



The Ausable Flume is a popular swimming hole.

►► rocky knob with a 180-degree vista that included the Champlain Valley, the Sentinel Range, Algonquin Peak, Indian Pass and, close by, the ski center and slides on Whiteface.

It was a nice view, but I was a little annoyed to discover that if I had turned right at the last fork, I would have ended up on a higher knob. So I returned to the fork and climbed it, too. At 2,880 feet, this offers slightly more expansive views toward the Champlain Valley. Looking toward the High Peaks, I also could see Mount Colden and Avalanche Pass.

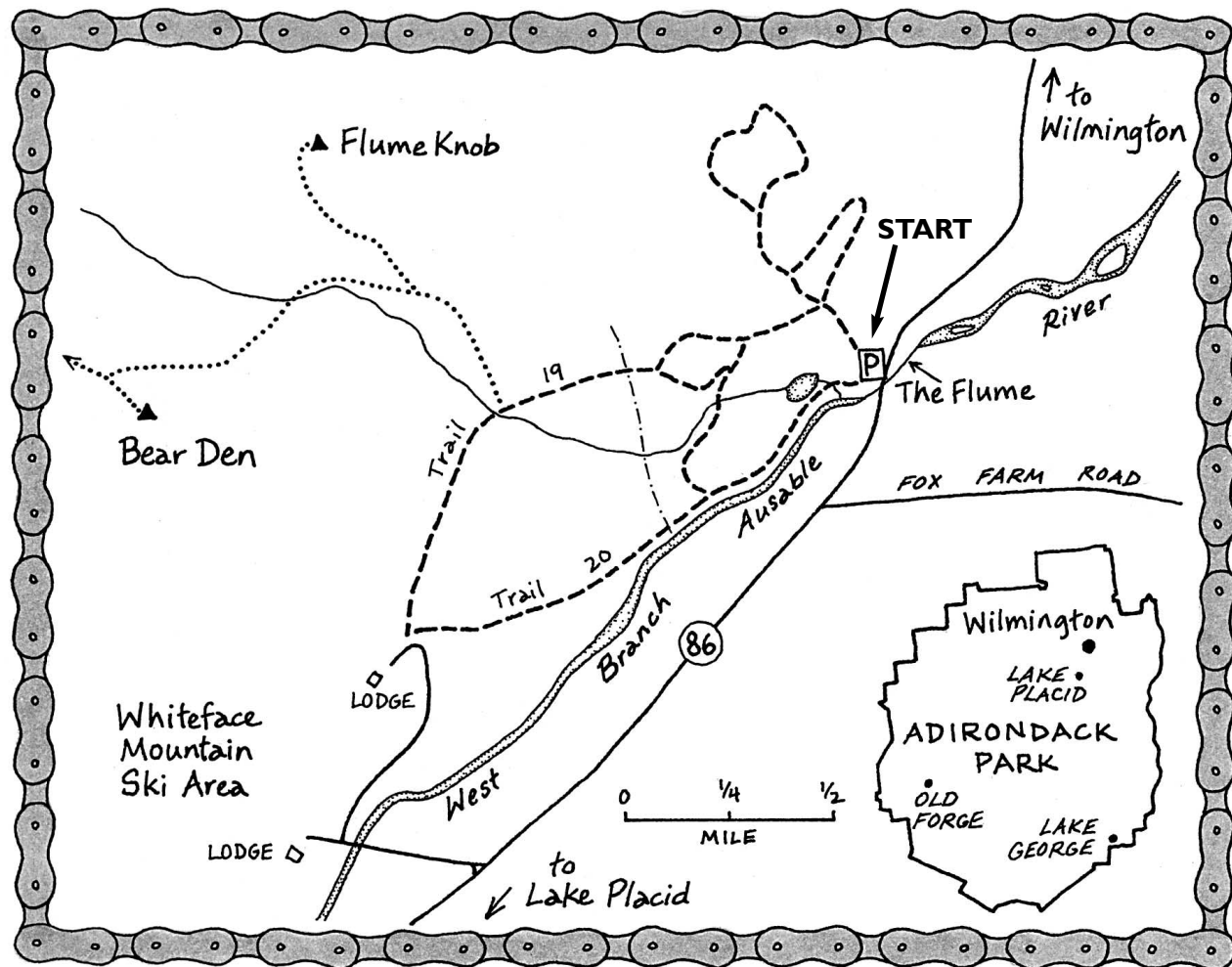
On my descent, I managed to stay on the trail the whole way. When I got back to the original fork, I turned left to take the route to 2,450-foot Flume Knob. It is well marked by bottle caps nailed into trees. Because it ascends through an open pine forest (with some big white pines), this trail is much easier to follow. Flume Knob is another ledge with good views of the Champlain Valley and numerous peaks, including the Jay Range, Hurricane Mountain and the Sentinels.

Right now, the Bear Den and Flume Knob trails are informal routes. DEC proposes to mark and maintain the Bear Den trail in the future, but until that happens—or until somebody clears the trail—most hikers probably will want to avoid it. The Flume Knob trail, besides being easier to follow, is much shorter.

### THE SWIM

Finding my bike, I mounted and started cautiously down the steep, rocky trail, keeping my hands on the brakes. When the grade relented, I started coasting at a good clip, and it wasn't long before I was back at the kiosk. During my hike, someone had torn up several pages of the register and scattered them on the ground. Go figure.

After working up a good sweat biking and hiking, I wanted a good swim. I left my bike at the car, crossed Route 86 and followed an obvious path along—or rather, above—the Ausable. You find yourself at the edge of a nar-



Map by Nancy Bernstein

**THE WHITEFACE MOUNTAIN SKI CENTER** offers another option for mountain biking in Wilmington. Bikers can ride 21 miles of trails every day in summer and on weekends from Sept. 11 to Oct. 11. The basic trail pass costs \$6. Bikers can pay more to use the Cloudsplitter Gondola to whisk them to the top of Little Whiteface Mountain. The gondola pass costs \$25 for adults and \$15 for children under 13. Rentals are available.

The Whiteface trails connect to the Wilmington Wild Trails, which can be ridden for free. For more information, visit [www.whiteface.com](http://www.whiteface.com) or phone (518) 946-2223.

**MORE INFORMATION** about the Wilmington mountain-bike trails (and a map) can be found online at [www.lakeplacid.net/willkommenhof/mt\\_bike.htm](http://www.lakeplacid.net/willkommenhof/mt_bike.htm) or obtained from the Whiteface/Wilmington Regional Visitors Bureau on Route 86 in Wilmington (across the street from Tops Supermarket). You also can phone the bureau at (888) 944-8332.



row canyon, with the water 30 feet below. This is the Flume, one of the fabled stretches of a fabled river. If you keep going, the trail soon descends to a beautiful pool.

It's a popular swimming hole. On this day, 20 people,

mostly teenagers, were enjoying the water. They were jumping off little cliffs, lounging on rocks and riding the currents. I could think of no better way to end the day than to dive in and join the crowd. ■

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Biology major Levi Rudd on Whiteface Mountain