had just snowed. It was early in October, but that's the way it is in the Adirondacks, particularly at higher elevations. I was on vacation in the region and needed the mountain to complete the Fire Tower Challenge – a quest established by the Glens Falls-Saratoga Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club, requiring the ascent of 23 of the fire tower mountains in the Adirondacks and all five in the Catskills. At that time, there was also concern that the fire tower could soon be removed, having been designated as a non-conforming structure in the St. Regis canoe area. So “summit fever” kicked in, and despite the snow, I decided to go for it anyway. The trees and trails were awash in autumn colors and ascending from the trailhead there mounted the observable evidence where two seasons met. The snow-dusted summit was socked in with fog, and there was no panoramic view. But it did not matter. The walk up through a wintry wonderland of snow-laden branches with orange and red and yellow leaves made it one of my favorite hikes – ever. Plus, I figured the mountain wasn't likely to move, so I could return one day for the view.

Several years later, when the launch of a brand new quest

TOWER
CLOSED
TO PUBLIC

The fire tower is still closed to the public as it awaits restoration, but the views from the summit itself are still spectacular



was announced, the Saranac 6, it gave me the perfect excuse to revisit St. Regis. To satisfy the requirements for this quest, six mountains in and around Saranac Lake had to be summited, including Baker, Ampersand, Haystack (at Raybrook), Scarface, McKenzie and – St. Regis. Also, according to the rules, successful hikes made up each mountain before the quest had been established did not count. So, I had to do it again.

This time it was summer and just after dawn in the cool morning air, without the mesmerizing views to slow me down almost every step up the trail as it was that snowy autumn day, the 3.4 miles to reach the top was a relative breeze. And what a view! On a clear day, it is possible to see in every direction without climbing the tower (which is no longer endangered but is still closed in need of serious repair) and take in some 200 mountains and 30 lakes.

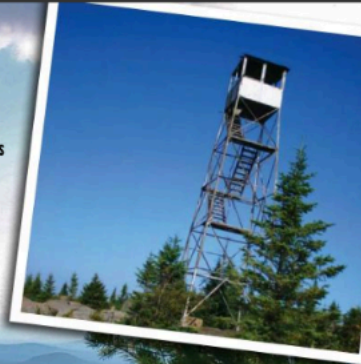
For those who are into quests, St. Regis Mountain is one of the few mountains that can now satisfy two challenges in the Adirondacks with a single hike. It is about a three-hour drive to Paul Smiths (near where St. Regis is located) from Utica and depending on your hiking shape a

Each step upward manifested mounting evidence of the collision between two seasons

90- to 120-minute, 6.8 mile round trip hike, making it a great and full day trip from the Mohawk Valley area. You will want to avoid mud season, but with spring on the way as winter slowly loses its grip, it can be an opportune time for unique experiences that can come with the collision between two seasons.

Special Note: Visit the active www.friendsofstregis.org for how to become involved in the fire tower restoration project on St. Regis Mountain. A special meeting of the well-established organization is planned for Tuesday evening, March 3, at Paul Smith's Visitor Interpretive Center (VIC) located one mile north of Paul Smith's College. For more information on the meeting and the Friends of St. Regis contact the Co-chair of the steering Committee for the Friends of St Regis at DavidPetrelli@yahoo.com. •

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