

## Touring New Hampshire – mountain villages, elegant hotels, beaches and fabulous entertainment

By Sharman Yarnell

What makes New Hampshire so very unique, aside from the fact that it offers the visitor a choice of mountains or beaches? Aside from the fact that it is so picturesque, with small white churches dotting the landscape, lush rolling hills and magnificent mountain ranges, quaint sea port villages with pristine beaches? And an array of differently priced, differently styled accommodations? Something for every pocket?

Only three hours away from Montreal, I was able to do my morning Saturday shows on CJAD, jump in the car when they finished, and arrive in Littleton to sample the fudge at Chutters, before they locked the doors. Chutters is in the **Guinness Book of records** as having the world's longest candy counter. What's more important, in my humble opinion, is the fudge. Chutters fudge is so smooth and creamy that This One was quite able to finish off various and sundry flavours.

Before I was side-tracked by any of the other delicacies in Chutters, I was ushered out the door to continue the drive to the Omni Mount Washington Hotel.

The New Hampshire scenery is absolutely gorgeous; the roads smooth and even, with lupins growing alongside in some spots, the country air fresh and clean. I travelled early June on a balmy, warm day, but I can only imagine how colourful and crisp that same drive would look in the Fall.

Sitting nestled at the base of mountains in all its glory is a beautiful white and red, elegant lady, The



The historic Mount Washington Hotel is an elegant 'lady' surrounded by its fine golf course

Mount Washington Hotel. With a verandah stretching its length, she is a Grand Dame of Halcyon Days waiting to welcome you. Walking in the front entrance, I was transported into the early 1900's, when she was built. Anyone with a smidgen of imagination could sense the ghosts of Gatsby, Coward and perhaps Gertrude Lawrence, strolling by. The hotel retained all the elegance and dignity of its past but with all the required modernity of today. And there is plenty to make everyone feel at home. Families with children, newlyweds and retirees all partake in the glory of the hotel. It has Stickneys for the more relaxed dinner - and The Cave, a prohibition-era speakeasy with stone walls and live evening entertainment - what an experience! The main dining room is stunning and the food and service outstanding. Everyone, at some point in their lives, should stay at The Mount Washington Hotel.

The next morning, we ventured up Mount Washington itself. No, we didn't hike it - we took the Cog Railway. In the past, the Cog used to transport visitors up the mountain to a posh resort, but now it is simply for the joy of riding in this super little train. Only one steam engine remains as they have converted to the more environmentally responsible diesel. Retired from work, is the original little steam engine "that could". 'Hero' or 'Peppersass' as it's now known, sits in the yard of the

railway and is a must see for anyone who ever wondered if they, too, could take on any wild venture.

The ride up the mountain is breathtaking! Although the day was warm, there was still the odd bit of snow and ice at the top when we were there. To say the weather can sometimes be harsh at the summit would be an understatement.

You don't want to go to New Hampshire and not take a trip up the mountain on The Cog Railway. It's simply a must do. Kids big and little will love it. (And I had the exceptional joy of riding down in the front of the engine!)

From the sublime to the equally sublime, but in a different direction. The second night was spent in Meredith at The Inn and Spa at Mill Falls. I went in with the valet and luggage whilst my husband parked the car. One look in the room and I warned the valet to be prepared for male hysteria: The four poster bed was made entirely out of birch trees! A fireplace was in one corner, a long window seat in a bay window and doors opened onto a balcony over-looking Lake Winnepesaukee. My husband arrived. Hysteria ensued: He was taken back to his days at camp, canoeing and dreaming under the stars! - There is no roughing it here, though - this is a SPA in every sense of the word, in a gorgeous setting. And... it has pet-friendly accommodations!

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The Cog Railway is a 'must do'

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That night we drove to Plymouth to take in a Mavis Staples concert at The Flying Monkey – That’s right, The Flying Monkey! Newly renovated, the 1900’s cinema is everything from a dinner theatre, musical venue, to movie house, showing classic silent films. Owned by Alex Ray, he named it The Flying Monkey because he had played a flying monkey in a Wizard of Oz theatre production. When he asked his wife if he had done well, she suggested that if he wanted another job on stage, he might have to buy a theatre. So he did. Hence the name. There’s a great line-up of Jazz/Blues legends for the summer and fall at The Flying Monkey - Natalie MacMaster in July, Judy Collins and the iconic Arlo Guthrie in August. What’s not to love about this funky monkey?

The next day, it was off to Portsmouth. What a dream of a city. Within walking distance of shops, restaurants and theatres is The Sise Inn, a beautiful inn built in 1881. I’m a glutton for historic homes that have retained the elegance of the past. The Sise Inn is all that and more. It has 34 en-suite rooms, each one uniquely decorated with period pieces. I enjoyed the very comfortable living room that you can cozy down in with a good book. There is a coach house split into two lovely, private apartments, the downstairs unit with kitchenette, the upstairs suite with whirlpool and private sauna. Great for families or for newly-weds.

Once ensconced in the Sise Inn, it was off on a tour of the city and ... gloriosky... we came across a beautiful old lady from the past. This Music Hall is not to be missed. While it harkens back to the glory days of theatre, it has been fully renovated.

The auditorium and proscenium arch are stunning. Upcoming events include Lily Tomlin, Emmy-Lou Harris and K.D. Lang. Check out [www.themusichall.org](http://www.themusichall.org) for the full schedule.

There are a slew of events and festivals throughout the summer and fall. Many are held in The Music Hall or around the corner at The Loft – a new intimate setting for smaller productions. In the fall both are home to the New Hampshire Film Festival this year from Oct. 13 to 16th.

For families, there’s a wonderful ‘living’ museum, Strawberry Banke, where visitors can experience the history and growth of Portsmouth over the years. Kids and adults alike will so enjoy the old homesteads, the stories told and the reenactments that bring the past into the present.

For a delectable meal in a nice relaxed setting, the place to go in Portsmouth is The Portsmouth Brewery. We settled down with a ‘delish’ plate of mussels along with a brew created to celebrate the brewery’s 20 years in service: Mottly’s Crew. And for an afternoon nosh of super salad and sandwiches, we dropped in to Popovers.

We so much enjoyed Portsmouth, we cancelled other plans and stayed into the next afternoon. Imagine! All this in just

four days. What could one do with a full week or two? Beaches, mountains, lovely towns, concerts, outdoor sports, fireworks, boardwalks and ... North Conway at Settlers Green.

What is it that makes New Hampshire unique? The answer is the soul of the people that live there. Such a consistently friendly, helpful and welcoming group is really cool to come upon.

We travelled home through the Crawford Notch State Park. Awesome. There really isn’t a route that you could take in New Hampshire that isn’t simply outstanding.

## TRAVEL PLANNER

Here is a useful list of web sites for hotels and attractions mentioned in this article.

- New Hampshire Tourism [www.visitnh.com](http://www.visitnh.com)
- Omni Mt Washington [www.omnihotels.com](http://www.omnihotels.com)
- Inn and Spa at Mill Falls [www.millfalls.com](http://www.millfalls.com)
- The Cog Railway [www.thecog.com](http://www.thecog.com)
- The Flying Monkey Theatre [www.flyingmonkeynh.com](http://www.flyingmonkeynh.com)
- The Sise Inn [www.siseinn.com](http://www.siseinn.com)
- Chutters [www.chutters.com](http://www.chutters.com)
- The Music Hall [www.themusichall.org](http://www.themusichall.org)
- Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce [www.portsmouthchamber.org](http://www.portsmouthchamber.org)
- The Portsmouth Brewery [www.portsmouthbrewery.com](http://www.portsmouthbrewery.com)
- Popovers [www.popoversonthesquare.com](http://www.popoversonthesquare.com)

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