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View Finder: Chondola Ride at Sunday River

Chair lift or gondola? It's both, and it's a fast, comfortable and breathtaking way to get to the mountaintop.

BY ALEXANDRA HALL

The views from the top were certainly there long before Sunday River Resort introduced this, its \$7.2 million investment, in 2008. But, in building the Chondola — a hybrid that's half chair lift, half gondola — the resort gave visitors a fast, comfy, easy way to get up and down the mountain and soak up the vistas.



It's part chairlift and part gondola, called the Chondola at Sunday River. Visitors can choose their preferred type of ride — either a classic chair or an enclosed gondola cabin that carries up to 15 passengers. *Sunday River photo by Darin Back/*

And what vistas they are. Not only can you peer out at all of Sunday River Valley, but also the imposing and shadowy, deep green Mahoosuc Mountains, including Old Speck, the third-highest peak in Maine and where some of the toughest hiking exists anywhere along the Appalachian Trail.

The Chondola is called such because passengers can choose their preferred type of ride — either a classic chair or an enclosed gondola cabin that carries up to 15 passengers.

Modeled after European versions that have sprung up around ski resorts in the Alps, it operates on a high-speed cable that carries skiers and non-skiers up in the winter, and pedestrians and hikers up the 6,427 feet from South Ridge base up to North Peak all summer and fall.

In winter, the Chondola has made it easy for those not skiing to join their friends and family up at the top for lunch. And, in warmer months, it's as great for

picnickers and hikers (there are trails down) as it is for this who just want to get up there for the view, take a couple of selfies, and come right back down.

Meanwhile, once you're down off the mountain, the activity choices are plentiful enough to make for a full day trip — especially if you've got kids in tow. Between the mountain biking, zip lining, disc golf, and bungee trampolining, the options are dizzying.

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Adults 13 years or older are \$15; kids 6-12 are \$10; seniors over 80 and kids under 6 are free. Sunday River pass holders are free, and dogs are welcome.

Alexandra Hall is a longtime New England lifestyle writer who recently moved to Maine.



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