

Sugar Hill NH – Lupines by Robert Bicknell

Sugar Hill is a small town in northern NH just west of Franconia Notch. It is about 110 miles from Westford and about a 2 hour 15 minute drive. Aside from being a summer home destination it is also known for its lupines and annual Lupine Festival.

The lupines are in bloom for about the middle two weeks of June, corresponding with the Lupine Festival. Hmm, is there a connection here?

Per the website of the Franconia Chamber of Commerce (<http://www.franconianotch.org>)
[Annual Lupine Festival](#) (June 5-21, 2009)

"The Fields of Lupine Festival is a time honored event sponsored by the communities of Franconia, Easton, Sugar Hill, Bethlehem, Littleton and Lisbon to showcase this colorful pageant. The lupine carpets local fields and pastures in a rolling sea of vibrant purples, pinks, blues and whites. The long-lasting blossoms attract equally dazzling butterflies and create a breathtaking floral display against the majestic backdrop of the Franconia, Presidential, and Kinsman Mountain ranges. Tour guide books are available with daily events throughout the month, weekend specials and include hospitality and shopping coupons for use throughout the festival. Filled with entertainment and other activities as well as an award winning photo contest"

Directions from Westford:

US Rte 3 north into NH, becoming toll rd (Everett Turnpike) to Manchester NH
It becomes Rte 293 through Manchester.

Then Rte 93 at Hooksett (toll)

Continue north on Rte 93 through Franconia Notch State Park.

Either take exit 34c and Rte 18 down into Franconia Village or stay on Rte 93 until exit 37 and go into Franconia Village.

Follow Rte 18 through Franconia Village to Rte 117

Take left on Rte 117 and proceed uphill.

Lupines will start popping up along the road within about a mile or so.

Pass Polly's Pancake Parlor on right. Lupine in Polly's parking lot is worth a stop on the way back. Also keep an eye out for the occasional black bear. Last year we saw a cub prowling around someone's front yard on this section of 117. Then pass Iris Farm on the left. (Great views but not much parking). You will then pass a couple of fields on the left and right with lupine. The field on the left has some old farm equipment.

Continuing uphill you will pass a small white (summer) church and then come to Sunset Hill Rd (Sugar Hill Sampler) on the left. This is a good place to stop and take stock of the situation. There used to be a fine field of lupine diagonally across from the Sampler with an old wagon. The field developed weeds and the authorities plowed it under in the hopes of reblooming. In 2008 it wasn't very good; in fact it was a disappointment. However, if the weather is right this road has million dollar views, especially of the Presidentials and Mt Washington off in the distance or more close by

Mt Lafayette and Cannon Mtn. (but house lots are going fast so this may not last) Sugar Hill Sampler has information and maps (for a fee) of the Lupine Festival and the area.

From here you have a lot of options:

You can continue over the Rte 117 hill down into the village of Sugar Hill.

(On 6/5 and 6/6 there is an Arts show and sale. I'm planning on exhibiting on 6/5)

However, aside from Harman's Cheese (good cheddar!), there isn't a lot to photograph.

Or head back downhill towards Franconia on Rte 117 and photograph as you go

There are patches of lupine off of Lafayette Rd (on the south end of Sunset Hill Road, heading down to NH 116, but not as many as on Rte. 117).

Also, check out **Robert Frost Farm** (the Frost Place) on Ridge Rd. Take Rte 116 south from Franconia Village and just south of the self storage facility there is a sign on the right. There is a small dirt parking lot on Ridge Rd (narrow).

Once you have worn out the lupines, head back on Rte 18 into Franconia Notch.

Lots of interesting photo ops as you approach the Notch: Echo Lake, Profile Lake, the Old Man site, the Basin. Etc.

If you have time and the inclination (and the light seems right) stop at The Flume.

Facilities, gas, food etc: Parking is generally on the side of the roads so be careful.

Not much for rest rooms in Sugar Hill except the portapotties at the Sugar Hill Sampler so stop in advance. Back in Lincoln (Exit 32 Rte 93) there are lots of gas stations, McDonalds etc)

White Mtn. Bagel has coffee and Elvio's pizza is good. I usually gas-up on the way home down in Plymouth NH (exit 25 Rte 93). There are an Irving and a Mobil just off the highway.

Photographing the lupines presents a paradox. Most of my best lupine photos were taken on "soft" days with rain, clouds or light rain. However, with rain there are no scenic views. I did have one trip where I got some super lupine photos on a very hot mid day with bright sun - just get in "close" and avoid the sky. (A polarizer also helps immensely)

Mapquest or Delorme maps are very good.