

FIND YOUR
FESTIVAL

Road trip-worthy events celebrate the
diverse flavor of New England

By Jen Rose Smith



Once the new blooms of spring appear, New England comes to life with a variety of outdoor fairs and festivals. Whether you want to spot shooting stars from an island peak or groove to jazz at the edge of the sea, there's a destination for you. Mark your calendar for these regional gatherings that celebrate music, culture, food, drink and more.



COMMON GROUND COUNTRY FAIR

Unity, Maine

► mofga.org/thefair

A relaxed celebration of all things rural, the Common Ground Country Fair draws a crowd to the tiny town of Unity, where attendees can join workshops on archery, astrology and beekeeping. "Our fair is perfect for someone who's curious about where their food comes from," says fair director April Boucher. "We just really want to get people interested."

Attendees show off their barnyard finesse at the Harry S. Truman Games manure pitch, tossing piles of the organic fertilizer in honor of the farmer-turned-U.S. president.

Not that you need pitchfork skills to get involved — dress up as a vegetable, insect or animal to join the exuberant, twice-daily Garden Parade that winds through the fairgrounds.

When to go: Sept. 21–23

Where to stay: A working fishing port that overflows with great art and seafood, **Rockland's** an ideal home base for attending the fair. The stylish and airy rooms at **250 Main Hotel** look out across the harbor, and you can watch the sunset from the rooftop bar.

En route: There's only room for 40 at **The Lost Kitchen**, a grist mill-turned-restaurant with some of Maine's most sought-after seats.

What's the draw? Award-winning chef and cookbook author Erin French dazzles with creative takes on local ingredients.





THE DEERFIELD FAIR

Deerfield, N.H.

• deerfieldfair.com

Among the longest-running family fairs in New England, the Deerfield Fair celebrates fall the old-fashioned way, with midway rides, caramel apples and lots of prize-winning produce. According

to fair secretary Debbie Tibbetts, the winning gourd in 2017 weighed in at 1,971 pounds, requiring a flatbed truck for the trip to the fairgrounds. Not that all the star attractions are oversized; New Hampshire apples fill one of the fair's most beloved treats. "Try the apple crisp," Tibbetts recommends. "I get it with ice cream, whipped cream — or both."

When to go: Sept. 27–30

Where to stay: With a bustling waterfront and a historic downtown, nearby Portsmouth makes the perfect home base for visiting the Deerfield Fair. Walking distance from downtown, Martin Hill Inn is sweetly romantic, featuring four-poster beds and deep soaking tubs.



NEWPORT JAZZ FESTIVAL

Fort Adams State Park,
R.I.

► newportjazz.org

As one of the longest-running jazz festivals in the United States, Newport Jazz Festival's back catalog reads like a who's-who of American music.

"Newport is the granddaddy of music festivals in America," says artistic director and jazz bassist Christian McBride. "It has always presented the very best that the jazz community has to offer."

Miles Davis, Frank Sinatra and Dizzy Gillespie have all rocked the crowd here, and McBride likes to keep a fresh perspective on sound: "The best in the jazz world encompasses diversity — you're going to have a lot of range, from avant-garde to electric and hard-core funk." The 2018 lineup includes jazz saxophonist Charles Lloyd and singer-songwriter Andra Day, who will perform at outdoor stages at Newport's historic Fort Adams.

When to go: Aug. 3–5

Where to stay: Full of design-inspired riffs on Newport's grandest era, **Gilded** is bright and beautiful. Breakfast arrives as a series of small plates and for those who prefer to sleep in, baked goods are available all day.

En route: Step aboard the elegant schooner **Aquidneck** to sail Narragansett Bay's East Passage, with outings starting at \$30 per person.



DISCOVER NEWPORT



JULIA CUMES

WELLFLEET OYSTERFEST

Wellfleet, Mass.

► wellfleetspat.org

With just 2,900 year-round residents, Wellfleet goes all out for this celebration of locally grown shellfish, which are prized for their excellent flavor.

"Wellfleet oysters have the perfect salinity, and the bay has unique nutrients for them to feed on, with

cold water and fast-moving tides. They're the golden standard for oysters," notes Michele Insley, the executive director of Wellfleet SPAT, a nonprofit that supports the event. At OysterFest, shellfish are served by the oyster farmers themselves, who go head-to-head in a fast and furious shucking competition before a cheering crowd.

When to go: Oct. 13–14

Where to stay: A grand Victorian mansion with luxe amenities, each room at **Eastham's Inn at the Oaks** is different, and some include fireplaces to ward off the autumn chill.

En route: Wellfleet is poised at the entrance to **Cape Cod National Seashore**, which boasts beautiful beaches. The wild cranberries at Head of the Meadow beach turn scarlet in the fall.



MYSTIC SEAPORT

SEA MUSIC FESTIVAL

Mystic, Conn.

► mysticseaport.org/event/sea-music-festival

Maritime work songs fill the salty air at Mystic Seaport, a living museum that preserves and celebrates America's nautical past. According to festival director and chanteyman Geoff Kaufman, it's more than a picturesque backdrop.

"We're able to demonstrate sailors' work songs and chanteys on board Mystic Seaport's three tall ships — setting sails, raising a lifeboat with a capstan and raising the anchor with a windlass — all jobs that developed with rhythmic music to help get the job done," he says.

This will be the festival's 39th year, with performers from Britain, Ireland, France and Iceland bringing their

own sea music traditions to seven stages by the Mystic River.

When to go: June 7–10

Where to stay: Overlooking the Mystic River and walking-distance to Mystic Pizza, guests at the **Steamboat Inn** wake to the sound of sails and seagulls. The inn's loaner bikes are the perfect way to cruise to Mystic Seaport.



ACADIA NIGHT SKY FESTIVAL

Acadia National Park,
Maine

► acadianightskyfestival.com

Far from city lights (and everything else), the five-day astral party kicks off when night falls on Acadia National Park. "This is one of the darkest places east of the Mississippi," says Alf Anderson, co-chairman of the festival's marketing committee. "There's so little around it, and we've kept light pollution to a minimum."

The headlining event is a star party atop **Cadillac Mountain**, where astronomers stay up all night to watch sunrise from the summit — the mountain catches some of America's very first rays.

When to go: Sept. 5–9

Where to stay: Walking distance from Bar Harbor's adorable shops and cafes, the **Acacia House Inn** offers relaxed elegance, with show-stopping breakfasts featuring produce from Maine farms.



MAINE OFFICE OF TOURISM



VERMONT BREWERS FESTIVAL

Burlington Waterfront Park

► vermontbrewers.com/festivals/vermont-brewers-festival-burlington

Vermont has the most breweries per capita in the United States, and they pour their best at an annual extravaganza on the Burlington waterfront.

"We have world-class beer here, and some of the brewers create things that are unique and special just for the festival, so it's the only place you're going to find the beer being offered," says Amy Cronin, Vermont Brewers Association festival and marketing manager.

Most of the brewers who attend the event are from within the state, which has earned global recognition for distinctive IPAs that balance bitterness with heady aromatics. And the festival site alone is a destination worth the trip, with gorgeous views of **Lake Champlain** and the **Adirondack Mountains**.

When to go: July 20–21

Where to stay: Talk festival strategy with **Hotel Vermont's** on-site "Beer Concierge," who can also help arrange brew-themed trips around the state. Rooms are stocked with locally made amenities such as woolen blankets and organic soap.



VERMONT BREWERS ASSOCIATION



STOWE AREA ASSOCIATION

STOWE FOLIAGE ARTS FESTIVAL

Stowe, Vt.

► stowe.com/activities/event/stowe-foliage-arts-festival

Vermont's forested mountains turn brilliant just in time for this festival, offering a gorgeous backdrop for more than 150 juried artists.

"Stowe in the fall is quite magical. It's a magnet for

people from all over the country," says festival founder Charley Dooley. Walk through the outdoor festival grounds, and you'll find handmade jewelry, blown glass, fiber arts, photography, painting and more. Just beyond the cluster of tents, Stowe's mountains soar upwards in a blaze of red maples, birch trees and towering oaks.

When to go: Oct. 5–7

Where to stay: Like an indulgent summer camp for grownups, **Stowe's Field Guide** strikes a balance between sophistication and fun. There's a roaring fire that's ideal for evening drinks, and décor is a whimsical take on Vermont's rustic appeal.

En route: Hop a Gondola SkyRide to the top of **Mount Mansfield**, the highest peak in the state.