



# Top 10 attractions in vermont

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Vermont is equal parts myth and reality, home to a mystique that other states can only envy. A mere mention of its name, and images appear: sunlit meadows of black-and-white cows, dazzling white ski trails, tidy hillside farms, blazing red maple trees along a stone wall, covered bridges, buckets collecting sap for maple syrup.

Certainly these idyllic scenes still exist, although less picturesque plastic tubing has replaced most of the buckets, and many of the farms may now be chic B& Bs where you can stay while sightseeing.

Another Vermont exists alongside this idealized one, represented by bustling Burlington, the outlet malls of Manchester, Killington's frenetic apr?s-ski scene, and Brattleboro's unlikely blend of gritty blue-collar and '70s hippies grown up.

Even the state's mainstay of agriculture has a new look, as dozens of artisanal cheese makers transform Vermont's dairy industry, and tourists eagerly follow the Vermont Cheese Trail to sample them.

Other trails lead to traditional tourist attractions: maple farms boiling sap and welcoming visitors each March, and covered bridges - seven of them in the far northern town of Montgomery alone. You'll enjoy both Vermonsts.

I live 20 miles from Brattleboro, Vermont, where I do my shopping at the Farmer's Market and in the locally owned stores on Main Street. My travels frequently take me back and forth across the Connecticut River, which separates my western New Hampshire town from my favorite skiing and hiking trails in Vermont's Green Mountains. I consider both states to be our backyard.

With a covered bridge, white-spined church, weathered barns, and ski trails down the mountainside, Stowe is everybody's image of Vermont. At the foot of Mt. Mansfield and in the heart of the state's snow belt, it's also the town that most personifies the glory days of Vermont's early ski industry, a heritage that's explored here in the Vermont Ski Museum.

Although avid skiers had climbed the mountain long before that, and a rope tow was installed in 1937, things really took off in 1940, when the first chairlift was opened. Stowe Mountain Resort is still one of New England's premier ski destinations, and the gondola that carries skiers in the winter takes sightseers to the summit for more views in the summer and fall.

It's not all about skiing and the mountain; you'll find shops and boutiques, art galleries, dining, and lodging of all sorts. Exhibits of works by Vermont-based artists are shown in the Helen Day Art Center and you can find quality Vermont- and New England-made jewelry, glass and fiber arts at Remarkable Things at Stowe Craft at

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the beginning of Mountain Road. When hunger strikes, I like to grab a hand-built sandwich at Back Cap Coffee & Bakery on Main St.

You can rent bicycles to ride, or you can walk or skate along the 5.3-mile Stowe Recreation Path, a paved multi-use route through meadows and woods alongside the river, with beautiful views of Mt. Mansfield. The best views of Mt. Mansfield's distinctive profile are from the upper part of the path, which you can access from Thompson Park, on Mountain Road.

Author's Tip: If your canine friend accompanies you to Stowe, look for the 1.8-mile Quiet Path, a low-impact extension of the Recreation Path, where dogs can run free. You can reach it from Cemetery or Mayo Farm Rd.

In the heart of downtown Burlington, Church Street is only four blocks long, but it forms a wide, traffic-free space for public events and a lively street life even in Vermont's cold winters. Along with the festivals scheduled throughout the year, it's a place for sidewalk cafes, benches, and public artworks, and the buildings alongside it are filled with shops, restaurants, and boutiques. In the summer, when everyone is outdoors, it has the feel of an Italian piazza.

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