

# Gothics North Face (Adirondacks)

## Introduction

The North Face of Gothics is a popular Adirondack climb. In Summer, it is a friction climb, whereas in Winter it is a mountaineering route where conditions can vary greatly, from deep snow (it then becomes skiable by very experienced skiers) to a thin layer of rotten ice. The overall slope is between 40 and 45 degrees. The rareness of placement for protections increases the overall difficulty of this climb. Climbers who find that the climb is too difficult for them (because of their skills or because of the prevailing snow/ice conditions) have the option of climbing along the trees, where the exposure is lesser and the trees can be used as anchors.

## Topographic Maps

1:25000 North Elba NYS DOT G47 USGS 044073b7  
1:25000 Mount Marcy NYS DOT H47 USGS 044073a7  
Available from: [www.nysgis.state.ny.us/quads/usgsdrg.htm](http://www.nysgis.state.ny.us/quads/usgsdrg.htm)

## How to get there

### 1. Get to the Garden parking lot.

From the north: Hwy 87, exit 34, left on route 9N up to Keene, left on route 73 at the 3-way intersection at Keene, continue up to Keene Valley, turn right on Adirondack street (shortly after the Mountaineer store), drive up to the end of the road, the parking lot is there.

From the south: Hwy 87, exit 30, follow route 73 up to Keene Valley, turn left on Adirondack street, drive up to the end of the road, the parking lot is there. If the parking lot is full (as this often happens), then you have to park at the village and to hike back (about 2.5 km/1.5 mi).



Source : I Love New York - Tourism Map

### 2. Get to Orebed lean-to

From the Garden, take Johns Brook trail (north side) up to the interior outpost (5.0 km/3.1 mi), take right at the T-junction, and soon you will cross a small brook. Then take a wooden bridge left and cross Johns brook. Continue and pass a cabin and group of lean-tos. Keep your left in the maze of short trail segments, and soon, you will come to the crossing of Orebed brook, that may be difficult. Climb the steep south bank to another T-junction, turn right, and continue up to the 5-way junction, then to Orebed lean-to. The lean-to is 7.1 km/4.4 mi from the Garden trailhead. In snow period, it is generally efficient and enjoyable to use skis to get to Orebed lean-to. Depending on snow conditions and on one's ability to ski, it may be preferable to remove skis from the first lean-to (Bear Brook, 1.4 km/0.9 mi from the trailhead) to the top of the hill past the second lean-to (Deer Brook, 2.1 km/1.3 mi), and for the crossing of Orebed brook. Also identify and remember tricky spots in case you fail to control your speed on the way down.

### 3. Get to the North Face

From the lean-to, continue up the Orebed trail for about 0.8 km/0.5 mi, to the crossing of a tributary of Orebed brook. The tributary is large enough to first appear as being Orebed brook itself, but looking at the map will soon make everything clear. Follow this brook for a distance of a bit less than 0.3 km/0.2 mi from the maintained trail. At this point, a small tributary enters from the right. Following this tributary for about 1.0 km/0.6 mi takes you exactly at the base of the North Face. If, instead, at 0.2km from the maintained trail, you follow the main tributary, you will eventually come to a slide called « Ribbon Slide ». This slide emerges on the ridge between Armstrong and Gothics, east of a noticeable bump on the ridge. This noticeable bump needs to be climbed in order to proceed to Gothics.

### 4. Climb the North Face

The center-right of this large slab is considered to be « the real thing ». The far right, near the trees, allows one to use trees as aids or anchors. To the left, the face is less steep, and typically offers some stripes of thicker ice in Winter, when the right part becomes very thin. There is typically no placement for protections, except maybe for ice screws where/if the ice is thick enough. Once you reach the top of the face, you will have to walk about 5 minutes through sparse vegetation in order to reach the actual summit of Gothics.

### 5. Get back to Orebed lean-to

After having climbed the slide (see description below), you basically have 3 options: A) get down the North Face, B) get down the Ribbon slide. Look carefully at the map to locate it unless you have been there before. C) the maintained trail that descends the west side of Gothics is very steep, but remains the easiest way for getting back to Orebed lean-to. Once you get to the Gothics-Saddleback col, the trail enters a more sheltered forest, and takes you down to Orebed lean-to (unless you decide to take advantage of being there and choose to climb Saddleback also). When you come to the tributary that leads to the North Face (where you had left the maintained trail a couple of hours before), be sure not to take the broken path to your right, or you may enter an endless loop!

## Credits and Distribution

### MapWork/Text

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### Distribution

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Gothics North Face from the west. March 23, 2003.



