



Ascutney Trails Association
P.O. Box 246, Brownsville, Vermont 05037

Futures Trail

The Futures Trail was constructed in 1983 by a crew from Vermont Futures -- a program established by the State of Vermont to provide work opportunities to unemployed Vermonters. The trail is located entirely within Ascutney State Park and is 4.1 miles long to its junction with the Windsor Trail and 4.6 miles to the summit of Mt. Ascutney. Blue paint blazes were used to mark the trail.

The trail starts by climbing up a steep bank, past an old stone chimney and follows an old logging road along the contour. The logging road ends (0.1 mi) and the trail swings right and uphill, climbing the ridge through a series of switchbacks to **Bare Rock Vista** (1.0 mi, 1,350 ft) offering excellent views to the southwest. The trail then descends the back side of the ridge through a hemlock stand in a series of switchbacks and then resumes climbing (1.1 mi.) through a northern hardwood forest. At 1.5 mi, it crosses a small stream and continues slabbing uphill. It soon crosses another small stream (2.0 mi) and turns sharply uphill through a rocky area. It crosses yet another small stream and then immediately cuts under a power line and climbs to a picnic area parking lot (2.1 mi).

From the parking lot, it is a short walk across the paved Mountain Road to the stone **picnic pavilion** (1,740 ft) constructed by the CCC and offering excellent views to the northeast.

The Futures Trail does not cross the Mountain Road here; it exits the parking lot on the west end and continues climbing. It crosses a small stream (2.2 mi), goes under a power line (2.4 mi) and climbs uphill to a junction with a grassed-in skid road (2.6 mi) and soon crosses under the power line again. The trail descends gradually to a stream crossing and a log landing adjacent to the paved Mountain Road (2.8 mi).

Here the trail crosses the Mountain Road and follows an old logging road along the contour. Turning sharply uphill (3.2 mi), it continues to climb steeply following the skid road. The skid road ends and the trail crosses a series of three small drainages just before the junction with the spur trail to the Steam Donkey (3.4 mi, 2,450ft).

The spur trail to the remains of the **Steam Donkey** is 0.1 mi long and is also marked with blue paint. A steam donkey was a steam powered machine used in the early 1900s for cable logging equipment. It is believed that this steam donkey broke down and was then abandoned by its cable logging crew sometime during the 1930s. A large boiler, cables, and gears remain on site.

From the spur trail junction, the Futures Trail soon takes a sharp left-hand turn and continues climbing uphill, intersecting with the Futures Link Trail at 3.8 mi (2,790ft). The Futures Link Trail is 0.1 mi long and connects the Futures Trail to the Slab and Slot Trails. Thus, it can be used as a way to bypass the summit and go directly to the upper auto road parking lot, or it can be used as part of a slightly shorter, alternate way to the summit.



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From this junction, the Futures Trail continues slabbing the hillside, climbs steeply through a ledgy area of balsam fir and white birch (4.0 mi) until its union with the Windsor Trail (4.1 mi, 2,840 ft). It is an additional 0.5 miles following white blazes to the summit (4.6 mi, 3,150 ft). Along the way, the trail passes through the Stone Hut site (3,110 ft) and past the side trail to Brownsville Rock. An observation tower on the right just before the true summit affords a panoramic 360° view of the White Mountains, Green Mountains, Berkshires, and Taconics.

Distances from the Ascutney State Park to:

- Bare Rock Vista: 1.0 mi.
- Stone Picnic Pavilion parking lot: 2.1 mi.
- Steam Donkey Spur Trail junction: 3.4 mi.
- Futures Link Trail junction: 3.8 mi.
- Windsor Trail Junction: 4.1 mi.
- Mt. Ascutney summit: 4.6 mi. 2,590 ft ascent