

WINTER WAKEUP

Vermont gets vibrant in summer

BY SALLY JOHNSON
NEW YORK TIMES SYNDICATE

Summer is the reason most Vermonters put up with the winters. For three months, after the rain ends and before the frost turns the leaves, the world becomes a vibrant, lush green and the residents, aroused from their hibernation, venture forth, remembering once again why they live here.

The town of Middlebury on the western side of the state is an ideal jumping-off point for forays into the Green Mountains, because nothing is far away. Lake Champlain, 20 to 25 minutes to the west, offers swimming, boating and fishing. The mountains, with hiking trails, swimming holes and waterfalls, are a short drive to the east.

A college town of 8,000 people, Middlebury is far more cosmopolitan than its size or setting would suggest, with a variety of restaurants and inns that are often included on the recommended lists of national guidebooks.

From mid-June through August the streets and stores sound like a rural United Nations, with people chatting in languages from French to Arabic to Chinese, all of them students at Middlebury College's Summer Language Schools, where English is the only forbidden tongue.

Summer days begin with a rosy sunrise over the Green Mountains and end with a spectacular display of pink, purple and orange as the sun descends over the Adirondacks of New York state to the west.

For three weeks in July the

weather turns hot (by local standards hot is anything above 90 degrees) and humid. When that happens relief is — literally — in sight: the Green Mountains, reliably 10 degrees cooler than the Champlain Valley floor, are a 20-minute drive east and up.

And should it rain, Burlington, with its array of cultural and culinary offerings, is an hour to the north.

Events

Mozart under the lights at Lincoln Center is an enchanting musical experience. Mozart under the stars at Shelburne Farms near Burlington, is something else again. The Farms is the grand, turn-of-the-century, lakefront summer home built by Dr. William Seward Webb and Lila Vanderbilt Webb.

For three weeks each year the musicians of the Vermont Mozart Festival play on the South Porch to the people seated on the grounds around the Shelburne House. Although other festival venues include downtown Burlington and the Lake Champlain ferry, this is a perennial favorite.

The Vermont Equestrian Summer Showcase, which began with two weeks in Killington, ends with two weeks at the Trapp Family Lodge in Stowe Aug. 12 to 23. Spectator fees are \$5 (\$7 on Sundays) and \$2 for children under 12 and seniors (\$3 on Sundays). Call (802) 496-7459 for schedules.

One of the more unusual summer treats Middlebury has to offer is the



Overview: The view from a rocky ledge of the Green Mountain National Forest overlooks Branbury State Park and Lake Champlain, both in the town of Salisbury, Vt., just south of Middlebury.

Picturesque pedaling: Long, flat stretches of land surrounding picturesque Lake Champlain, near Middlebury, make the area a cyclist's paradise.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE VERMONT TRAVEL DIVISION

Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, where each night from Aug. 11 to 23 well-known authors give readings. Authors range from Jay Parini and Ron Powers to Hilma Wolitzer and Linda Pastan.

The readings at 8:15 in the Little Theater at the Bread Loaf college campus above Ripton are free. For information call (802) 388-3711, ext. 5296.

Outings

When Joseph Battell, the wealthy but eccentric Middlebury resident who built the Bread Loaf Inn around the turn of the century, was alive he banned all automobiles from the road leading to his mountain retreat. If that seems extreme in these times it is still an idea that has merit. Hiking and cycling are better choices.

The day-hiking possibilities around the Middlebury region range from a casual, if slightly uphill, stroll to a rugged, rock-climbing experience, best left to the initiated.

Two valuable sources of information are the "Day Hiker's Guide to Vermont," which covers hikes off the Long Trail, and the "Guide Book of the Long Trail." Both are published by the Green Mountain Club and both are sold in the Vermont Book Shop in Middlebury for \$9.95 plus tax.

One relatively easy half-day hike begins at the top of the Appalachian Gap where state Route 17 crosses the Long Trail, which bisects the state from north to

south, following the ridges of the Green Mountains. Park in one of the pull-offs at the top and follow the Long Trail signs, headed south. The trail climbs steeply for a mile or so, then levels off in a clearing. Follow the path through the bushes and out onto a seriellike cliff.

Although Vermont is correctly thought of as mountainous, there are long flat stretches throughout the Champlain Valley that make it a cyclist's paradise.

Biking has become a wildly popular sport here over the past two decades, in large part because of the efforts of John Freidin, the founder of Vermont Bicycle Touring. Freidin, who no longer owns the business, has encapsulated his knowledge into the helpful "25 Bicycle Tours in Vermont," also for sale at the Vermont Book Shop and well worth the \$3.95 it costs.

For those more comfortable with some outside guidance, Bruce Burgess, the owner of Bicycle Holidays in Middlebury (802-388-2453), will provide either a highlighted map or a custom-designed tour for as many days as you wish. Burgess rents mountain bikes for \$29 the first day and \$20 a day after that.

Helmetas cost an additional \$3 a day and reservations are recommended.

Vermont Bicycle Touring (802-453-4811) in nearby Bristol offers two-day weekend tours in addition to the longer variety. Reservations are usually necessary.

For drivers there is a very scenic loop that takes you over the mountains and back again, with opportunities for antiquing, shopping and dining along the way.

Head north out of Middlebury on Route 7, turn right onto Route 17 at New Haven Junction and follow the road through Bristol. Coming out of town, take the second right and follow the road to the top of the Appalachian Gap, making certain to pull over and turn around at the top.

Wind down the mountain past Mad River Glen and Sugarbush to Route 100, go right on Route 100 to Hancock, stopping for lunch and browsing at Warren Country Store.

In Hancock turn right on Route 125 and climb the mountain, turning in at the sign for a look at Texas Falls. Then continue over the mountain, back to Route 7.

Shopping

Over the years Middlebury has evolved into a browser's paradise. The best strategy is to park somewhere around the Green and walk. Nothing is very far.

Along Main Street the Vermont Book Shop (802-388-2061), in residence at the same location for years, is declared by even urban bibliophiles to be a treasure.

Treasures crystallize at Swedish glassworks

BY EVERETT POTTER
SPECIAL WRITER

A visit to Sweden is not complete without a stop in the area known as the "Kingdom of Crystal." Situated in the southeastern province of

Smaland, a rural area with deep blue lakes and thick pine forests, the Kingdom is home to 16 major glassworks.

Among them are Kosta Boda and Orrefors, names that have become synonymous with the acclaimed tradition of Swedish craftsmanship and design.

Visitors flock to the area to see glassblowers at their craft and to take advantage of bargains.

With few exceptions, the local Swedish factories offer large selections of seconds that are far less expensive than first-choice pieces.

In many cases it takes an expert's eye to distinguish the small flaws that mark a piece as a second. But it doesn't take an expert to become excited about the prices. They are about 50 percent less than first-quality pieces sold in Stockholm and 70 percent less than those sold in the United States.

All the factories welcome visitors. This year Kosta, the oldest glassworks, is celebrating its 250th anniversary.

Kosta was founded in 1742 by

two noted generals — Anders Koskull and George Bogislav Stael von Holstein — at the request of King Fredrik I, who was intent on building a crystal trade for the country.

The Kosta factory acquired the nearby Boda and Afora glassworks more than 40 years ago, forming Kosta Boda. In 1950 Kosta Boda merged with Orrefors. But each firm retains its own designers and production facilities.

Now 900,000 visitors wander through the Kosta glassworks every year.

"It's rare that a piece of glass is broken, and you'll never see a 'don't touch' sign here," says Diana Hansen, a Kosta spokesperson.

"About 15 percent of a team's production is seconds," she says, adding, "firsts would be enormously expensive if we couldn't sell seconds."

Each year the company introduces two new collections. They discontinue others and offer favorites for as long as they sell.

Amid deafening noise and constant heat, workers maintain a rhythmic pace — blowing, turning and shaping pieces of glass. A six-

man team can make between 800 and 900 wineglasses per day.

Unlike most factories, which keep visitors at bay, Kosta lets guests up close to watch and talk to the workers.

The shop is a large, well-lit warehouse with thousands of pieces of glassware for sale. About 95 percent of the pieces are seconds; the rest are discontinued firsts.

They include art-glass pieces that are signed and can be bought for a good discount. But finding such pieces takes luck.

The shop carries all the classic Kosta pieces, including the Pippli line of glassware, a favorite for 50 years. These narrow, heavy items include cherry glasses for about \$16, pilaner glasses for about \$27 and champagne glasses for about \$18.

A perennial Kosta favorite is the Snowball, a thick, hollowed-out piece used as a candleholder. It's about \$8.50.

Among the newest art-glass designs is the Pandora series. It features clear glass with a satin finish. A Pandora candlestick is about \$75. Whimsical pitchers are about \$94.

The Texas series of glass cacti

designed by Gunnel Sahlin are very popular, says Hansen.

"Only later did we find out that these cacti are natives of Arizona," she says. The pieces are priced at about \$60.

Sweden's best-selling glass, Kosta's Chateau wineglass, has delicate beveled facets on the bowl and costs about \$12.

All these prices include Sweden's whopping 25 percent value-added tax (VAT). About 15 percent of that tax is returned when the buyer leaves the country — under Sweden's Tax Free for Tourists plan.

The price of shipping glassware — especially heavy pieces such as vases — to the United States can be as much as the amount of value-added tax that is refunded.

Even so, savvy shoppers often figure it's worthwhile to buy and ship from Sweden.

The ultimate glass experience is a "Hyttail" evening. In this traditional fest, participants have dinner in the factory — Baltic herring which are cooked in the glass furnaces.

Dinner is followed by local folk entertainment. Of course, there is time for shopping. Getting to Kosta involves an overnight trip from Stockholm. There are good accommodations in the nearby cities of Vaxjo or Kalmar.

For information contact Kosta Boda, Kosta S-360 52, Sweden, or call 011-46-478-503-00. Or contact the Swedish Tourist Board, 655 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017; telephone (212) 949-2333.

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