

Spread from one ocean to another, America makes for a formidable road trip. Assuming you stick to the Lower 48, your best shot for taking it all in might be the drive from Bangor, ME, to San Diego, but even that 3,275-mile odyssey fails to pass through half the states. Still — to point out the obvious — road trips aren't just about maximizing the number of sights or states seen. Choosing a drive come vacation time is a vote for slowing down, a pledge to make room for unexpected detours and deep conversation. Through some sort of automotive alchemy, a great drive transforms what can be the tough part (the getting there) into the reason to set out in the first place. We asked five local writers to plot five road trips in their part of the country. Each drive takes its inspiration from one of our travel icons: play, eat, shop, relax and explore. But all of them celebrate the spirit to move.



HAWAII
Big Island
Adventure



WASHINGTON
Northwest
Wine Drive



NEW HAMPSHIRE
New England's
Antiques Road



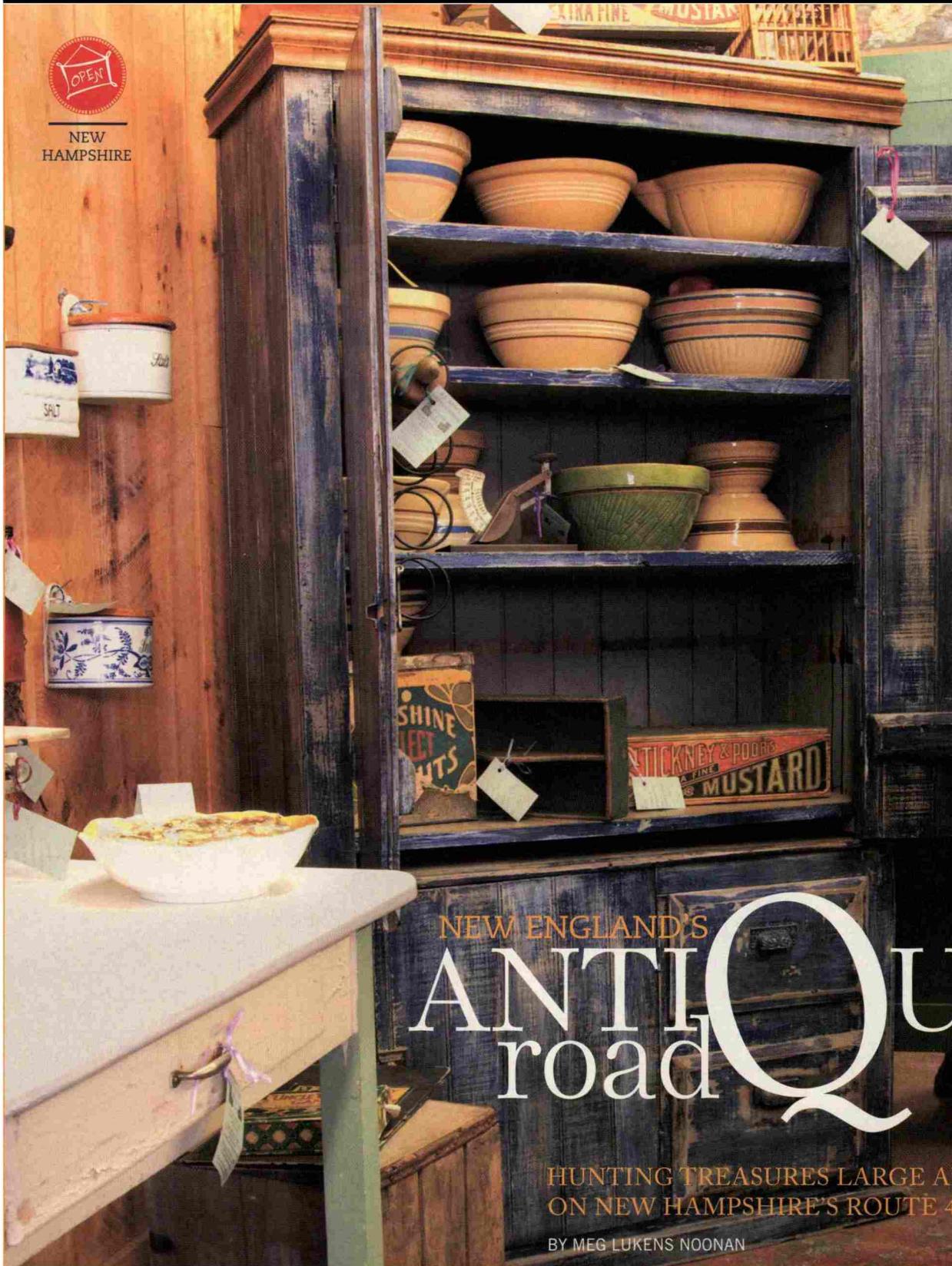
NEW MEXICO
High
Desert Spas



MISSOURI/
ARKANSAS
Ozarks Getaway



A desert straightaway
in New Mexico.



3 THE DRIVE: Route 4 in southern New Hampshire is an antiques lover's dream. Scenic and short, it links four towns—Lee, Northwood, Epsom and Chichester—that are filled with mom-and-pop antiques shops, cavernous dealer showcases and a few appointment-only galleries.* The eastern end of Antiques Alley starts with a buffet. Fifteen dealers at Lee Circle Antiques (603-868-3424) combine to offer a hodge-podge of pottery, old clocks, green glass bottles, chests and baskets.

Leaving Lee, the two-lane road cuts through 10 miles of farmland and

forest on the way to Northwood. Fern Eldridge & Friends (603-942-5602) manages to cram 35 dealers into a restored barn. You can expect collector-worthy 18th- and 19th-century furniture, folk art, textiles, architectural items and woodenware. "We don't sell milk bottles," Eldridge says. "We're a real antique shop." For something more eclectic but nearby, try R.S. Butler's Trading Co. (603-942-8210). Inside a tulip-pink Victorian barn you'll find country furniture, old tools, architectural salvage, glass and dishware, even vintage records. If you need a break, head to Susty's Café (603-942-5862) for vegan fare: fresh fruit smoothies, wraps or tofu lasagna.

That should keep you light enough on your feet to hit the road again.

Your next stop is a pair of refined shops in Chichester. Start at Austin's Antiques (603-798-3116), where 30 dealers show an uncluttered mix that includes American cupboards, blanket chests and duck decoys. Next door, the year-old Keepers Antiques (603-798-3399) specializes in early American 18th- and 19th-century furniture and folk art. Shaker aficionados should make the pilgrimage down Horse Corner Road (left off Route 4) to Douglas Hamel Antiques (56 Stanicels Rd., Chichester; 603-798-5912).

From here, retrace your way east down Route 4, hitting shops you missed in the morning or revisiting ones for a second look. If the weather allows, you can even stop for a dip at the town beach on Northwood Lake.

As you make your way back toward the sea, think dinner. Newick's, a 60-year-old institution, serves fried clams and chowder at tables overlooking Great Bay (431 Dover Point Rd., Dover; 603-742-3205). For a more refined seafood meal, reserve a table at Pesce Blue back in Portsmouth (103 Congress St.; 603-430-7766). This sophisticated Italian hot spot is the perfect place to relive the day's hunt. Go ahead and pull out your newly acquired yellow ware creamer—just to gaze at it. Everyone will understand.

**Call all stores to confirm they will be open when you visit.*

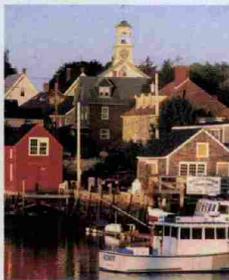
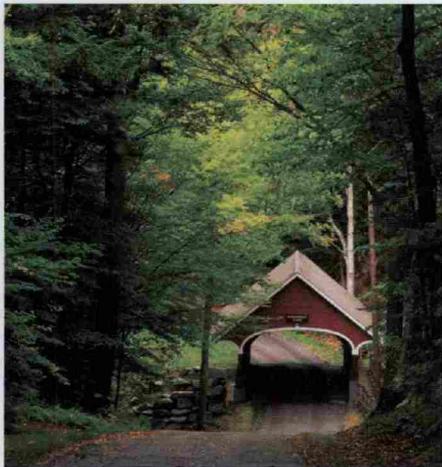
stay

WENTWORTH BY THE SEA
 This imposing whitewashed 1874 hotel near Portsmouth was relaunched in grand style by Marriott in 2003. 588 Wentworth Rd., New Castle; 866-240-6313; wentworth.com; doubles from \$199

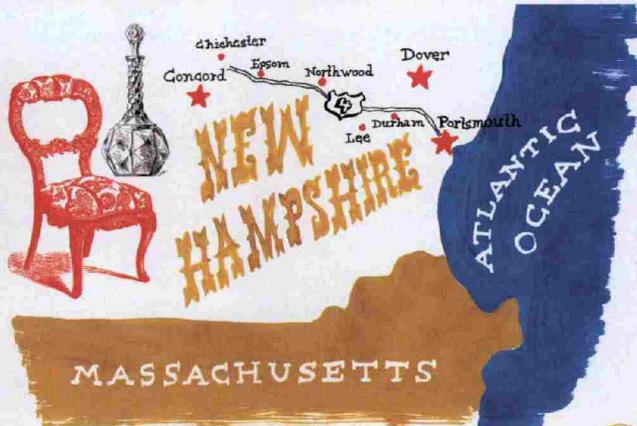
THREE CHIMNEYS INN
 About 10 minutes from Portsmouth, the restored 1649 mansion and 1795 carriage house have 23 rooms between them. 17 Newmarket Rd., Durham; 888-399-9777; threechimneysinn.com; doubles from \$134

INN AT STRAWBERRY BANKE
 An 1814 house with seven antiques-filled rooms. 314 Court St., Portsmouth; 800-428-3933; innatstrawberrybanke.com; doubles from \$145

SISE INN
 The 34 rooms, all with period furnishings, are in the grand Queen Anne main residence or a restored carriage house. 40 Court St., Portsmouth; 877-747-3466; siseinn.com; doubles from \$159



Roadworthy: (from top) One of New Hampshire's famous covered bridges; the Portsmouth harbor. Opposite: A display at R.S. Butler's Trading Co. in Northwood.



PHOTOS: PREVIOUS SPREAD, FROM LEFT: THOMAS BARWICKAGE; FOTOSTOCK; JULIA KUSKINGETTY IMAGES; JOAO CANZIANI; THIS SPREAD: AARON CONSTANT; MARK NEWMANGETTY IMAGES; JOHN ELK; ILLUMINELY PLANET IMAGES.