

100 THINGS YOU SHOULD DO TO KNOW THE REAL NEW HAMPSHIRE

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Here are some places, activities, events and diversions that afford insight into the culture and values of the Real New Hampshire—those aspects of the state that are distinctive and different from the homogenized, mass-market rest of America.

Most of these things don't cost a nickel, or can be enjoyed for just a few dollars.

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1. Attend an evening program where writer and teacher Rebecca Rule tells stories that embody the best of rural New Hampshire humor and mirth.
2. Head to Pittsburg and cruise Moose Alley—that's U.S. Rt. 3 for eight or 10 miles north of the village. Best time to see the critters is just before dusk. Beware fast-braking tourists, and be sure to bring a camera.
3. Learn and sing the words to "Old New Hampshire." It's the official state song and was only adopted after years of legislative wrangling.
4. Visit a real working dairy farm and stand in the pit of the milking parlor and watch what happens. Don't be surprised if the people milking the cows speak only Spanish. Some to try: Forbes Farm, East Lancaster; Tullando, Orford; Stuart Farm, Stratham; or Pine Lane, Contoocook.
5. Take the Cog Railway up Mount Washington. It's mostly diesel-powered now, but there's a steam locomotive still making the first run of the day just like a century ago.
6. Visit the Canaan Speedway on any race night. Dress down.

7. Travel the back roads of Colebrook, Stewartstown and Columbia and look at the vast fields and pastures once home to dozens of farms and hundreds of cows now rapidly reverting to spruce forest.
8. Go watch a high school football game between teams from tough old mill towns such as Franklin and Newport. It's not NFL quality ball, but the kids play with heart.
9. Canoe or kayak a section of the Connecticut, Merrimack or, best, Androscoggin white water.
10. Stand at the rail of the ox-pulling ring at the Cornish Fair and listen to the rich regional accents of the teamsters and their fans.
11. Hear a fascinating lecture on early New Hampshire history delivered by Dartmouth Prof. Jere Daniell. He appears often around the state.
12. Drive Rt. 135 north from Woodsville through Monroe and on toward Lancaster for a glimpse of an unspoiled 1930s New Hampshire landscape.
13. Get out of your car and slowly walk through any New Hampshire covered bridge. Imagine the skill and toil it took to build such a marvel when there was no such thing as a power tool. And take a look at the stonework of the abutments, if it hasn't been covered over with concrete.
14. Pick up and read a copy of one of the fine weekly papers that cover the North Country—they're the last real hometown journalism left in the state.
15. Hop on a jet ski and take a ride on any water where it's still legal.
16. See in person every major candidate running for president. As soon as one election is over they'll start showing up campaigning for the next one, even if it's four years off. A great place to find them is Lindy's Diner in Keene, and be sure to try an order of onion rings when you're there.
17. Sign up with a community theater group and discover the talent right in your midst.

18. Put on soft-soled shoes and head for the contradance at the Nelson town hall. It's been going on every Monday evening for three quarters of a century. Try to be there when the great Bob McQuillen is playing the piano—he's the man who knows more than 1,100 dance tunes, many tracing back to New Hampshire in the 18th century.
19. Enjoy fried dough sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon at Weirs Beach or Deerfield Fair.
20. Watch the sap boil at a sugarhouse and taste some syrup hot from the evaporator. Then step outside and listen to the drip-drip-drip from a tree spout into a bucket for another kind of sweet country music.
21. Sit in the gallery of any district court on small claims day.
22. Attend a Grange meeting and find out how the organization had such deep influence on public policy in New Hampshire a century ago.
23. Hop on a snowmobile and tour the trails of Coos County right after a fresh snowfall. You'll find stunning views everywhere.
24. Treat yourself to some real New Hampshire ice cream—stuff that's made from milk from cows right nearby. Try Sandwich Creamery or Walpole Creamery or one of the newer brands that are coming on the market.
25. Watch the sheep-to-shawl competition at the New Hampshire Sheep and Wool Festival in Deerfield or at one of the agricultural fairs.
26. Get caught in a big fat foliage weekend traffic jam on Rt. 16 in Conway.
27. For a real crowd experience head for Hampton Beach on the Fourth of July.
28. Enjoy lamb kebabs and baklava to die for at Glendi, the Manchester Greek community's September festival.
29. Join a crew harvesting wild low-bush blueberries on the rocky barrens around Prospect Mountain in Alton.

30. See the Christmas light display at the LaSalette Shrine in Enfield.
31. Walk the Amoskeag Millyard and imagine when it was the center of the greatest textile complex in the world.
32. Board the Thomas Loughton at the Portsmouth docks and enjoy a trip to the Isles of Shoals.
33. Bundle up and go sit in a bob house and do some fishing through the ice.
34. View some of the interesting curtains and backdrops that were created for town and Grange halls long ago and that are now being rescued and restored.
35. Take in the Homecoming Game bonfire at the center of the Dartmouth Green in Hanover.
36. Drink a soda by Squamscot Beverages from a glass bottle.
37. Join the Blessing of the Motorcycles at the Shrine of Our Lady of Grace in Colebrook.
38. Pick your own berries or apples at a nearby farm. Then go home and make some nice jam or applesauce.
39. Watch the lobstermen offload the day's catch at Saunders Lobster Co. in Portsmouth.
40. Ask Ray Burton for an invitation to his annual summer lawn party at his farm in Bath. You'll find a bipartisan mix of North Country and downstate politicians on hand for the ham and beans.
41. Dig some clams in the Hampton River.
42. Spend a day at the Sunapee Crafts Fair.
43. Inquire of a sheep farmer when the shearer is coming around to clip the flock and go watch one of New Hampshire's professionals do the job. They're lightning fast and some have even competed in championships in Australia and New Zealand.

44. See thousands upon thousands of jack o'lanterns lit up and on display at the annual pumpkin festival in Keene. They turn off the street lights to deliver the full effect.
45. Go on a coon hunt through Connecticut Valley cornfields or try fishing for horned pout.
46. Study the New Hampshire photography of Peter Randall.
47. Bid on antiques and collectibles at a country estate auction. Or look for a bargain piece of art at a roadside yard sale.
48. Stay overnight at an Appalachian Mountain Club hut high in the White Mountains.
49. Observe a purple finch, the New Hampshire state bird.
50. Chat with a skier from the Greatest Generation who served in the 10th Mountain Division in World War II, or one who competed at the Nansen Jump in Berlin when the sport of jumping was in its heyday.
51. Serenade your sweetheart as you stand beneath the Great Stone Arch in Tilton.
52. Subscribe to the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture's Weekly Market Bulletin.
53. Take in the play "The Old Homestead" in Swanzey, staged annually for generations.
54. Read a novel by West Lebanon author Ernest Hebert and see if any of the characters seem like people in your town.
55. Head into an alder swamp in April and pick some fiddleheads. Take them home and fry them in butter.
56. Turn on a radio in Pittsburg and see what comes in. It'll probably be in French.

57. For a Christmas feast, buy—or make—tortiere, the hearty French-Canadian pork pie.
58. Learn the difference between a forwarder, a slasher and a feller-buncher and how technology has radically changed the way trees are harvested in the forests of New Hampshire today.
59. Check out a farmers' market. The state has more than 80 of them, and some even run during the winter months.
60. Observe the importance of small-town identity when the state high school basketball championships for the smallest schools are underway at Plymouth State University.
61. Watch one of the masters create an ox yoke. Bob Boynton of Dunbarton and Tim Huppe in Farmington carry on a craft tracing back many centuries.
62. Enjoy some souvlaki at the Gaslighter in Concord, and maybe one of the regulars will let you peek at his Greek newspaper.
63. Stand in the studio at Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish and visualize the great sculptor at work on his seated Abraham Lincoln.
64. Try some New Hampshire wine or a shot of hard stuff from Flag Hill Distillery in Lee. Or sample hard cider made from heirloom cider apples at Farnum Hill in Lebanon.
65. Learn how to use a scythe and snath and cut hay the way the oldtimers did. If you get good at it enter the handmowing contest at the North Haverhill Fair.
66. Sample breads and pastries made by local Finnish bakers and sold in stores around New Ipswich.
67. Study the layout of the villages of New Castle and Sandwich and see fine examples of 18th and 19th century vision and planning.
68. Watch the sunrise at the Cathedral of the Pines in Rindge.

69. Hunt up Muriel's Donut Shop in Lebanon and have a cruller straight from the kettle. It's one of the last of its kind in New England.
70. Visit a still-functioning one- or two-room school, such as in Croydon or Landaff. Croydon's claims to be the nation's oldest continuously operating one-room school.
71. Enjoy chocolate milk from a glass bottle and produced by Hatchland Dairy in Haverhill or McNamara Dairy in Plainfield or one of the other farmstead milk processors that have recently appeared around the state.
72. Sit in the audience any day the House Committee on Municipal and County Government is taking up legislation related to dogs. The number of different interests will amaze.
73. Watch the Moran tugboats nudge an oil tanker up the Piscataqua River into Portsmouth Harbor.
74. Pick a bright sunny day for a visit to the summit of Mount Washington. Whether you go by car, by rail or by foot, you'll be wise to bring warm clothing along.
75. Attend town meeting without fail. If you live in a town that still has the traditional "real" town meeting, savor every moment of this totally democratic institution.
76. Kick the tires on the log skidders and well-worn tractors at the Eddie Nash equipment emporium outside Colebrook and visit with some of the interesting people who may be there looking to buy a rig.
77. Take in a rowdy rafting party on Winnepesaukee or the Saco River.
78. Enjoy a slice of extra sharp cheddar cheese from Calef's Store in Barrington or Harman's in Sugar Hill. Or taste some of the new cheese varieties New Hampshire artisan cheesemakers are turning out.
79. Learn why the road agent is often the most important person in a rural town.

80. Read anything written by John Harrigan, North Country newspaperman, outdoorsman, logger, raconteur.
81. Look up at a clear New Hampshire winter sky at dusk and see where the term “Maxfield Parrish blue” came from.
82. Hang around the first farm auction in the spring.
83. Know what an “intervale” is and what Robert Frost thought about it.
84. Listen to the Shaw Brothers sing “New Hampshire, Naturally” at a nice benefit concert.
85. Find the Dodge Brook one-room school up a narrow bumpy road in Lempster and have one of the local historical society people tell about its history.
86. Pick up a DeLorme’s Atlas and go find places like Poocham, Bungy, Trapshire and Hemlock.
87. Admire the “Seven Swans” on The Ridge in Orford, elegant mansions that bear the influence of Bulfinch, Morey and other great architects of post-Revolutionary America.
88. Count the yard sales, antiques shops and collectibles vendors on U.S. Rt. 4 through Northwood.
89. Climb Mount Monadnock and see why it is said to be the most-climb mountain in the United States.
90. Make sugar on snow.
91. Read the New Hampshire-focused essays of Donald Hall and novels by Thomas Williams.
92. Get out of the car and walk around the prettiest town commons you can find. Start at Haverhill and be sure to see those in Walpole and Amherst along you way.

93. Hang around a deer weighing station and watch and listen to what goes on.
94. Place a large order for poutine at Chez Vachon in Manchester. Those French fries topped with cheese curds and spicy gravy will satisfy the most discriminating palate.
95. Dance cheek to cheek at the Rockingham Ballroom in Newmarket. Think of the times when the Dorsey Brothers, Paul Whiteman, Cab Calloway and other greats from the big band era played there. And the place offers dancing shoes for sale.
96. Socialize at your local transfer station. It used to be the smoky dump where neighbors were sure to swap gossip, now the recycling bins and mammoth dumpsters serve just as well as the lure.
97. If it's country music you enjoy, head for Epsom and the Circle 9 Ranch, the state's liveliest venue for the genre. There are line dancing lessons before the bands fire up, and it's BYOB.
98. Always, always buy brown eggs, preferably fresh from the 4-H kid's flock down the road.
99. Live through a good chimney fire.
100. Eat at any place that serves a good plate of fried tripe.



(This list of 100 Things to Do to Know the Real New Hampshire was first composed by Steve Taylor for the 1995-96 class of Leadership New Hampshire as a light-hearted study exercise. It is by no means a definitive listing, as there are many, many more things that are peculiar to New Hampshire culture that make life in the state interesting. This version of the list was revised extensively in September 2012 .)

