

Unexpected delights

*Be impulsive along the scenic byways
of Vermont and New Hampshire*



Expect color when you explore New Hampshire and Vermont in the summer. Lush green and loads of flowers appear everywhere.

Story and photos
by Christine Tibbetts

ctcom@plantel.net

*Wonders to expect over and over again:
Covered bridges
Mountains
Walking paths, trails, paved rails
Fresh foods, local produce
Yellow houses and red barns
Friendly, chatty people*

Don't take much of a plan with you when you go to Vermont and New Hampshire. Discovering delightful surprises is the holiday here because these two states are full of them.

Instead of planning to head to a specific town, historic or cultural site, expect the unexpected on your way to anywhere. Wrap your travel attitude around this notion: I'll be stopping, turning, maybe even backing up just because something looks intriguing.

That really works. I tried it for a week in June. You need a car to be impulsive, but you don't need to worry about traffic. The roads are calm in Vermont and New Hampshire, even the main Interstate 89 — and instead of billboards, these highways have scenery.

My itinerary was a circle, flying Southwest Air from Jacksonville International Airport to Manchester, N.H. Destinations from there



Red barns and yellow houses pop up all along the way on New Hampshire and Vermont back roads.

This one is actually a neighborhood outside Montpelier, the nation's smallest state capital city. Walk in the front door of the gold-domed Capitol and out the back to hike or ski seven miles of trails in Hubbard Park amidst red oak, beech trees, red and white pine and old hemlock growth.



This haunting woman is settled near a path of birch trees at the New Hampshire summer home of sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. At this National Park Service site you can experience much of the state's charm: woods, mountains, water, walking trails and meadows, plus sculpture, bas relief and cameo miniatures.

were Stowe and Burlington in Vermont, and Hanover, home of Dartmouth College, in New Hampshire before returning to Manchester.

I didn't know about this no-planning approach, but I got into it really fast.

Here's an example. Somebody in Burlington told me Woodstock was a charming little town, worth a stroll around the Village Green and a meal so I took Highway 4 but almost missed lunch.

First was the compelling view from a bridge along the way, and the urge to stop and walk back across to peer way down into the Quechee Gorge.

The Green Mountain state has lots of places to pull off the road to watch the view.

Second was the covered bridge heading north. I was driving west, but who cares when you're in Vermont? I made the switch, drove across the bridge expecting to turn around right away to resume my route to Woodstock.

That's not how it works in Vermont. On the

other side was a glass blower creating extraordinary vessels next to the waterfall with cold waters of the Ottauquechee River running under that bridge so I stayed a while.

Sure, he was connected to the original Irish Simon Pearce glass and pottery company just around the next curve, with a big salaried operation and restaurant, but businesses in Vermont balance environment and profitability. Fine restaurants sport signs declaring their participation in the Vermont Food Network using fresh, locally grown and often organic foods — and the Slow Food Movement.

Fun for Foodies vacations can be found in seven inns in the Select Registry association of 411 properties, each with unique styles and stories; Fun for Foodies inns offer off-the-beaten-path culinary experiences.

Here's another act-on-impulse example; this one's in New Hampshire. Highway 12A along the Connecticut River looked like a scenic route from Dartmouth to Manchester and I had to catch a flight the next day. Good thing I had the whole morning because the surprise at the end of the long driveway with the National Historic Site sign was far more wonderful than I anticipated.

This was the summer home and studio of sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, commissioned in 1905 by President Teddy Roosevelt to create 10- and 20- dollar gold pieces. Everywhere you stroll, on your own or with a National Park Service guide, you admire Mt. Airy cutney in the distance.

You might have seen the Saint-Gaudens "Standing Lincoln" in Chicago, "Shaw Memorial" in Boston or Sherman Monument in New York's Central Park.

Cornish is the town where you find this pleasant surprise. The covered bridge in this artist's colony was built in 1796 and refurbished in 1866.

Hanover is old and beautiful too. Stay at the Hanover Inn, founded in 1780, and located right on the campus green. You'll feel like a student as you stroll past the 1771 Church of Christ, 1784 Dartmouth Hall, 1786

Choate house and more lovely buildings. I found a great exhibit of illuminated works in the 1928 library on campus ... and some Tibbettses in the 1771 cemetery.

Eat breakfast at Lou's, serving rhubarb pancakes and other fine foods since 1947. If you chat with some students, marvel how they keep up with the \$43,341 tuition, fees and housing cost for the 2006-07 school year.

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more information**

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