



An American Tour: 88



Mt. Washington's Cog Railway

The Mount Washington Cog Railway is the world's first mountain-climbing cog railway (rack-and-pinion railway). The railway is still in operation, climbing Mount Washington in New Hampshire, USA. It uses a Marsh rack system and one or two steam locomotives and four biodiesel powered locomotives to carry tourists to the top of the mountain.

It is the second steepest rack railway in the world, with an average grade of over 25% and a maximum grade of 37.41%. The railway is approximately 3 miles long and ascends Mt. Washington's western slope beginning at an elevation of approximately 2,700 feet above sea level and ending just short of the mountain's summit peak of 6,288 feet. The train ascends the mountain at 2.8 miles per hour and descends at 4.6 mph. It takes approximately 65 minutes to ascend and 40 minutes to descend although the diesel can go up in as little as 37 minutes.

The railway was built by Sylvester Marsh, who came up with the idea while climbing the mountain in 1852. His plan was treated as insane. Local tradition says the state legislature voted permission based on a consensus that harm resulting from operating it was no issue — since the design was attempting the impossible — but benefits were guaranteed. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Washington_Cog_Railway]

