



THE FOREST QUEST

Woodstock, Vermont

Physical Difficulty: Moderate

Special Features: Natural, View

Walking Conditions: Trail

Duration: 2:30

To get there: Take Route 4 to Woodstock and then take Route 12 north. Turn left onto Prosper Road (2.7 miles beyond Billings Farm). Take Prosper Road for 0.7 miles to the trailhead parking lot on your left.



Super Quest 2019: Gateway to Summer Fun

This quest is one of 25 featured in this year's Super Quest challenge to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Vital Communities. For the rest of your adventure: vitalcommunities.org/superquest

Now that you're here...

Check out Billings Farm & Museum! Billings Farm is a working dairy farm with daily kid- friendly educational experiences. The museum offers insight into life in 19th century Vermont with exhibits on ice cutting, maple sugaring and farm life. For more information:

<https://billingsfarm.org/visit/>

1. Make your way up the path to where a map stands.
Here you must tell me where we are, do your best!
To learn the story of this land you must solve
The mysteries of this Forest Valley Quest.
2. Go right after the gate. Off the path in the woods: stone walls.
But why these stone walls, inside some trees to keep?

STONE WALLS are you clues to a time long ago
When fences enclosed pastures for all the grazing sheep.

3. Over a bridge then 80 steps to where the pines stretch tall.
Long cones and bundles of 5 needles the forest floor betrays.
These clues confirm that our canopy is WHITE PINE.
Below, the plants of the understory await sun's rays.
4. Growing in dappled light, SUGAR MAPLES make their way.
Pine, on the other hand, requires a full day's sun.
These white pine trees were planted in the 1930s,
By the Billings family, once the farming was done.
5. Ahead looking right, hidden in the shrubs... an old rusted car.
Further up the path: concrete, piled rocks, and a retaining wall.
These things are all remnants of an old Vermont farm.
Before the forest rose? A working farm here with barns standing tall.

Westward ho! And the farmers go, leaving behind exhausted land.
Axes and sheep erode the land, leaving poor soil to plant.
By the 1860s fish, wildlife, trees, and the watershed are in trouble.
"The earth is becoming an unfit home for its inhabitants," wrote George
Perkins Marsh in 1864.

6. Left turn on the carriage road and into a unique forest.
Frederick Billings and his family led the way on this land,
Teaching farmers to replant the trees their fathers cut.
On we go to where a tree with four white trunks stands.
7. At the second fork you will find a rock
And two different kinds of pine left and right.
Plates of reddish bark, egg-shaped cones, paired needles...
Know these and you'll know a RED PINE is in sight.
8. Keep on! In a while, a big tree on your left.
Does its bark remind you of cantaloupe skin?
It is a WHITE ASH, find the small seeds if you can!
After passing at least 5 ash trees, your next clue comes in.
9. Patience... find smooth gray-barked trees covered with sores.
Beech scale disease, a fungus, is followed by insects.
Sick beech trees, circled by young ones, show their hope.
The trees sprout new trees from their roots, trying to cope.
10. On you go! To where large white quartz shines.
At the second curve, a rock outcrop, red pines in rows.
Make a stop and find a young pine tree: can you tell its age?
Each year these pines send forth a new "limb whorl" to grow.

11. At the T, to the right and downhill you will go.
As you walk please enjoy all this forest has to show.
You might just spy some NORWAY SPRUCE here.
Their cones look different, too... look and have no fear.
12. Onward to the next fork and the giant HEMLOCK.
Over 200 years old, and still growing tall!
Hold a tiny cone, lean on the trunk, and look up.
Amazing that something so big started out so small.
13. Stay right, curving around until water is found.
You've made it to the Pogue, the farthest point on this journey.
Sit, reflect, say a small thanks to Billings' granddaughter,
Mary Rockefeller, and husband Laurance... this park made at their
behest.
14. What's a Pogue? This fourteen-acre pond was a wetland,
Until its waters were dammed to make this special place.
Quietly walk along the pond and you might see
Painted turtles sunbathing... then OOPS, gone without a trace.
15. Now turn around and head back from whence you came.
LONG reverse: back to *hemlock*; uphill stopping at the sign.
This one has eleven letters. Turning left is right!
Soon find a small trail to the right. Take it, you'll do fine.
16. Downhill, stay to the middle where three trails diverge.
Listen and look closely to observe who lives here:
Birdsong, chatter, rustling, color, leaves stir.
Quiet stillness reveals what in movement disappears.
17. On you go! A tiny bridge, and down to a fork.
You're in a forest glade, with a mix of trees naturally made.
Now keep eyes open for trees planted in a line.
When you find this plantation whisper the words "red pine"
18. Keep right looking for an ancient sugar maple, an old pasture tree.
It's hollow you can plainly see.
On the north side of this aging giant, your Quest ends—
pause in silence for a moment, you've made a new friend.
19. Congratulations on completing your Quest!
Please write where you are from and your name,
The date, and some comments if you wish.
Then return the box so others may do the same.

Did you know?

With all the acres of farm land that Billings owned, he decided to plant over 10,000 trees in the Woodstock and planted many non- native species.

Source: billingsfarm.org

Please be a good steward of the land: leave it better than you found it and pack out any trash you find.

Valley Quest is a collection of 100+ treasure hunts that share and teach the natural gems and cultural heritage of the Upper Valley with children, families, adults, and visitors. It is a program of Vital Communities, a regional nonprofit working to engage citizens, organizations, and communities in creating solutions to our region's challenges. Learn more at vitalcommunities.org.

Have a suggestion, question, comment, or idea for us? We'd love to hear from you. Reach us at valleyquest@vitalcommunities.org or 802-291-9100.

