

GRASS POND MOUNTAIN

Location	North shore of Lows Lake, accessed from Cranberry Lake or from CR 421 near Tupper Lake								
Aspect	West								
Height	120'								
Quality	★★★								
Approach	2 hr 12 min, moderate; requires a boat								
Summary	An undeveloped cliff with amazing potential in an extremely remote wilderness setting.								
	5.6-	5.7	5.8	5.9	5.10	5.11	5.12	5.13	Total
	0	0	3	2	1	0	0	0	6

This cliff is a real gem and one of the more remote cliffs in the Adirondack Park. The existing routes are located on the shorter, less imposing right end; so far, no routes have been done on the good-looking overhanging faces of the main cliff. The established climbs are short, but they're all pretty good.

The left (north) end of the cliff has two bands (a lower and an upper), both of which are dirty but offer several obvious possibilities. The main cliff is steep and relatively clean (quite clean in some spots) and stretches about 0.25 mile. It is consistently 80–120' high. There is good potential for new rock routes here, mostly 5.8 and above, on steep to overhanging rock.

The trail reaches the cliff near a 20'-tall pointed orange tower of rock known as Leaning Tower. Just right of the tower is a section of overhanging orange rock. To reach the existing routes, walk right from Leaning Tower past a low nose of rock to a giant flake that leans up against the cliff and forms a cave. This flake is the landmark for locating the routes.

HISTORY

The cliff was first reported by Jamie Savage, a teacher at the Ranger School in Wanakena, and Tad Welch. During their first visit, they found evidence of previous climbers on **Lost Horizon** and **Lunatic Hares**, perhaps from nearby Boy Scout groups' top roping. The cliff and the ice caves in the talus seem to be a popular destination for Boy Scouts in the Sabattis area.

DIRECTIONS

(map page 590)

The shortest way to this cliff is to boat 6 miles to the southeast end of Cranberry Lake, then hike 4 miles or so to the cliff.

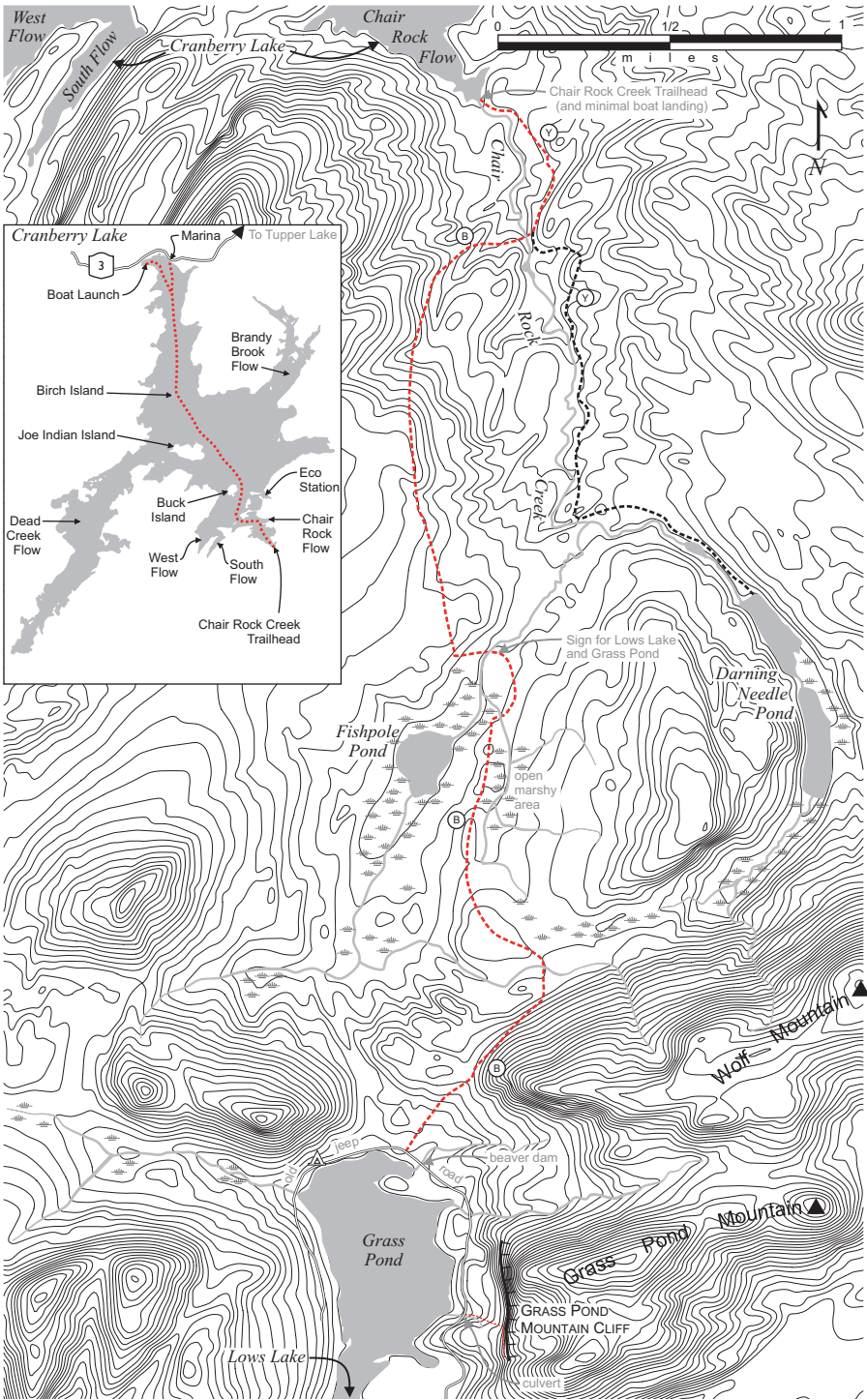
Start in the town of Cranberry Lake [513048,4896520](#). The easiest way across the lake is by motorboat, as Cranberry Lake is very large, and the open-water sections can be quite windy and rough. There is a public boat launch in town: from the center of town, go 1.1 miles east on NY 3 and turn left onto Colombian Road; the boat launch is 0.4 mile on the left. The Emporium Marina (315.848.2140) runs a water taxi and rents kicker boats (\$60.00 per day in 2007). Either way, from town, aim for the left side of Birch Island, then the left side of Joe Indian Island, then the left side of Buck Island. Continue past Buck Island heading toward a remote grouping of lake houses. Bear left into Chair Rock Flow and follow it as it winds its way around a point and through a minefield of submerged stumps. At the very end of the flow is a trailhead, just left of where Chair Rock Creek drains into the lake [516340,4887491](#). It takes 40 min to reach the trailhead from town, assuming you don't get lost in the maze of false bays and islands.

From the landing, hike the yellow trail that follows the left side of Chair Rock Creek. At 4 min, an unexplained blue-marked trail merges from the left; stay straight on the yellow trail. At 11 min, the trail forks;

Early morning fog over Grass Pond. Photo by Simeon Warner.



Cranberry Lake



the left fork (yellow markers) goes to Darning Needle Pond. Take the right fork (marked with blue markers and yellow "canoe carry" markers) for Grass Pond and cross Chair Rock Creek. (Note that the mileages on the signs are very wrong.) At 40 min, cross a stream with a sign for Grass Pond but no intersection. At 45 min, the trail reaches a marshy area on the left (with Fishpole Pond barely visible through the trees to the right) and continues along its side. At 1 hr 15 min, the trail hits a T-intersection with the old jeep road that circles Grass Pond, a large pinched-off bay on the north side of Lows Lake.

From the T-intersection, you can walk right for 5 min to the end of the blue-marked trail. Continue on the jeep road for 2 min to a beautiful campsite (#32) 515647,4882483 with views of the cliff, a sandy beach, and an outhouse.

From the T-intersection, turn left and walk across a beaver dam, then follow the old jeep road as it rings the pond. After 12 min, the jeep road crosses a large culvert that drains an obvious creekbed (dry in the summer). (This is the second culvert; you'll also pass a smaller, somewhat hidden culvert that drains a wet area.) Just before the creek is an excellent herd path marked with tape and a cairn that heads 5 min up to the cliff. The trail meets the cliff just right of the aptly named Leaning Tower, a 20'-high orange feature in the talus 516452,4881730.

The herd path is maintained by a local Boy Scout group and leads to "ice caves," holes in the talus slope beneath the cliff that hold ice throughout the year.

Alternate Approach: Begin at the intersection of CR 421 and NY 30 between Tupper Lake and Long Lake. From Tupper Lake (where NY 3 and NY 30 split), drive on NY 30 toward Long Lake for 8.4 miles, then turn right on CR 421. From Long Lake (the intersection of NY 28N and NY 30), follow NY 30 toward Tupper Lake for 13.0 miles, then turn left on CR 421.

From the beginning of CR 421 (0.0 mile), drive to the end of the pavement at 5.8 miles, then turn left on a dirt road and follow it to Lows Lower Dam canoe access at 6.5 miles.

From the put-in at Lows Lower Dam, paddle upstream along the winding Bog River for 3 miles (40 min) to the right (north) end of Hitchins Pond. Paddle south (left) across the pond to the inlet brook and follow it to the base of Lows Upper Dam and a portage. (The Hitchins Pond Cliff, page 587, is up and right.) Carry over the dam and continue on the Bog River to Lows Lake. Paddle along the north shore, around a large point, then north into Grass Pond, the pinched-off bay to the north. This is a long paddle (about 14 miles), requiring about half a day.

1 Lost Horizon 5.8 G 50' ★★★

Sustained crack climbing.

Start: At the right end of the cliff is a giant flake that leans up against the cliff forming a cave, below a long sharp-edged ceiling 30' up. 10' right of the flake is a roof 15' up. This route begins 3' right of the right end of the roof, at an obvious straight-up crack.

P1 5.8 G: Up the crack through a flared section to a V-slot below a tiny triangular ceiling. Climb out right to a ledge, then step left and climb up to the top. Walk right to a pine tree. 50'

FA Sep 2006, Tad Welch, Jamie Savage

2 Take the Power Back 5.9 G 50' ★★

An unlikely start is made easier by hidden incut buckets. Named for a Rage Against the Machine song.

Start: 6' right of **Lost Horizon** is a right-facing corner that sits below a shallow right-facing open book that begins 15' up.

P1 5.9 G: Climb the corner through some bulges on good incut buckets to a stance below the open book. Up the open book to a ledge (crux). Move left and join **Lost Horizon** to the top; walk right to a pine tree. 50'

Gear: To 0.75", including small TCUs.

FA Jul 16, 2007, Jim Lawyer, Colin O'Connor

3 The Dharma Initiative 5.9+ G 50' ★★★

Good climbing through the roof. The route is named for a fictional research project in the television series *Lost*.

Start: Right of **Take the Power Back** and above some blocks is a large box-shaped alcove formed by large opposing corners 10' apart and capped by a large roof 30' up. This route begins in the left-facing corner that forms the right side of the box-shaped alcove.

P1 5.9+ G: Up a chimney up to the roof, then out right (crux) and into the shallow left-facing corner above. Work up the corner to the top and a good pine tree anchor. 50'

Gear: To 2".

FA Jul 16, 2007, Jim Lawyer, Colin O'Connor

*Tad Welch on the first ascent of Lost Horizon (5.8).
Photo by Jamie Savage.*

