



PASSPORT CONTROL
DEPARTURE

A green and pleasant land

Meera Dattani tours verdant Vermont

It's not hard to see why the von Trapps – yes, the real-life ones depicted in the movie *The Sound of Music* – settled in Vermont. From the balcony of the Trapp Family Lodge, still run by the family, the serene views over the Green Mountains have more than a whiff of Alpine Austria.

Verdant sums up Vermont – even the name originates from the French *les vert monts* or the green mountains. And there are few crowds to spoil the scenery. Vermont is the sixth-smallest US state by area and has the second-smallest population, behind Wyoming. The only New England state not on the Atlantic Ocean, it borders New York State, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and the Canadian province, Quebec,

and its highlights include the Green Mountain National Forest, Lake Champlain and a section of the 2,180-mile Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

● THE HILLS ARE ALIVE

At the Trapp Family Lodge in the mountain town of Stowe in northern Vermont, it's about more than *The Sound of Music* these days, although wall after wall of family photographs and weekly themed tours keep fans happy.

After leaving Austria in 1938, the family toured the US as a singing troupe before settling here in 1942. Initially built for visiting family and friends, the lodge evolved into a fully fledged resort, now run by Johannes, son of Baron and Maria von Trapp, his son Sam and daughter Kristina.

“We opened North America's first commercial cross-country ski centre in 1968,” says Johannes. There are cycling, hiking and Nordic walking trails, too, plus a spa, tennis courts, bakery and mountain farm. They're big on activities. In fact, attempts to engage Sam in *The Sound of Music* trivia are mainly fruitless as he's more enthusiastic about his pet project, the Trapp Brewery, successfully distracting me with a craft beer-tasting.

Stowe is an excellent base, home to ArborTrek Canopy Adventures – Vermont's first zipline canopy tour – and Smugglers Notch State Park, which has miles of hiking trails snaking through its mountainous scenery. When it comes to luxury accommodation, Stowe

Mountain Lodge sits at the base of Vermont's highest peak, Mount Mansfield, offering skiing in winter, riding in summer and spa treatments year-round.

● ON THE WATER

An abundance of natural beauty makes Vermont dream road trip territory. En route to the jewel in the state's crown, Lake Champlain, we stop at lakeside university town Burlington. As the state's most populous town, this is Vermont at its busiest – but it's still the least-populated largest town of any US state. The main drag, Church Street, sees independent shops ruling over chains and the lively waterfront has restaurants, boat tours and bike paths.

On Vermont's western border, with the Adirondack mountains ►



of New York State on the other side, Lake Champlain is a much-loved spot. Accommodation-wise, the lakeside Basin Harbor Club is popular, with its lake-view rooms, golf course and activity programme.

For the wow factor, it's hard to beat Seaplanes R Fun. Set up by Jason Grieff in 1998, his repurposed 1940s-1950s planes offer fantastic views, with a 30-minute trip for up to three passengers starting at £110. Basin Harbor is also handy for the Shelburne Museum's extraordinary collection of Americana, including the majestic Ticonderoga steamboat, which once sailed on Lake Champlain. Like Loch Ness, Lake Champlain has its own mythical monster, Champ.

● **BUY LOCAL**

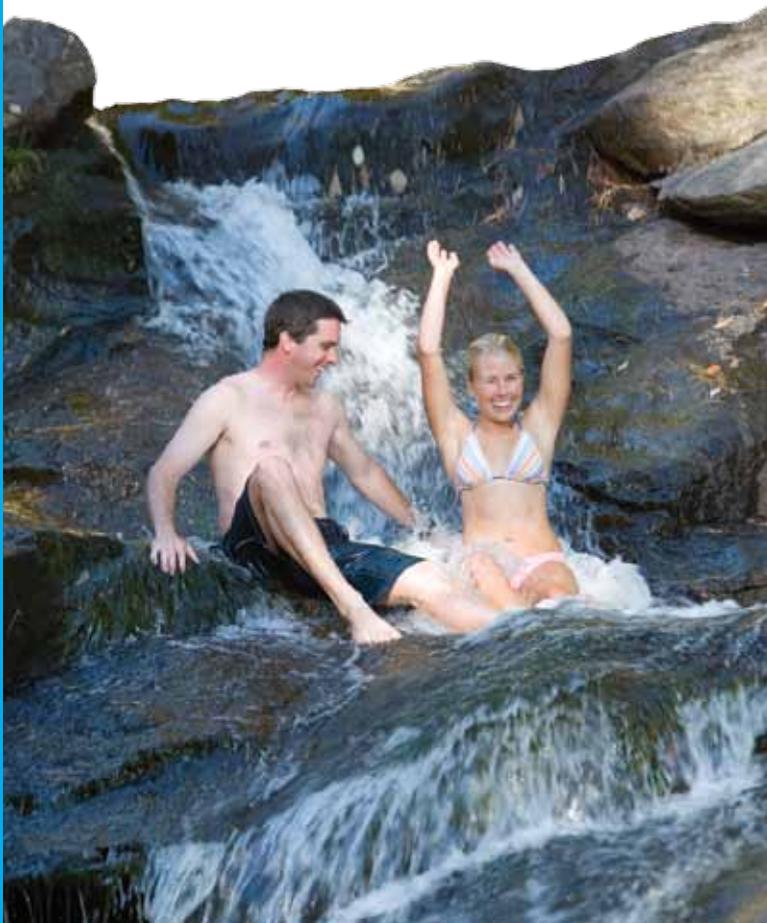
Heading south, we stop in Montpelier, the US's smallest state capital (of course) with its impressive State House and good choice of diners and cafes. Most head this way for the town of Waterbury, home to the ever-popular Ben & Jerry's factory, while Warren Falls' tiered pools,

one of many Vermont swimming holes, are perfect for a wild swim.

The driving never gets dull. Route 100 passes farmsteads, covered bridges and miles of wooded hillsides before turning off to pretty Woodstock, no relation to the festival. Here, mom-and-pop businesses thrive, from bookshops to restaurants, and the new 506 On The River hotel is a welcome addition. Nearby attractions include Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, Quechee Gorge and the famous ski resort Killington, hosting Vermont's second-highest peak.

For shoppers, Manchester's designer outlet shops, such as Michael Kors, J.Crew and Gymboree, will appeal. Unusually, it's the male in our group who has the penchant for shopping – the girls make a beeline for Mrs Murphy's Doughnuts. Manchester is also home to Lincoln family home Hildene, where Abraham's son Robert Todd lived, and country sports store Orvis whose fly-fishing lessons prove fun if unproductive for this first-time fisherwoman.

Food is big business here, ►



TRIED & TESTED



506 On the River, Woodstock

Part of the luxury Zanzibar Collection, this newcomer has 30 river-facing rooms and a relaxed, spacious feel. Facilities include a pool, library, restaurant and bar/lounge complete with vintage working

jukebox. There's also a playroom, teens room, yoga area and gym. ontheriverwoodstock.com



PICTURE: HUBERT SCHRIEBL

Black Bear Lodge, Stratton

Stratton is a popular ski resort, but the three-star Black Bear Lodge is a good out-of-season base too. Rooms are comfortable, breakfasts plentiful and staff friendly. There's an outdoor pool, two

restaurants, spa and nearby golf course, all in a great location. blackbearlodgestrattonmountain.com



Trapp Family Lodge, Stowe

Home to *The Sound of Music*'s real-life Von Trapp family, the only thing made of curtains are the curtains. Cosy, comfortable rooms include suites, chalets and villas, all

overlooking Stowe's mountainscape. Food and their own-brewed beer is excellent, and activities, from cross-country skiing to yoga and kids' clubs, are extensive.

trappfamily.com



Basin Harbor Club and Resort, Vergennes

Spanning 700 acres on the shores of Lake Champlain, this family- and dog-friendly resort dates back to 1886. With a huge choice of rooms and cottages, varied dining options, and countless activities

from paddle-boarding and kayaking to on-site golf and kids' clubs for ages three to 17, it's a lakeside favourite for many returning visitors. basinharbor.com



Church Street, Burlington



Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park



with a focus on local ingredients and fresh produce. Maple syrup usually comes up in conversation, although one local confesses “I can’t stand the stuff”. Vermont is the US’s biggest producer and you’ll find it in biscuits, cakes and cocktails. Another speciality is Vermont Cheddar, a delicious crumbly cheese to rival any. Places to stock up include Plymouth Artisan Cheese Company and Vermont Country Store, the latter an attraction itself. As ‘purveyors of the practical and hard-to-find’, the intentionally cluttered store dating

back to 1947 sells everything from vintage toys and old-fashioned sweets to cheese and maple syrup treats.

FAST FACT
 The Vermont Maple Open House weekend celebrates local maple syrup products with tastings and demonstrations statewide on March 28-29

● **A STATE FOR ALL SEASONS**

As autumn beckons, the state’s fall foliage season lures leaf peepers to witness nature’s annual show of bold, bright yellows, oranges, reds and even the brilliant gold of the sugar maple. It’s an optimum time, but there are few bad times, apart from the height of winter – unless clients are here to ski – and the slushy mud season around April. Clients typically fly in and out of Boston or New York

Ticonderoga steamboat



with the likes of Virgin Atlantic and British Airways, but consider a twin-centre with Montreal across the border. Air Canada flies daily and Canadian Affair’s weekly flights operate May to October from Gatwick and Dublin.

Vermont certainly packs a punch, its hills alive with the sound of Jersey cows, maple syrup tappers, crunchy leaves and swishing skiers. It’s a state for all seasons. **TW**

SAMPLE PRODUCT

Funway Holidays offers five nights’ room-only at the four-star Trapp Family Lodge, including return Virgin Atlantic flights from Heathrow to Boston and car hire, from £999, departing May 14. funway4agents.co.uk

Vacations to America offers five nights at Basin Harbor Club, return British Airways flights from Heathrow to Boston and car hire, from £2,445, departing May 19. vacationstoamerica.com/agents

Western & Oriental has a nine-night fly-drive with room-only accommodation at 506 on the River, Trapp Family Lodge and Stowe Mountain Lodge, from £1,900, including return flights from Heathrow to Boston and car hire, based on two sharing in September 2015. westernoriental.com/agents



Seaplanes R Fun