



Lesser-traveled areas in New Hampshire and Vermont make for a delightful journey of small discoveries.

Connecticut River Valley Excursion BY DAN COOPER

NOT EXACTLY a secret, this is just one of the lesser-known yet more pleasant road trips in New England. The coastal towns and the Berkshires get all the press (and the crowds), but little notice is given to the Connecticut River Valley that forms the border between Vermont and New Hampshire.

It's not a demanding itinerary. You can start in Brattleboro, Vermont, and work your way north. Follow Vermont Route 5 whenever you feel like meandering and stopping at whim; to make time, simply hop on the parallel I-91. If you run late, bail out at White River Junction at I-89 and head back to the Boston area, or at I-93 when you get up near Montpelier. To the west, you can cut across Vermont and connect with the New York Thruway.

Arrive in Brattleboro in time for dinner and a movie at the Latchis Theatre, a restored Art Deco movie

house with three screens, a brew pub, and a hotel. Brattleboro is a smaller version of Northampton, Mass., with coffee- and bookshops, restaurants and boutiques in a bohemian atmosphere. There's also a brilliant restaurant, T. J. Buckley's, nearby—but it's tiny, seating roughly 20, and reservations are strongly suggested.

In the morning, drive north on Route 5. Take your time, zigzagging back and forth between the two states' borders. You might immediately aim east for Swanzey, N.H., for an abundance of antiques, and then work your way over to Bellows Falls for lunch at the Miss Bellow Falls Diner. Those who enjoy looking at 19th-century architecture will note the wide variety of buildings all along the river towns on either side. Some have been restored, while others remain untouched, evocative of time's passage.

Remember, if you're lost, all you have to do is find the Connecticut

River and cross back to Route 5 at some point. No forced march, this is a random jaunt with delights waiting around any given bend in the road. This area is still a bit less built up and un-citified, sheltered from the cultural onslaught from New York (unlike the western side of Vermont. Yes, there's the lovely Manchester and the Green Mountains, but also a plethora of Outlet Shopping and development. Yeah, I know, I love New York, too. But Vermont locals must have a reason to refer to them as two-one-two-ers [for Manhattan's area code]).

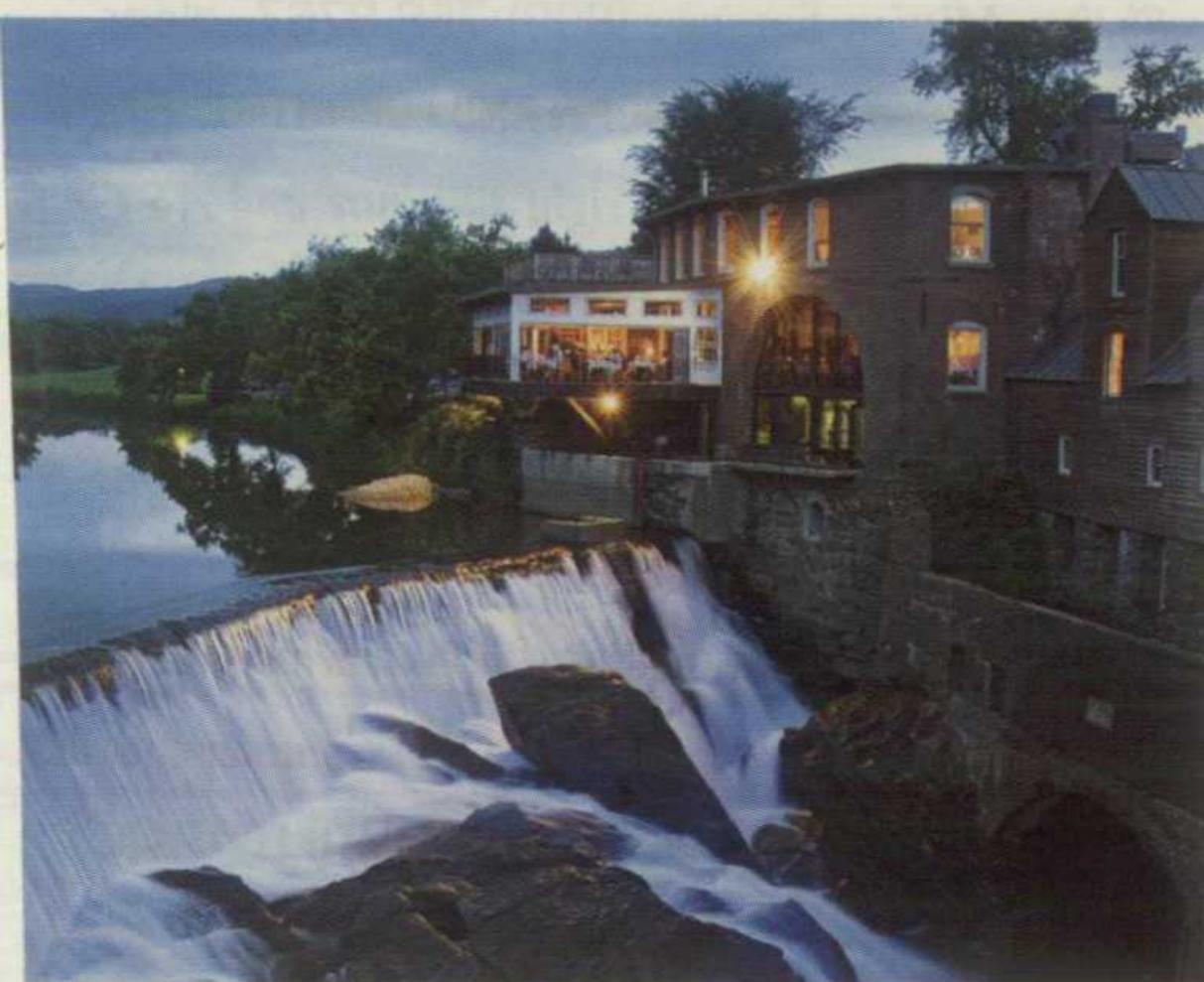
After Bellows Falls, wander east to Cornish, N.H., to visit the Augustus Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, where many of this legendary sculptor's works are on view as well as his family home. Then return to Vermont for a side trip to see Woodstock and the dramatic Quechee Gorge. Antiques shops large and small are as common as farm stands in August.



OPPOSITE: The Mount Washington Hotel is a Victorian landmark in N.H.

ABOVE: Licensed reproductions of Wright's Prairie furniture, from Copeland.

BELOW: See a hydroelectric turbine at Simon Pearce's restored former woolen mill in Quechee, Vt.



The next stop might be Hanover, N.H., home of Dartmouth College, which was founded in 1769. Aside from the beauty of the town and the architecture, Dartmouth boasts two fine museums, the Hood Museum of Art and the Rauner Special Collections Library, the latter of which houses the famed Audubon Elephant Folios. If you feel like it, cross over the border into Chelsea and Norwich, Vermont, for more historic architecture and rolling landscapes.

Finally, whether it takes you one day or two, end your journey in Jefferson, N.H., at the Mount Washington Hotel, a spectacular Victorian-era resort known for outdoor recreation. The entire run is only about 150 miles, and leaves you at the entrance to the Northeast Kingdom or ready to travel to Montreal, Lake Champlain, or the White Mountains. ✦