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Mountains in a Pandemic: Introduction

Christine Woodside

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Mountains in a Pandemic

Winter 2020 brought the new coronavirus, SARS-Co-V-2, to the world. Few alive had ever lived through a worldwide threat of a highly contagious virus whose origins were murky and treatment yet to be found. Suddenly, the best public-health advice was to return to the days of the 1918 flu pandemic: wear masks and stay away from people to avoid catching coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). That meant that traveling out and up into distant mountain ranges could not happen, and exploring home trails and forests became a stressful affair. In mid-March, in this journal's home range of New Hampshire's White Mountains, the U.S. Forest Service snow rangers decided that to keep everyone safe they would cease predicting avalanches or doing rescues in Tuckerman Ravine. Soon after, the White Mountain National Forest closed many of the popular trailheads. The Appalachian Mountain Club closed its mountain lodges in Crawford Notch and Pinkham Notch and had to block off entry to its parking lots.

So we asked writers and adventurers from New York City, Boston, New Hampshire, the Alps, Maine, and Pennsylvania to write about what a quarantine feels like when it means you cannot feel free to wander in the wilds. We hope their explorations and resilience will offer some inspiration to get through the next year.

The mountains are not going anywhere.