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BOSTON MAGAZINE'S

NewEngland

Travel&Life

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Northern New England is the place to relax, indulge, and explore—all very far from the noise of the city.

Final *frontiers*

BY STEPHEN JERMANOK

IT'S HARD NOT TO FEEL LIKE A MODERN-DAY EXPLORER WHEN traveling to the upper reaches of New England. Make the extra effort of driving an additional hour or two, and you'll be treated to a rugged wilderness of mountains and lakes, where the wildlife outnumbers the people and history is preserved in the

CLEAR WATERS AHEAD:
A kayak is one of the best ways to explore the National Wildlife Refuge of New Hampshire's Lake Umbagog.

19th-century architecture and village greens. And, yes, they have plenty of amenities in this northern tier—including one of the finest hotels in the northeast—quaint restaurants, and a slew of outfitters to get you on those lakes and up the mountains. Immersing yourself in the spectacular scenery is the allure, especially for those of us in dire need of Mother Nature's embrace.

B1B3

TRIP PLANNER

REST YOUR HEAD

The Birches Resort

Rockwood, 800-825-9453, birches.com

Little Lyford Pond Camps

Greenville, 603-466-2727, outdoors.org/lodging/lodges/lyford/index.cfm

SEE AND DO

Moose Cruise

The Birches Resort, Rockwood, 800-825-9453, birches.com

New England Outdoor Center

Millinocket, 800-766-7238, neoc.com

Northwoods Outfitters

Greenville, 866-223-1380, maineoutfitter.com

GOOD EATS

Kelly's Landing

Greenville, 207-695-4438, kellysatmoosehead.com

River Drivers Restaurant

Millinocket, 800-766-7238, neoc.com/food-dining

Rod-N-Reel Café

Greenville, 207-695-0388

MAINE

REST YOUR HEAD

The Balsams Grand Resort Hotel

Dixville Notch, 603-255-3400, thebalsams.com

Paradise Point Cottages

Errol, 603-482-3834, paradisepointcottages.com

Philbrook Farm Inn

Shelburne, 603-466-3831, philbrookfarminn.com

GOOD EATS

Bull Moose Restaurant and Lounge

Cambridge, 603-482-3856, bullmoosenh.com

NEW HAMPSHIRE

REST YOUR HEAD

The Wildflower Inn

Lyndonville, 800-627-8310, wildflowerinn.com

SEE AND DO

Burke Mountain

East Burke, 802-626-7300, skiburke.com

East Burke Sports

East Burke, 802-626-3215, eastburkesports.com

Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium

St. Johnsbury, 802-748-2372, fairbanksmuseum.org

Jay Peak

Jay, 802-988-2611, jaypeakresort.com

Kingdom Trails

East Burke, 802-626-0737, kingdomtrails.org

Stepping Stone Spa and Wellness Center

Lyndonville, 802-626-3104, steppingstonewellnesscenter.com

St. Johnsbury Athenaeum

St. Johnsbury, 802-748-8291, stjathenaeum.org

GOOD EATS

Miss Lyndonville Diner

Lyndonville, 802-626-9890

River Garden Café

East Burke, 802-626-3514, rivergardencafe.com

VERMONT



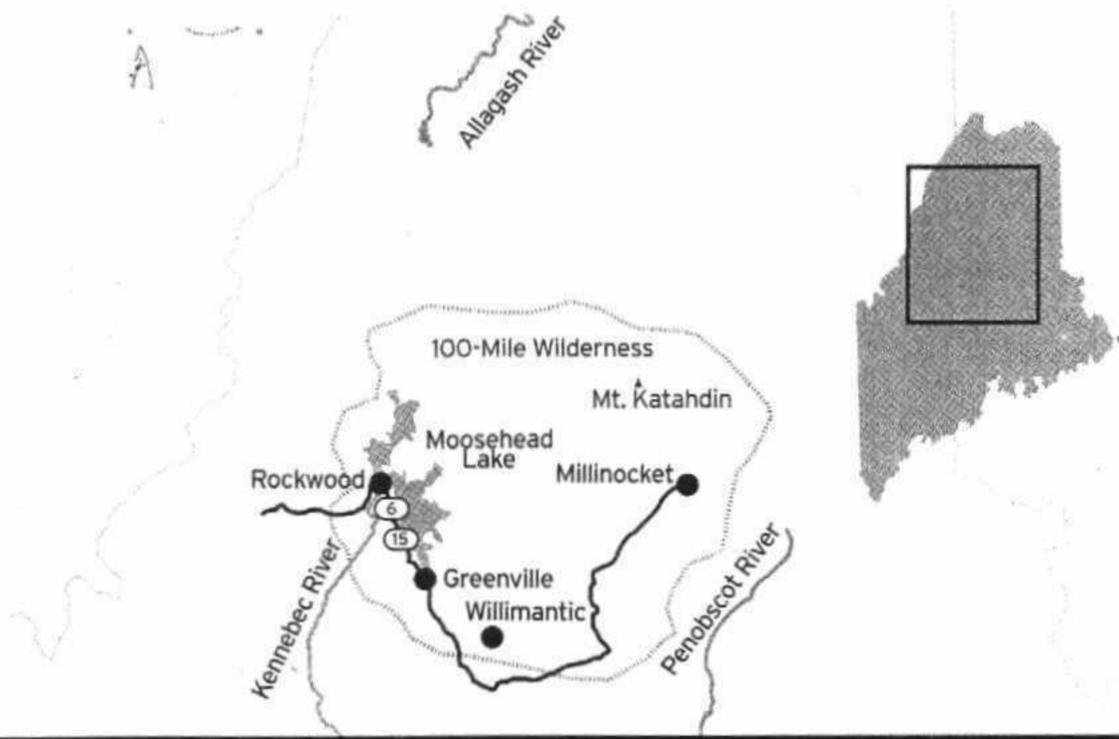
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maine's north woods

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BOB GEVINSKY





BIB

BFD



ONE HOUR INTO OUR MOOSE CRUISE ON MOOSEHEAD LAKE, OUR captain, Steve, shouts, "There's one around the bend." Everyone on board jumps up in anticipation of seeing Bullwinkle in the wild. We snake around the Socatean Stream, one of the many tributaries that empty into the 40-mile-long lake, and there, standing in the shallows, is Mother Moose. Close behind is her young calf. Behind the large animals is an undeveloped forest of tall pines and birches, and there's no one here but us and the moose.

Northern Maine truly feels like America's version of going on safari. Moose, deer, fox, even bear are not unusual sights in the 10-million-acre forest they call Maine's North Woods. The

terrain here is so remote that dirt roads and the timber trucks that barrel down them are often the only signs of civilization. Yet, if you make it this far north (Moosehead Lake is a 3-hour drive north of Portland), you'll be treated to some of the most exciting outdoor adventures in the country. Paddle along the same shores of Moosehead Lake that Henry David Thoreau did 150 years ago or venture farther north to canoe the legendary Allagash River. Raft the tumultuous Penobscot and Kennebec rivers. Or hike the last 100 miles of the Appalachian Trail, the region they call the 100-Mile Wilderness, a primitive land of cedar bogs, steep-walled gorges and rugged peaks where wildlife is abundant.

My Moose Cruise originated at The Birches Resort in Rockwood, a group of rustic cabins with wooden lofts and outdoor decks, along with a main lodge and more modern homes nestled on the shores of Moosehead Lake and overlooking the precipitous cliffs of Mount Kineo. Other activities at The Birches include kayaking Moose River, taking a

seaplane flight over the lake, and listening to loons as you canoe the backside of the property on Brassua Lake.

A little more than 20 miles to the east is the tourism hub on Moosehead Lake, Greenville. Northwoods Outfitters rents canoes, mountain bikes and snowmobiles. Or opt for a guided trip. The Rod-N-Reel Café in town is known for its fresh seafood, such as haddock and Maine scallops. On the water, the restaurant at Kelly's Landing is where the locals meet for a breakfast of omelets or pancakes.

At Little Lyford Pond Camps, in the heart of the 100-Mile Wilderness, you can rent a cottage that's nestled in a grove, only a short walk from canoeing on majestic First Little Lyford Pond and fishing on the West Branch of the Pleasant River. A short hike away, the Pleasant River careens through canyon walls, forming waterfalls, in the formidable Gulf Hags.

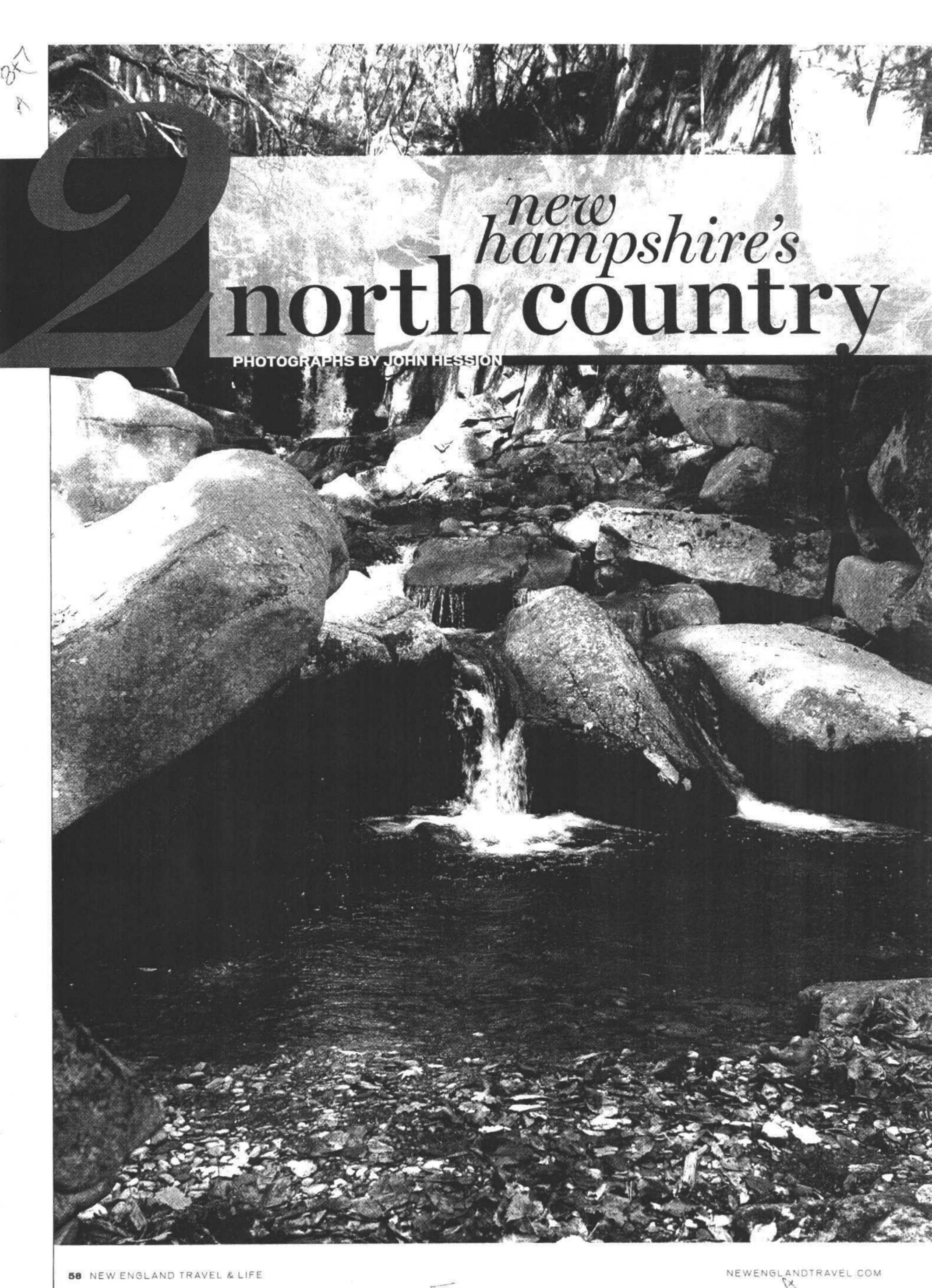
Farther north, Millinocket is the gateway to Baxter State Park. The strenuous hike up to the 5,267-foot peak of Mount Katahdin starts at the Roaring Brook Campground. Give yourself 8 to 10 hours, and don't miss the opportunity to climb up the Knife Edge, a 3-foot-wide granite trail that plummets some 1,500 feet on either side. In Millinocket, New England Outdoor Center offers day-long rafting jaunts on the Penobscot River. Or stop for dinner at River Drivers Restaurant for grilled salmon or an 8-ounce steak.

To access the 92-mile Allagash Wilderness Waterway, put in at Allagash or Chamberlain lakes. Mid- to late September is a perfect time to paddle this serpentine waterway.



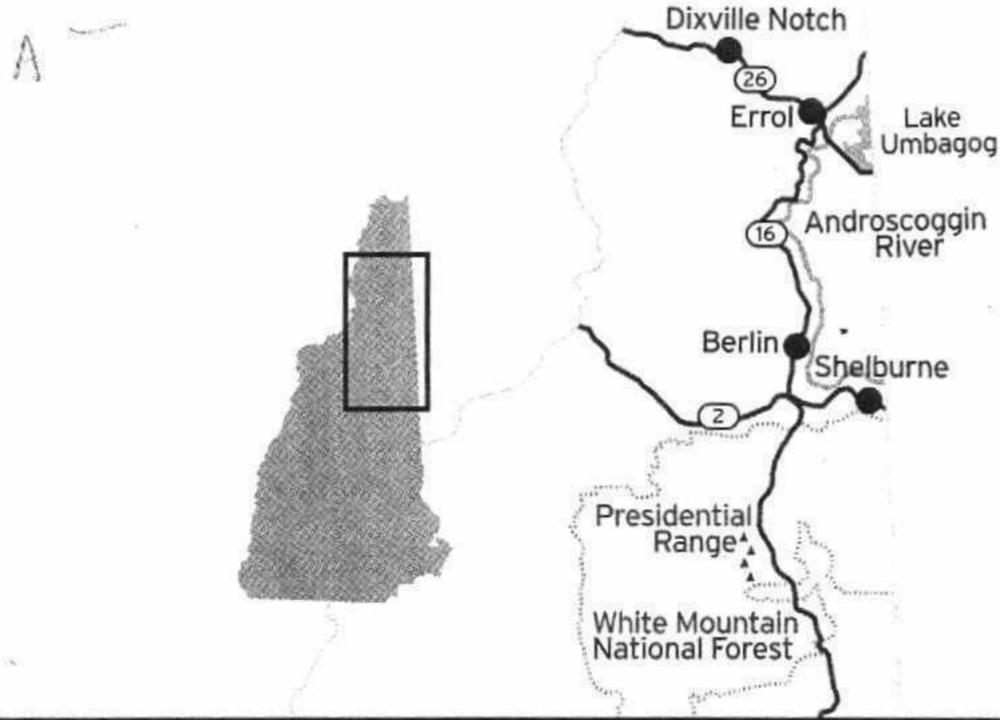
MAINE TIMES: The decks at The Birches Resort are prime real estate, OPPOSITE, while Little Lyford Pond Camps offer great access for trout fishing, TOP LEFT. Water sports can mean guided moose tours, LEFT, or getting around Greenville's Moosehead Lake, ABOVE.

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*new
hampshire's*
north country

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN HESSON



B/B 8FT



ALL ONE HAS TO DO IS LOOK UP FROM ONE OF THOSE Adirondack chairs placed on the veranda of The Balsams Grand Resort Hotel to be rewarded with the same majestic view that has left visitors to this resort awestruck for the past 141 years. Just beyond the sloping lawns, colorful gardens, pool and pond is the twisting carved granite they call Dixville Notch.

A wall of mountains hems in the tennis courts and Donald Ross-designed golf course. Add cross-country and downhill ski trails in the winter, mountain biking in summer, and a gluttonous feast at every meal, and you understand why this grand dame is still the preeminent retreat in northern New England.

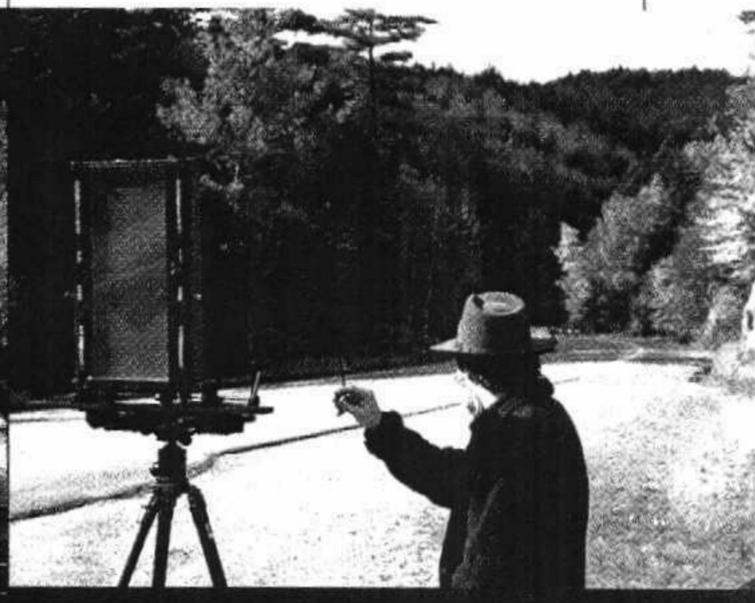
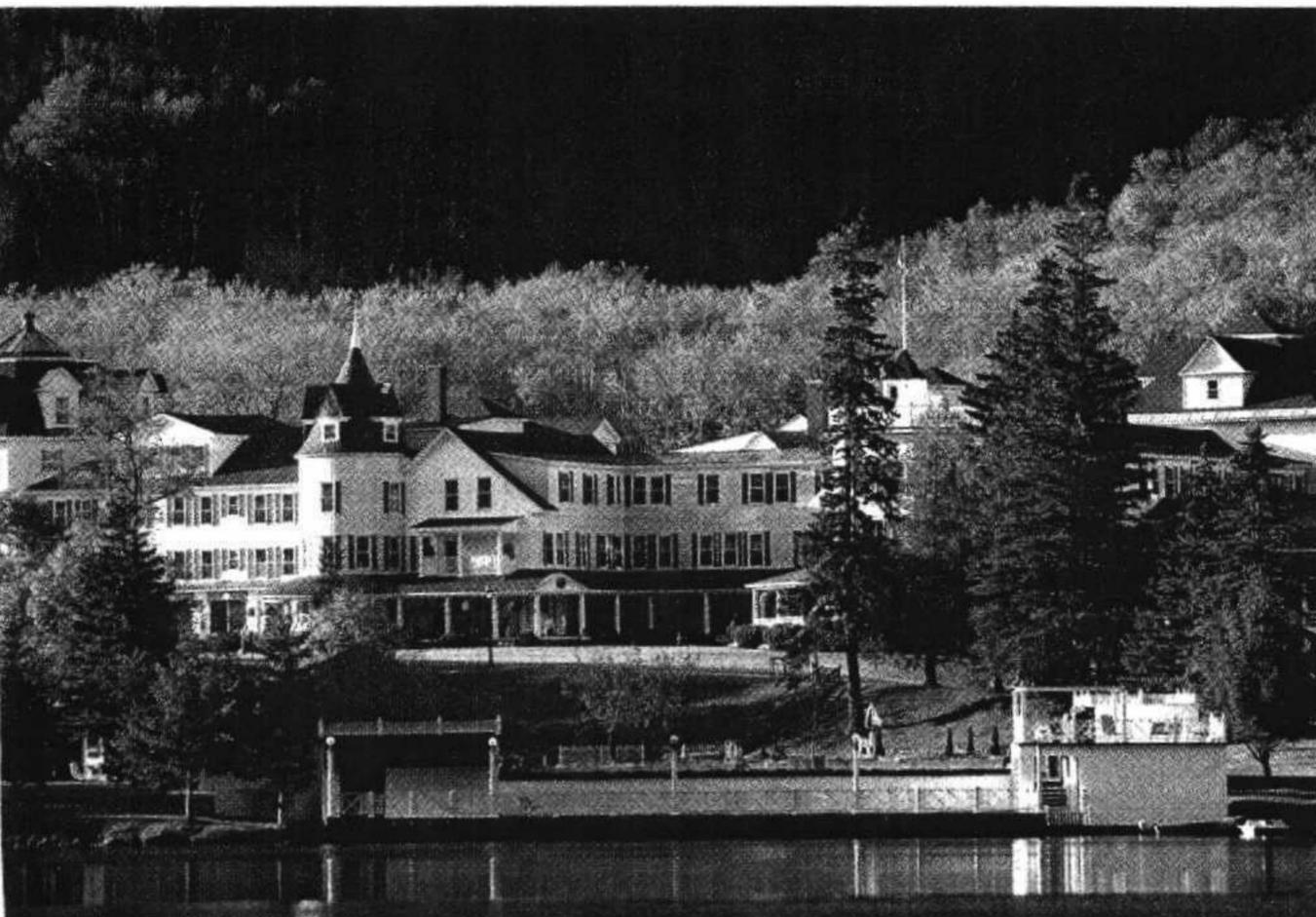
North of the White Mountain National Forest, New Hampshire is really defined by the tranquil settings of its lodgings. Go upscale with The Balsams or down-home with the Philbrook Farm Inn, where owners have been dishing out dinner and a dose of repose to guests since 1861. If you tire of looking at hummingbirds in the feeder or staring at the uninterrupted views of meadows and mountains spread out before you, there are a slew of trails just behind the rambling house that lead to hidden waterfalls and mountain summits. At Paradise Point Cottages, just east of The Balsams on Route 26, owners Linda and Ricky Blais were fortunate to have their place built on the shores of Lake Umbagog before the 8.5-mile body of water became a National Wildlife Refuge in 1992.

The main hub for both The Balsams and Paradise Point is Errol. Stop at LL Cote Sports Center, "Home of the White Moose," for fishing, canoeing and camping supplies. Grab a kayak and put in north of town on Route 16 to find out why Umbagog became a

National Wildlife Refuge. A short paddle on the Androskoggin River, which originates at Lake Umbagog, brings you to a deserted island where atop one dead pine tree is a large nest. Since 1989, a family of bald eagles has called this nest home, with new additions to the clan being born there almost every year. Paddle here in summer, and you'll no doubt see the white heads of the parents and their young children learning to fly.

Just up the road, toward the Maine border, the Bull Moose Restaurant and Lounge is known for its salad bar and juicy slab of prime rib. With its rustic decor and friendly, laidback vibe, the lounge is a perfect spot to relax, have a hearty bite and share stories of bald eagle sightings, canoe rides and walks along winding trails.

You can work off lunch on the network of trails behind the Philbrook Farm Inn. Families, like the Kanés, who I met on my visit, have been returning to this homestead each summer for more than 60 years. The warm hospitality and home cooking of the Leger family are certainly part of the allure. I grabbed the inn dog, Valkyrie, for a hike on the yellow trail to the peak of Mount Crag. We spotted one fox, but no Homo sapiens. Less than an hour later, I was sitting on the rocky summit, sharing water and rice cakes with this German shorthaired pointer, looking at the wondrous views of the White Mountain's Presidential Range. Mighty mounts Adams, Madison and Washington, a few of the tallest of New England's peaks, were standing shoulder to shoulder in the cloudless sky.

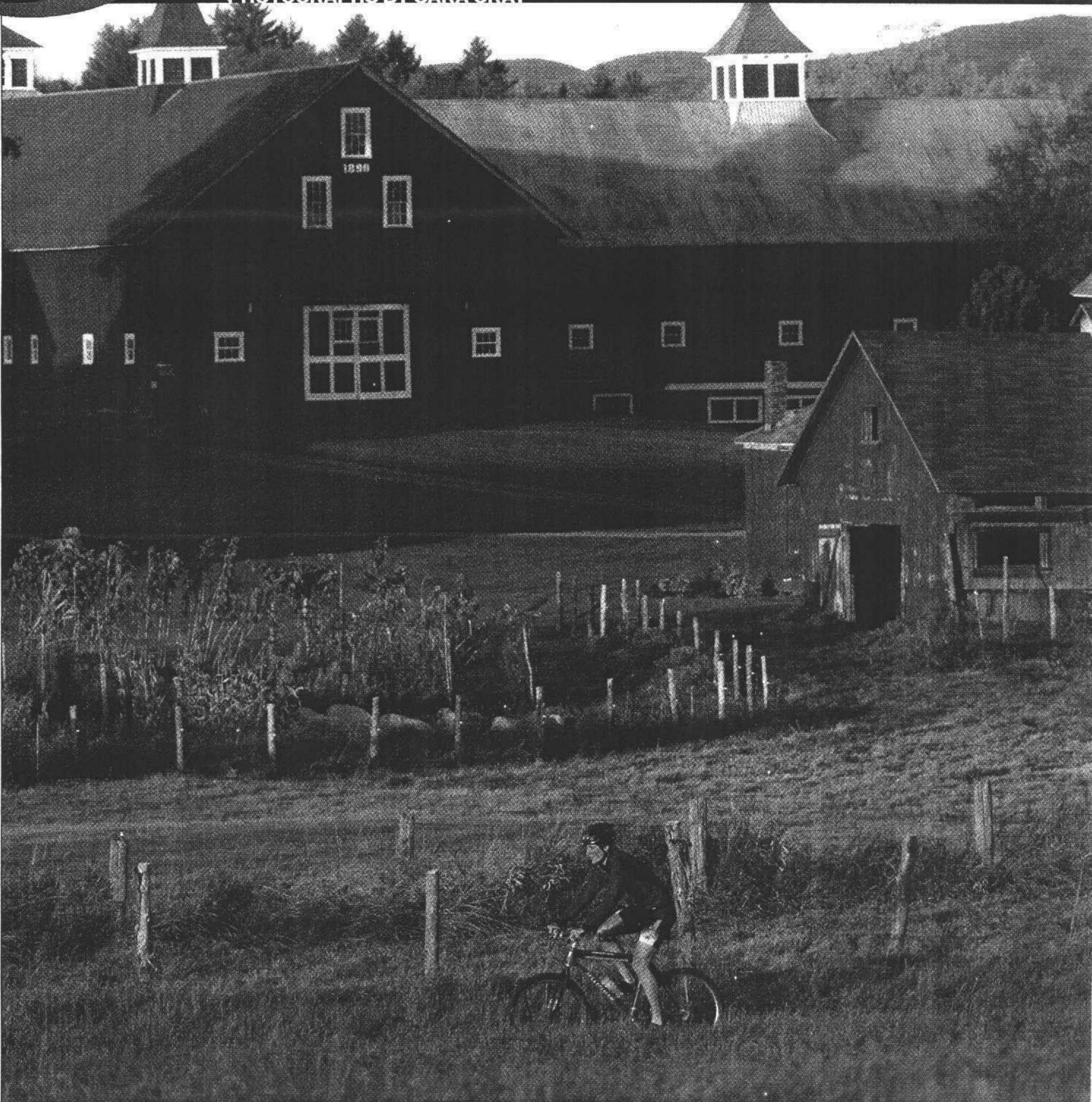


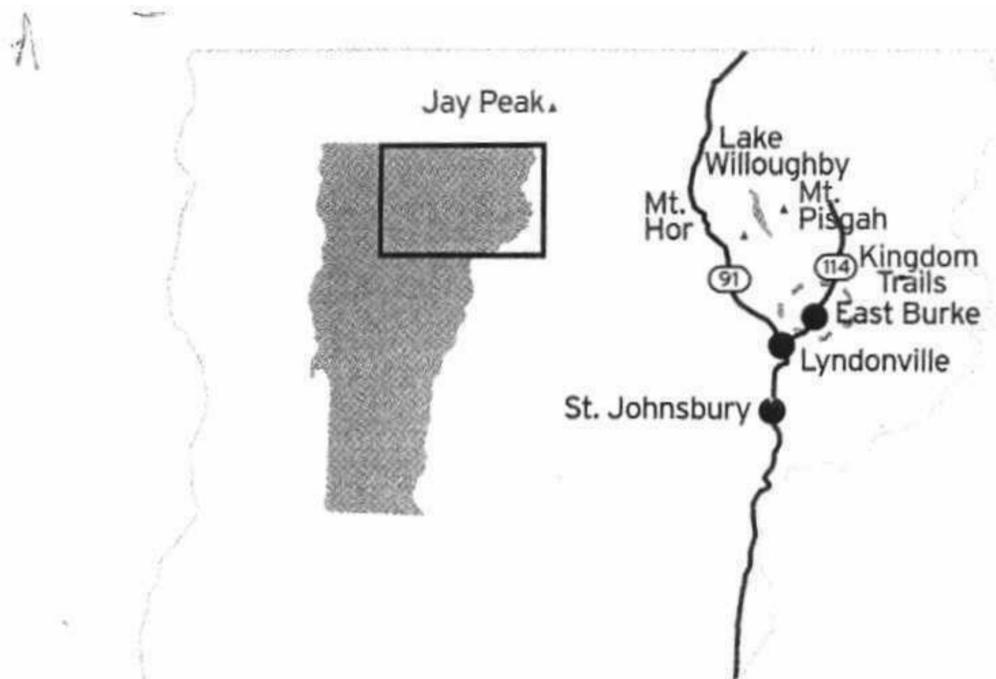
ETCHED IN GRANITE: Take in a waterfall, OPPOSITE, in Dixville Notch State Park; or visit Stark's covered bridge, TOP LEFT; The Balsams Grand Resort Hotel has lush views, LEFT; Dixville Notch State Park, ABOVE, is a photographer's dream.

A

vermont's northeast kingdom

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SARA GRAY





IN A STATE KNOWN FOR ITS RURAL SETTING (ONLY WYOMING HAS fewer people), the Northeast Kingdom is Vermont putting on its finest pastoral dress. Wave after wave of unspoiled hillside form a vast sea of green, and small villages and farms spread out in the distance under a few soaring summits. Here, inconspicuous inns and dairy cows have replaced the slick resorts and Morgan horses found in the southern part of the state, and the white steeples are chipped, not freshly painted. It's an authentic Vermont, a region that doesn't put on any airs about attracting tourists.

In the 1830s, the Fairbanks family of St. Johnsbury, the Kingdom's largest community, began manufacturing platform scales. They soon became one of New England's wealthiest families, and fortunately for St. J, began pouring their money into the village. They opened one of the finest libraries in America, the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, where leather-bound books share space with a gallery of 19th-century art, including Albert Bierstadt's *The Domes of the Yosemite*, a monumental, 10-foot-by-15-foot work. Across the street is the Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium, a natural history museum founded by the family. There, you'll see more than 3,000 preserved animals, including a 1,200-pound moose, an American bison from 1902 and a Bengal tiger.

Not surprisingly, this open and sylvan countryside is the perfect playground for outdoor activity. Bordering Quebec, Jay Peak gets more snow than any other ski area in New England (about 350 inches of powder a year). Burke Mountain, located in East Burke, is relatively unknown to anyone outside the Northeast Kingdom. Lucky locals often get to enjoy the challenging trails without lift lines.

East Burke is also home to more than 110 miles of single-track and dirt roads called Kingdom Trails. With a soft forest passageway dusted with pine needles, and trails through century-old farms, the town has arguably created the best mountain biking system in New England.

Hikers can head north to the shores of Lake Willoughby. Sandwiched between Mount Hor and Mount Pisgah, cliffs plummet more than 1,000 feet to the glacial waters below. The scenery is best appreciated on the three-hour hike to the summit of Mt. Pisgah. Afterward, take a swim in the cool waters of the lake.

Choose The Wildflower Inn and you'll be treated to their exquisite views of rolling farmland atop Darling Hill. Keep busy with mountain biking and cross-country ski trails that are part of the Kingdom Trails network, a petting barn with sheep and goats, pool, tennis courts, a batting cage, a skating rink, a sleigh hill, and Belgian horse sleigh rides. Nearby, the Stepping Stone Spa and Wellness Center offers massages to work out those knots in your legs after biking and hiking.

For sustenance, Miss Lyndonville Diner, five miles north of St. Johnsbury in Lyndonville, is a local favorite. Expect to spend in the \$7-\$8 range for a roast turkey dinner or a half-pound baked Vermont ham. More upscale fare can be found at the River Garden Café in East Burke. Start with the artichoke dip or one of the tasty salads, made with local Vermont produce and the café's own salad dressing. Then move on to the pepper-crusted lamb or pan-fried salmon. Cobbler à la mode is the perfect ending to a perfect day. ■



GREEN SCENES: Mountain bikers find nirvana at Kingdom Trails, OPPOSITE, and find rest inside The Wildflower Inn, TOP LEFT, or outside in one of the Adirondack chairs, LEFT. At Bailey's and Burke near Kingdom Trails, mountain bikers can rest and refuel, ABOVE.