

ROAD TRIP
DRIVING VERMONT'S LOVELIEST HIGHWAY



Driving Vermont's Loveliest Highway

By Jen Rose Smith

Pleated valleys and forest hollows in the Green Mountains turn vivid in fall, a brilliant stage set for Vermont's thriving rural culture.

Roads flanked by frost-skewed farmhouses lead to general stores where neighbors trade gossip, while cows graze meadows with million-dollar views. Winding into the heart of the mountains is Route 100, a two-lane country highway linking village greens and rolling farmland. You could rush through in a day, but slowing down for a long weekend journey on Vermont's most enchanting road leaves time to explore farm-to-table restaurants, visit world-class breweries, and summit rocky peaks.

DAY ONE

Start in the south, where Route 100 shears away from Route 9 at Wilmington. From there, it's an hour to the Vermont Country Store, a quaint landmark selling everything from flannel shirts to apple pies and penny candy. Pick up a jug of maple syrup, then continue to nearby Weston Priory, where Benedictine monks sing warm-weather services from an open-sided barn.

Another 30 minutes leads into the lush, green curve of Plymouth Notch, whose Plymouth Artisan Cheese was founded in 1890 by the father of President Calvin Coolidge and is famed for cave-aged Tomme made with raw cow's milk. Reserve ahead to dine at The Backroom, run like an exclusive dinner party by chef

“Winding into the heart of the mountains is Route 100, a two-lane country highway linking village greens and rolling farmland.”

JEN ROSE SMITH

Kevin Lasko in the small town of Pittsfield. Set menus feature produce from nearby farms, with room for 20 at family-style tables behind Pittsfield Original General Store.

DAY TWO

A morning drive brushes past Green Mountain National Forest, so pause to stretch your legs on the Long Trail, a 272-mile walking path that spans the entire state. Watch for moose along the .8-mile hike to Great Cliff, which commands unmatched views of wilderness home to a nesting population of peregrine falcons.

Continuing north, cleave to the trout-rich Mad River on your way to lunch at the Warren Store, an old-fashioned general store perched above a Mad River tributary. Nearby Mad River Distillers' Calvados-style Mad Apple brandy is a shimmering distillation of Vermont fruit, and from there it's a short drive to the tasting room of Lawson's Finest Liquids, a microbrewery known for brightly hoppy pale ales.

DAY THREE

Mountains claim the skyline as Route 100 continues to alpine-chic Stowe, where an essential stop at Trapp Family Lodge's Kaffeehaus means warm apple strudel alongside Austrian



coffee. Next, get some perspective on the Gondola Skyride to the summit of Mount Mansfield; you'll be surrounded by rustling forest in every direction when standing atop Vermont's highest peak.

From there, enter the wild country of Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, passing remote farms and forest on a final jaunt towards the international

border. Tag the end of Route 100 then celebrate in the lakeside town of Newport, once a swinging stopover for Canadian rum-runners in the Prohibition era. Celebrate your arrival with a glass of Eden Ice Cider at the town's Northeast Kingdom Tasting Center — it's an ice wine-like elixir pressed from frozen apples — while grazing locally made goat cheese at the well-stocked tasting bar.