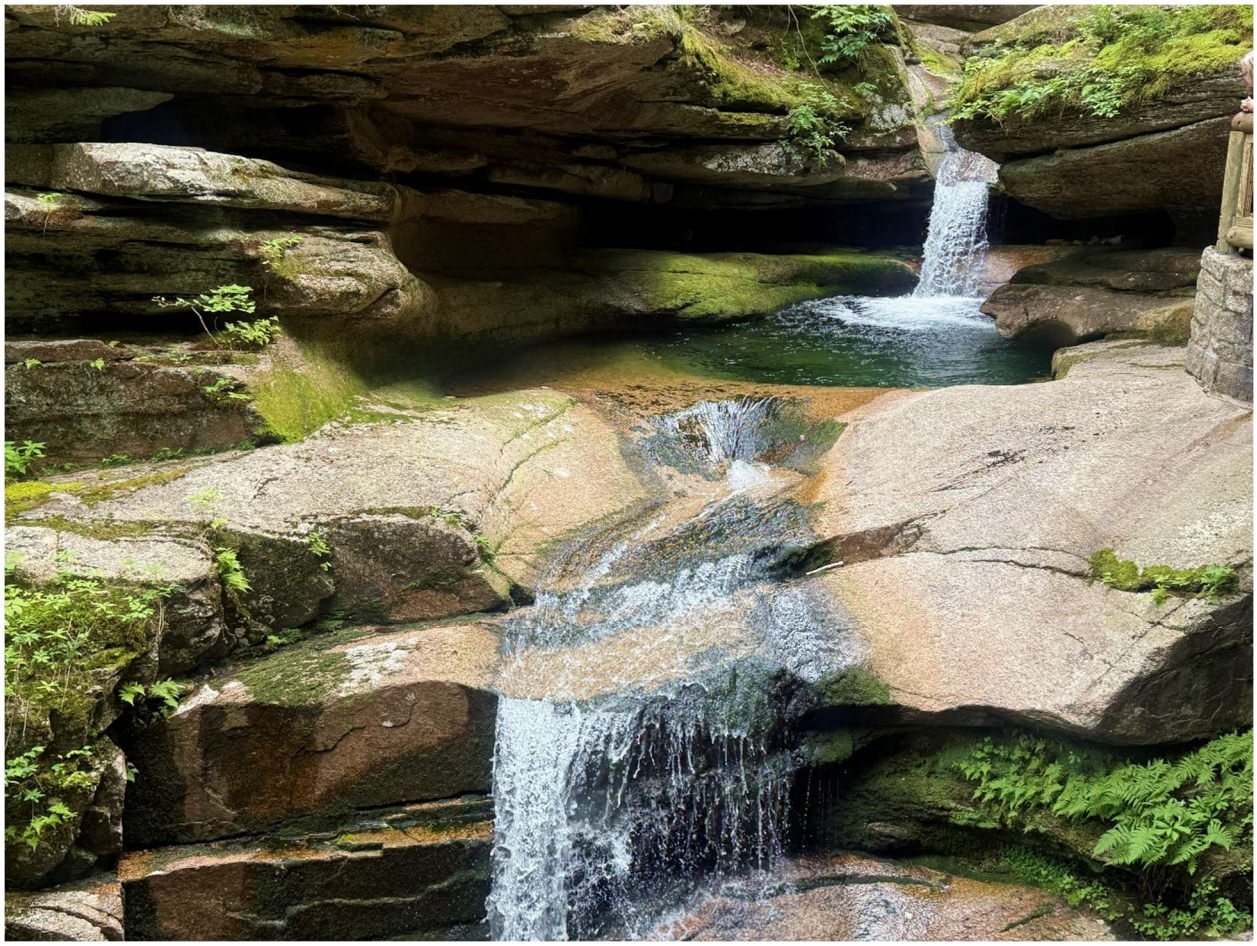
The Flyin' Solo VanLife on the Highways and Byways of North America
RICK'S ROADS
Ride Along and Enjoy the People, Places, and Who Knows What

BLOG POST: 2026.08.12

Waterfall Hunting 2: New Hampshire



After my day of Vermonting, my Harvest Host was a bar just about on the VT/NH line in a hard-to-find map point called East Haven, Vermont. I had stayed there a year or two before when it was called Dirt Church Brewery, and I liked it enough to return. It's called Roadside Pint now, but, really, all that has changed is the name and ownership.

I got to have a good chat with one of the new owners as I ate my hot pretzel and drank my cold, delicious Little Lush IPA. Her name might have been Barbara, but it might not have been. I suck at remembering names, and I'm not totally sure she told me anyway, so, Barbara it will be.





The few customers that were there when I arrived finished up their drinks and left (hopefully those two events are not causally related), leaving just me, one guy around my age, and Barbara.

The guy was sitting four stools to my right, and Barbara seemed very familiar with him. I quickly found out that he was one of those bar patrons who would only talk through the bartender. Even if I directed a related comment straight at him, his response was aimed at Barbara, without even looking my way.

It's odd behavior, to be sure, but I'd seen a good bit of it in my bartending days, to varying degrees. Some guys are overly wary of befriending a bar neighbor. They don't want to commit to anything resembling "acceptance" lest they be hit up for money, a ride home, acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, or the cost of a beer.

I can understand it. I've done it a little bit sometimes, I suppose, and in plenty of scenarios other than bars. Trouble is, I have a fundamental belief that, apart from all of you wonderful readers, people suck – at least until they prove otherwise.

Anyway, in this kind of conversation, the barkeeper is the fulcrum, and "the guy" and I were the levers. She was the connection point. We each had a function as long as she was there, but if Barb were to leave, all leverage would collapse. And if I then tried to make direct convo, I have no doubt that he would've put up his wall, maybe

muttered something, maybe waved me off altogether, maybe escaped to the restroom. When she returned, though, we could go back to our tri-corner chat.

So, yes, it is weird, but also yes, most bartenders will recognize it.

Barb asked where I was planning to go tomorrow, so I told her which NH waterfalls I had on my list. The guy gave a soft snort and took a pull off his lager.

She knew the game too, and gestured his way, “Pete knows all about every falls around. He could probably give you a tip or two.”

Pete, looking self-satisfied, replied *to her,* “I always thought that Sabbaday Falls was one of the best.”

It might have been funny if I pretended I did not hear him and let Barb repeat his recommendation to me, but I continued talking at Pete. “Where is that one? Is it north of here?”

Looking into his beer, but facing Barb, he said, “On the Kancamangus.” I was heading that way anyway, so I typed it into my iPad.

Pete knocked off his final slosh, pushed back his stool, wordlessly put a hand up beside his head – an apparent “see-ya” wave to Barb – and walked out.

“Nice talking to ya,” I called after him, “Thanks for the tip!”

No acknowledgment whatsoever.

But his recommendation would prove to be spot-on (see photo on page 1).

Tomorrow started with a different falls, though…

Crystal Cascade, Gorham, NH

Great name, yes? How you not go check out a place called *Crystal Cascade?* Sounds like its in freaking Middle Earth. It's a short hike, though uphill all the way, through the thick forest of the foothills of Mount Washington, New England's tallest peak. There is a huge parking lot, and it was 99% full. I think I made it 100%. The late-morning weather was perfect: mid-70's, bright sunshine, easy breeze.



It was a rocky trail, but they were little rocks, and the slope was gradual, so the going was not slow.

The only downer was Crystal Cascade itself, sadly. Touted as being 100 feet, that height is split widely across multiple drops, and none of them are any kind of spectacular. A bridge crosses over one of the brinks, but, to me, that just took away one of the best views.

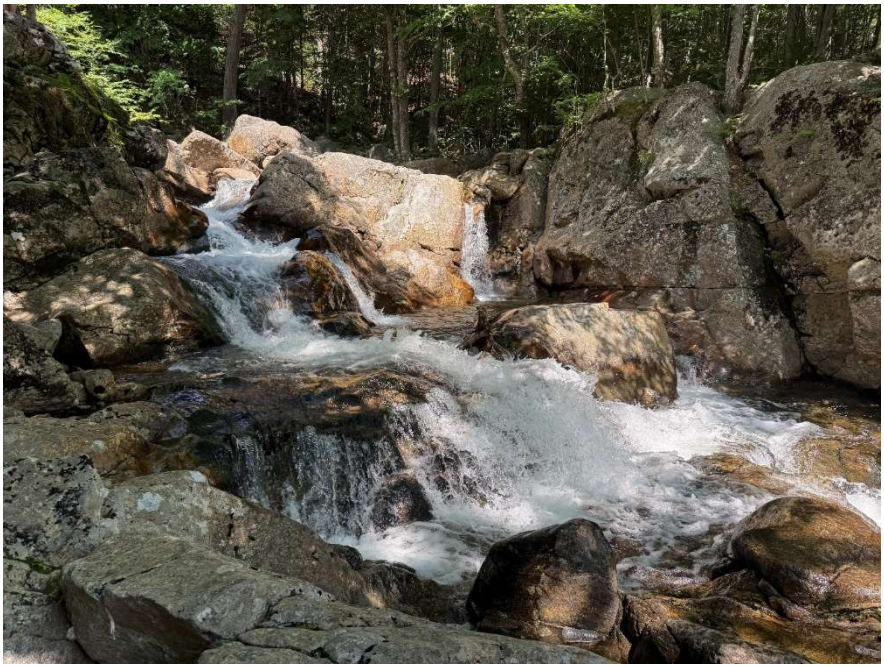
Given the late summer flow, the cascade just looked like a rocky river on a down slope.



I have no doubt that it would be far more compelling when gushing at its peak in Spring, but, today, it got a solid “Ehh” from me.

The next waterfall on the list was less than a mile down the road, so I left Maxx where he was at the Pickham Notch lot and buzzed down on my tiny e-bike.

Glen Ellis Falls, Jackson, New Hampshire



The trail from this smaller parking lot, which had plenty of open spots (go figure), is easy. It runs beside the river as it tumbles across some entertaining shallow cascades.

Then, there is a walled overlook right above the brink of the main 64-foot-high falls. Beyond that, the trail drops steeply, but there is a series of stone steps and a raw but sturdy log handrial leading down to the riverbank. Some people – both adults and children -- were down there, hanging out on the wide flat rocks and wading in the shallow water.

But, if you curl to th left from the bottom of the steps, you can clamber out onto a narrow, flat ledge on the edge of the primary fall’s basin. Which is where I went to enjoy the view and take some pics and vids.

Two young high school girls nearby decided that everybody hanging out down here was being a total wuss, and they announced – to their parents, ostensibly, but really to everybody – that they were going swimming, dammit. I was well in front of them taking a video, and the spray that was reaching me felt damn chilly, but, hey, go for it, girls.

They pulled off their t-shirts, dropped their baggy shorts, kicked off their sneaks, and, bikini-clad, came out onto the ledge. They were like 14, so it was not like some sexy show or anything, the only show was bravado.



There was no jump necessary; the ledge was basically just a step. The dark-haired girl in light pink did not hesitate and stepped boldly in. I watched her face change with each step; from brazen, to uncertain, to *what-the-hell-have-I-done?*

The blonde girl in purple was watching too, and was firmly in Pause Mode. Then Pinky slipped and went down. Not all the way down, but enough to dunk her to her shoulders. It even made me cringe. She nearly shrieked, clearly gasped, and scrambled to her feet. She practically dove back to the ledge.

PurpleGirl was looking at her, confused. I was thinking, *You don't know why she came back out so fast?* Pinky pushed past her, and shoved past me, blubbering, *ohmygodohmygod that is so fukking collllld holy shit holy fukking shittt.*

PurpleGirl watched her, then looked at the water, then at me. "I guess we're *not* going swimming," she said. I shrugged and commented flatly, "*I* wouldn't." She shrugged back, gave a cute smirk, and went to join her no-longer-brazen friend.

I took another video down here and a couple more vids of the upper cascades and then headed back to Maxx. Time to resume the day's hunt.

As it turned out, I missed a couple of the falls that were on my list. My GPS was sketchy up here in the White Mountains of northern New Hampshire, and I lost signal for extended periods. I could see the map, but the names of the smaller towns were missing, and there were no POI markers.

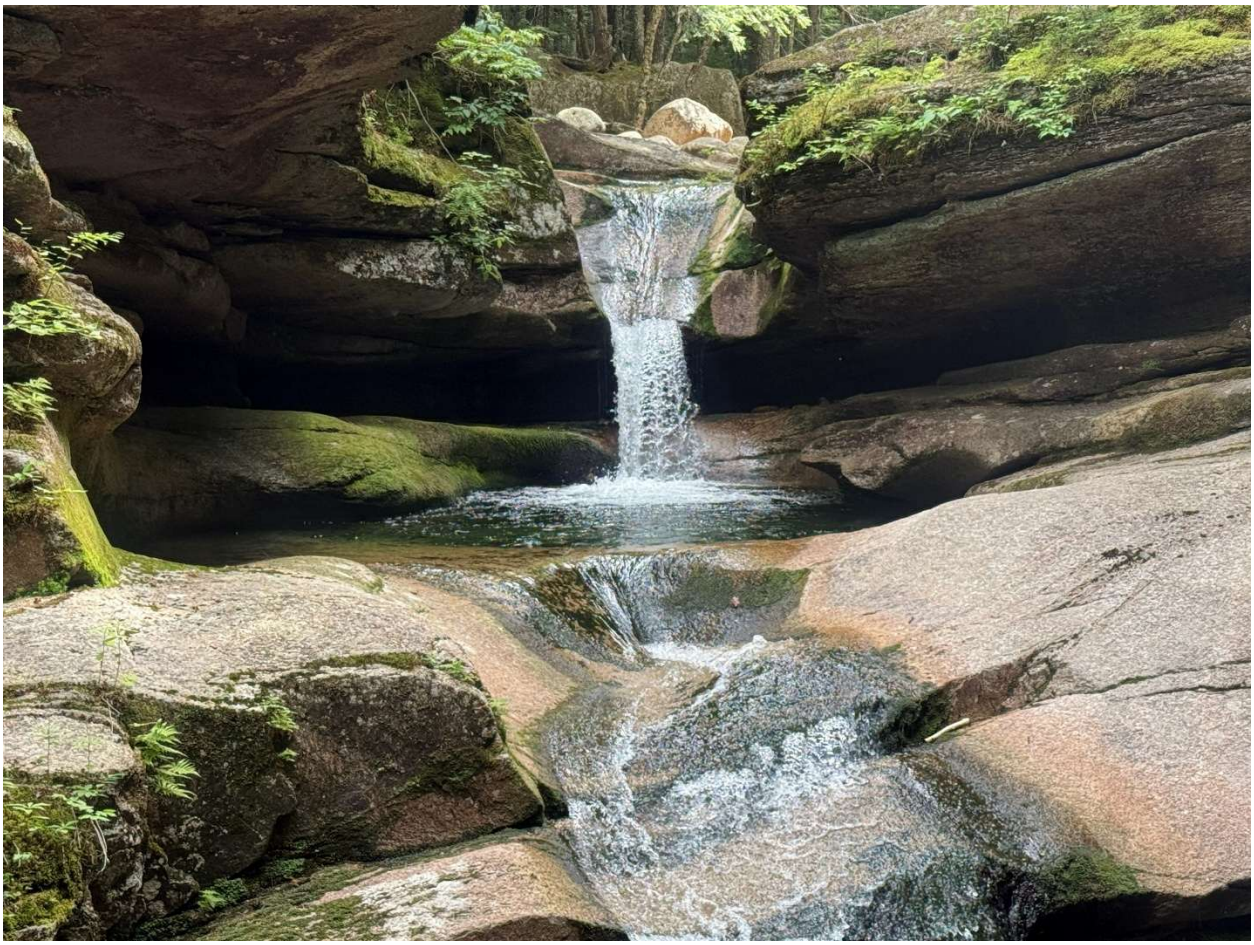
I drove to where I thought I should, but ended up many miles off the mark, at the end of a seven-mile-long road deep in the woods, stopped and staring at a covered wooden bridge – you know the type – with an 8'6" clearance. Maxx's 9'3" was not going to be driving through that freaking bridge, and there was no way around it.

What I knew from memory was that two of the falls on my list were fairly close together on the Kancamangus Highway, and if I backtracked to the last village and turned right, I'd be on that road.

A half-hour later, I was blowing off the blandly-named Lower Falls without even trying. It was one of those low cascades, and it was swarming with people. There must have been 100 of them walking all over the rocks. I was so outa there.

So, I drove on. And that brought me to…

Sabbaday Falls, Kancamangus Highway, NH



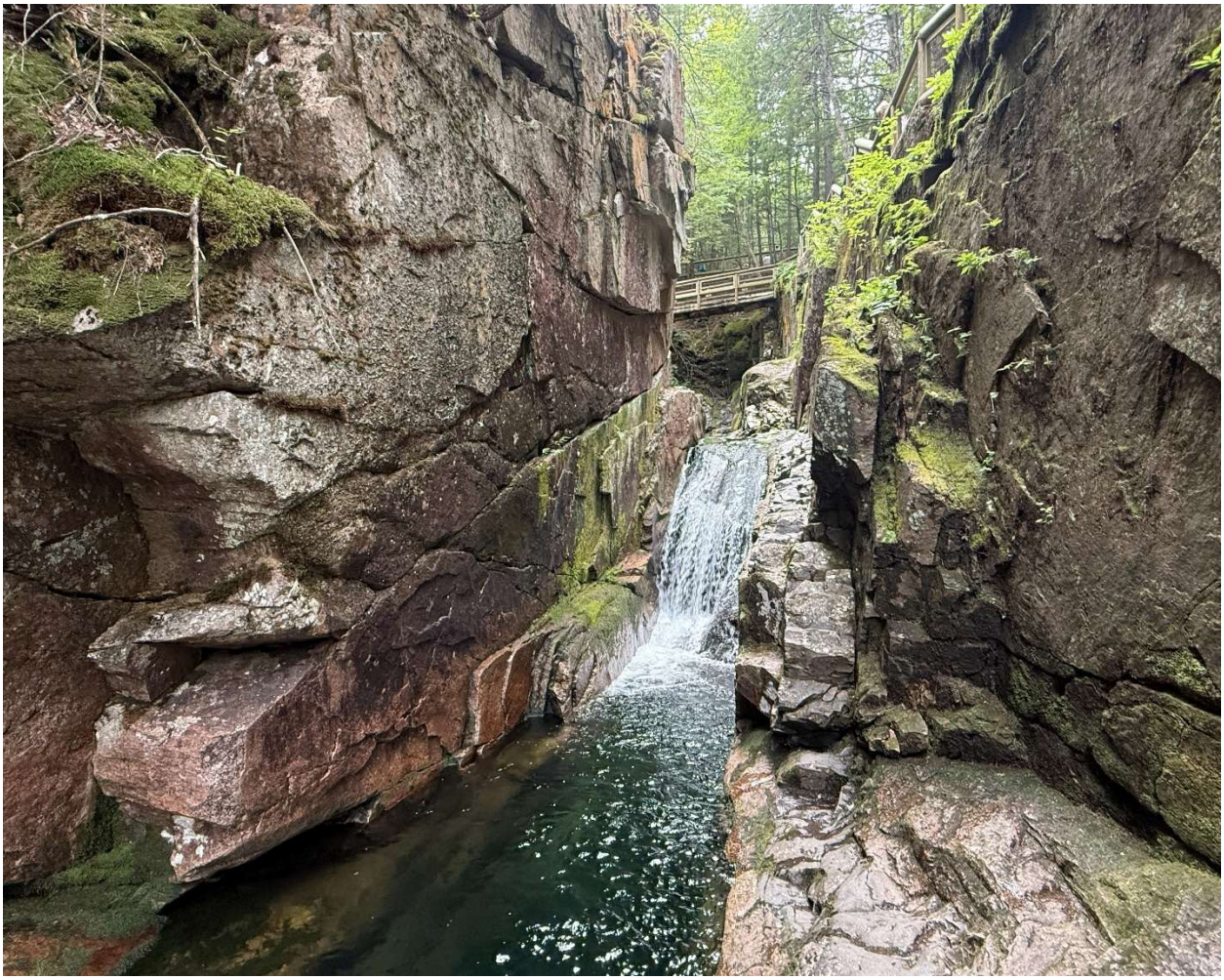
Apart from finding out how to get here, I deliberately learned nothing about this waterfall. Pete's rec was standing on its own. I craved the sense of discovery.

The parking lot was not-big-not-small, but it *was* full, so I parked on the shoulder of the road. There was plenty of room, it was suitably level, and several other vehicles were aleady there.

The map on display showed me that the hike was only about a half-mile. I strode with a purpose, trying to ignore the thirsty creek trickling a small among rocks to the left of the trail. I hoped that did not mean what I thought: the dreaded dry falls.

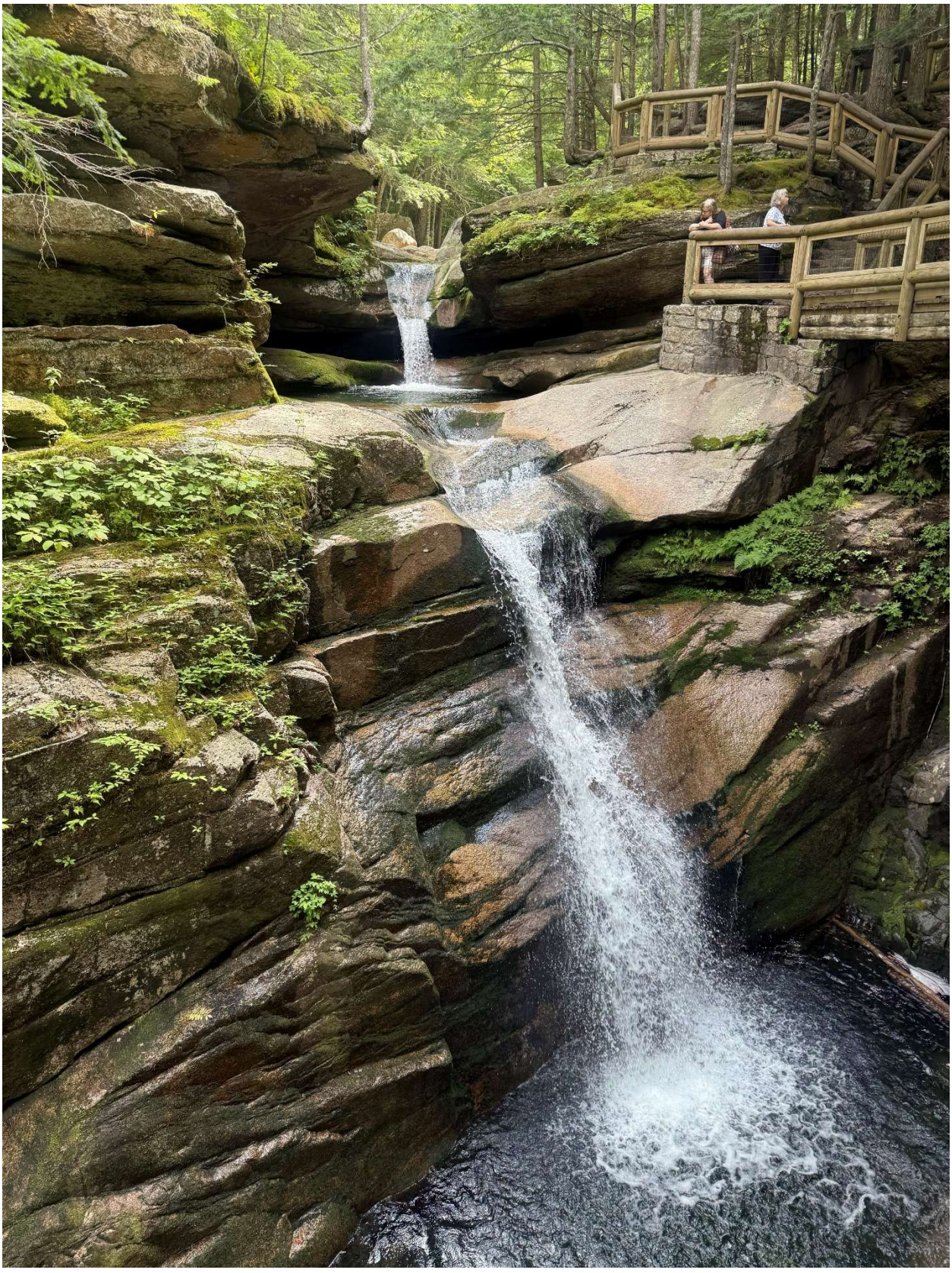
Thus, I was pretty happy when I got to the falls observation area and heard the sound of forceful splashing. I had gone left at the final fork, down to the pool below the falls themselves. Signs said that swimming was prohibited. Pinky could have used such a sign back at Glen Ellis.

I looked left and saw a narrow corridor between vertical rock walls. A short fall was pouring down, with a high bridge beyond it. Time to climb.

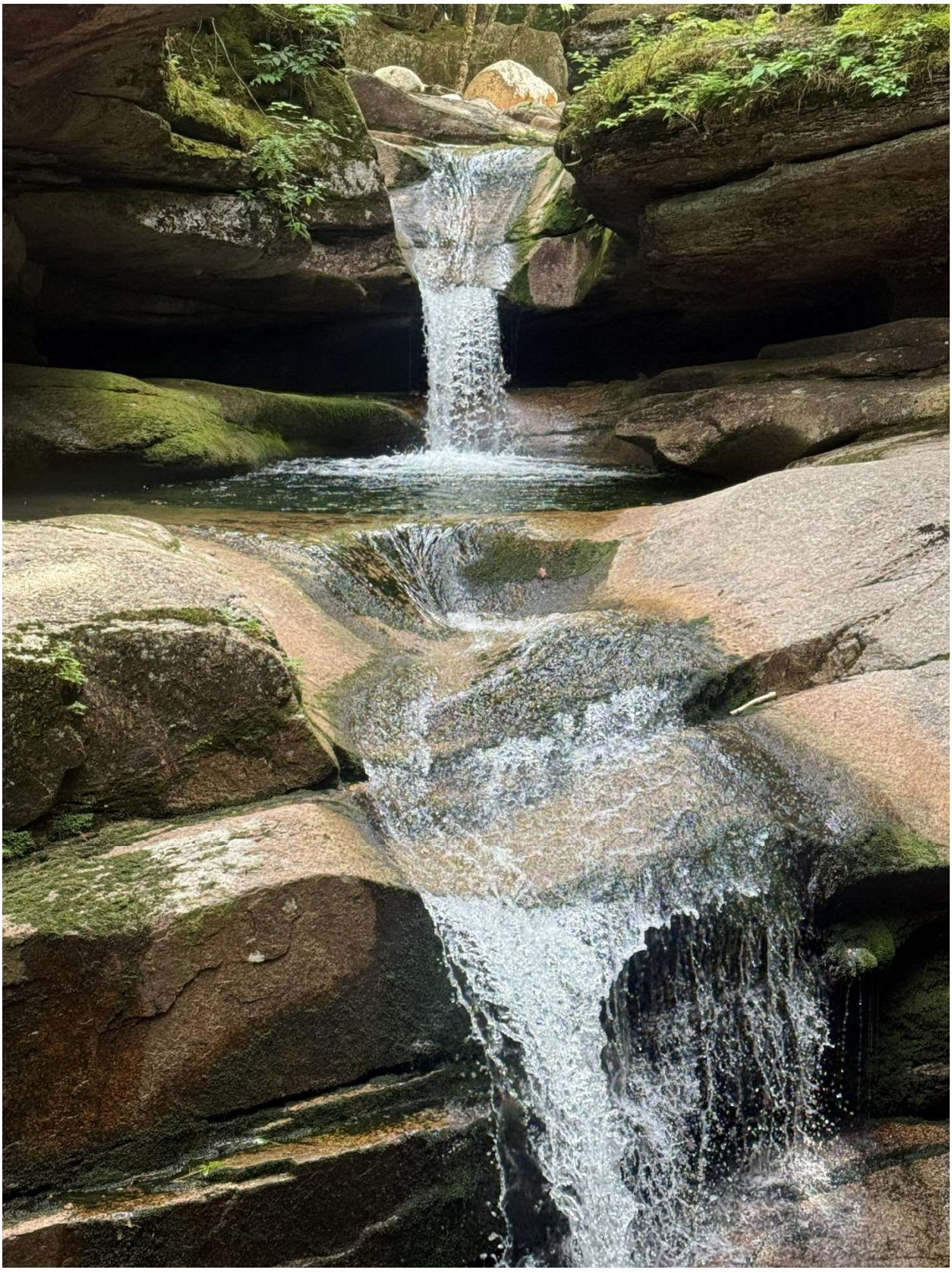




The railed trail revealed another, taller fall even farther up.

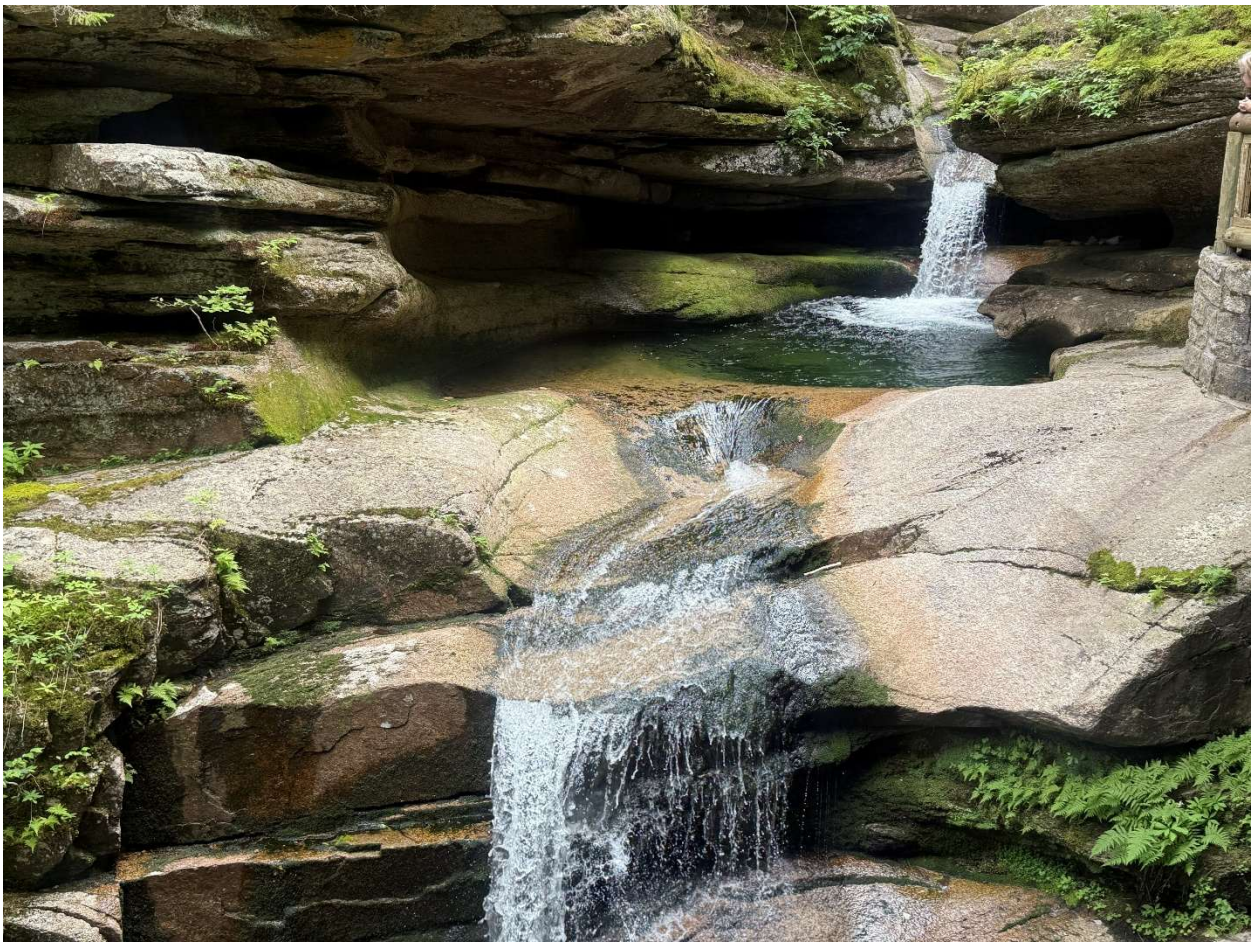


Followed by this beautiful, amazing hollow with a fall and a basin of it own.





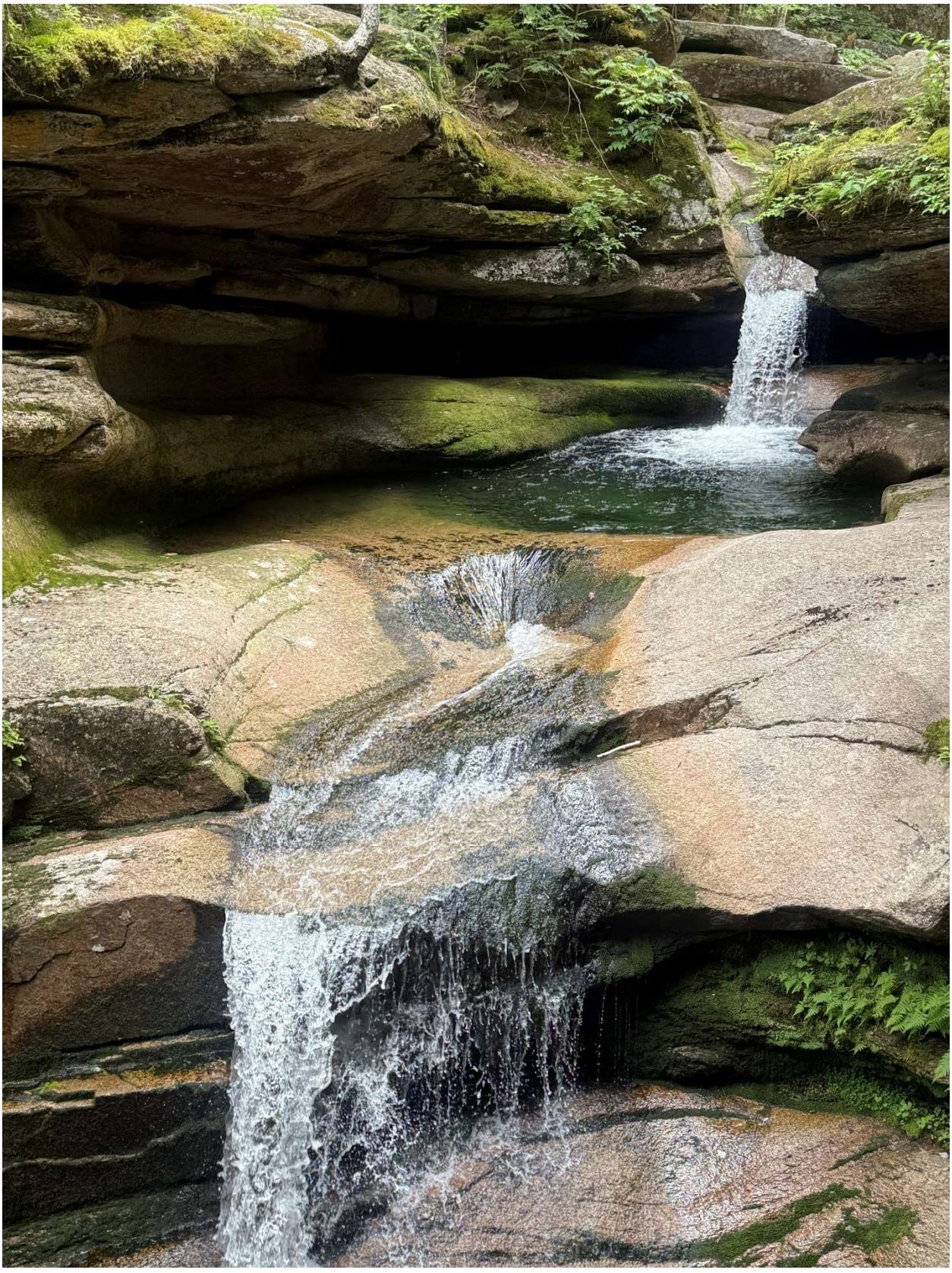
Wow, wow, and more wow. I could not take my eyes off it. I wanted to explore every little recess under that canopy of rock. The roundness of the opening, the smoothess of the sluice down into the basin, and of the sluice pouring out. All that lush green moss, both on the water-level rocks and hanging over that cool upper shelf.



The railed trail continued up to an observation deck right at the brink. The view from up there seemed ordinary, though, compared to the front-facing perspective, peering into that deep, shadowy space.



I went back down to that level and stayed there for a good while, just letting it all hypnotize me. But eventually, I took a casual and contented stroll back down to Maxx.

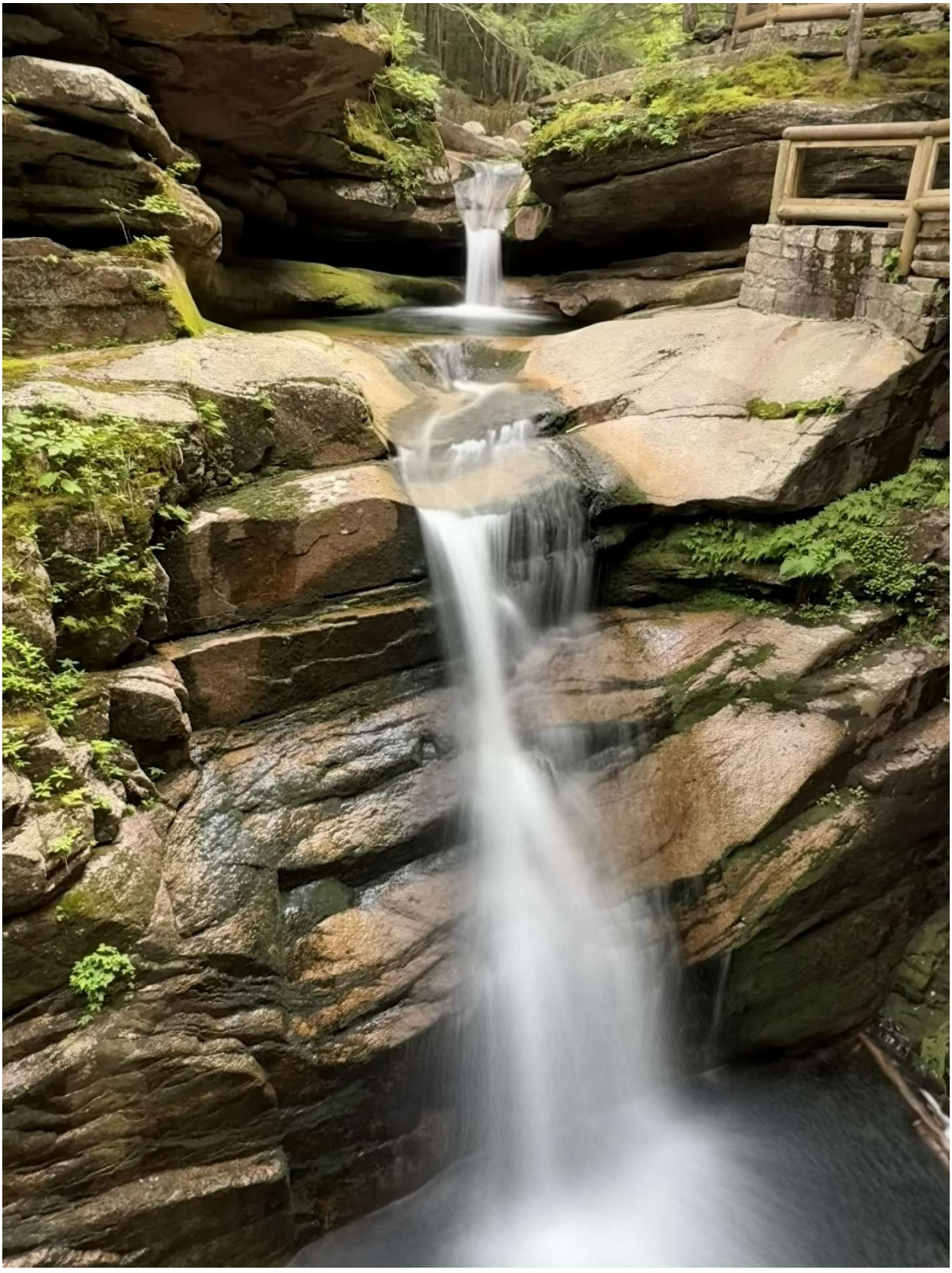


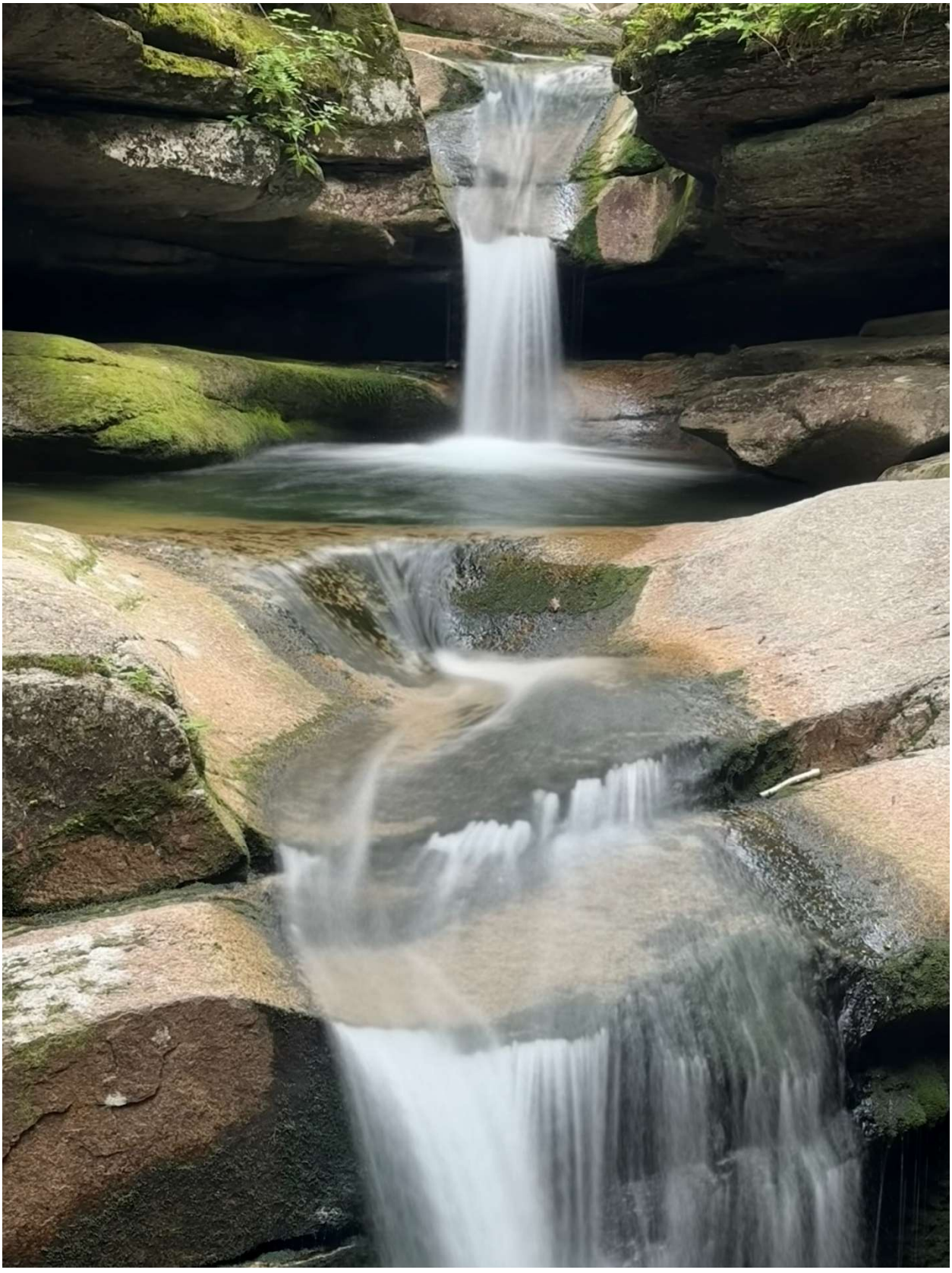


But, once back, Maxx asked me how it was. I told him it was spectacular and that I took way too many photos. He asked eagerly, “Oooh, did you take any of those cool long exposure ones?”

That stopped me. No. I hadn’t. But do you really think I was going to walk that uphill half-mile again just for that? Damn straight I was!







The lone remaining falls on my list was only about a half-hour away, but daylight was fading and rain clouds were sliding in. When the attendants at the desk in the big lodge at Flume Gorge told me I could see it all for just $29, I chuckled and declined. “I’ve been seeing them for free all day. That does not sound like such a great deal.”

Maybe next time, but I kinda doubt it.

Oddly enough, there was a cool little 6’ waterfall next to the parking lot. And you don’t often see a falls *and* its reflection…

