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VERMONT'S NEW
TASTING ROOMS

OUR 16 FAVORITE
PLACES TO BIKE

GREAT WEEKEND
FARM STAYS


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Farm



GET A TASTE OF THE OLD WAY OF LIFE ON FARM

Stays

BY LISA LYNN

The magnificent barns at Shelburne Farms have been preserved and now house many of the non-profit's educational programs.

WHAT RANGE FROM THE SIMPLE TO THE SUBLIME.

Photo by Sebastian Ventrone

A century ago, when Rudyard Kipling wanted a retreat where he could write *The Jungle Book* and other stories, he built a home next to what has become one of the foremost heirloom apple orchards in the country. When New York heiress Lila Vanderbilt Webb had a vision for a model farm, she and her husband purchased thousands of acres of pasture and forestland on Lake Champlain. Both of these properties remain working farms. But on top of that, they also offer lodging and classes in sustainable farming, gardening and preparing food.

Around the state, these and more modest farms are both taking in guests and giving them hands-on experiences in how food is produced. At Vermont's farm stays/B&Bs you can help with the chores, learn to cook, bake, brew, felt, build a stone wall or make cheese. Or, you can just settle back and enjoy another way of life.

Liberty Hill Farm

It's been raining in the quiet valley near Rochester and wisps of fog rise over the White River as it winds through the pastures and cloaks the velvety green mountainsides. A fisherman wades in the river shallows. Mountain bike trails (part of the RASTA network, see p. 32) snake up behind the white farmhouse and red barn. On Route 100, just down the road, it seems like more bicycles pass than cars.

This is the postcard Vermont scene that's been wooing guests to Liberty Hill Farm for more than three decades. "We were a farm-stay B&B long before the farm-to-table movement started," says Beth Kennett. Both she and her husband Bob come from old farming families: their ancestors have been working the New England soil since 1641 on Beth's side and 1742 on Bob's.

"Pretty much everything we eat here we grow ourselves or our neighbors grow," says Beth as she ticks off the names of neighbors up and down the valley who deliver eggs, berries, apples, vegetables and meats to her door.

For the guests who come to stay at the 1825 farmhouse's seven guest rooms (or in the newly acquired home just down the road), this is a chance to see a working Vermont dairy farm in action. "Guests can do as much or as little as they want," says Beth. Most everyone who wants to gets a chance to feed bottles to the calves, others can help out with the chores or just kick back on the porch.

"We had a Boy Scout troop here once that wanted to work, so Bob set them out to the field to pick stones. They never had thought about the fact that this was how the land was cleared, so that fields could be planted, so that cows could be raised, so that they could drink milk." Beth recalls. "Later, I got a note from one saying he'd never drink a glass of milk or eat ice cream again without thinking about the work that went into producing that milk."

At night, Bob and Beth, their son

David, his wife Asia and their young daughter all gather around the farm table for dinner with the guests, which, along with breakfast, is included in the room rate. "It's something you don't get to do often at inns or restaurants or even B&Bs. It's a way for people to learn more about the farm and Vermont," Beth says. "Ultimately, what I hope people take away is a real connection to where our food comes from. That's something that's been missing in so many people's lives."

Rooms are \$132 per person (\$62 for kids or \$75 for teenagers) and include breakfast and dinner. www.libertyhillfarm.com

Shelburne Farms

If you were a Vanderbilt in the late 1800s, had more money than you could spend and a hankering to own a farm in Vermont, what would you do?

In 1886, Dr. William Seward Webb and his wife, Lila Vanderbilt Webb, began thousands of acres in Shelburne on the shores of Lake Champlain with the idea of creating a model farm. They had Frederick Law Olmsted, the landscape architect behind New York's Central Park, design the estate. Architect Robert Robertson masterminded three barns, including the Breeding Barn, which was, at the time, the largest open-span wooden structure in America. Their own home, comparatively modest, was set on the cliffs looking west over the lake to the Adirondacks, with covered porches to the north and south.

Today, that home has been restored as an inn, open only in the summer. The 24 guest rooms still hold much of the original furniture

Beth and Bob Kennet (below) come from a long line of dairy farmers, a tradition they maintain at Liberty Hill Farm (bottom right) where they raise more than 100 Robeth Holsteins as part of the Cabot dairy cooperative. Home-grown heirloom tomatoes (top right), a cozy bedroom (far right) and cooking lessons are some of the treats awaiting guests at Green Mountain Girls Farm. At Shelburne Farms the south wing of the massive Farm Barn (previous spread, and immediate right)) has a Children's Farmyard where kids can milk a cow, collect eggs, or brush a sheep.





Photos: top left and far right, courtesy Green Mountain Girls Farms; cow, courtesy Shuburne Farms.



and décor, including gilt curtains, four-poster beds and a library of leather-bound books. You can play the piano, wander the formal gardens, recline in an Adirondack chair on the lawn (with a stunning view of the lake and the Adirondacks) or head out for a kayak.

In the afternoon, a cheese board magically appears, featuring Shelburne Farms' Farmstead Cheddar, produced from the farm's herd of Brown Swiss cows. Warm loaves of organic bread from the farm's O Bakery grace the dinner table. On the evening menu you might find pasture-raised lamb or beef, whey-fed pork, organic vegetables and desserts made with the farm's maple syrup—all produced on the working landscape that surrounds the inn.

The farm itself was turned into a non-profit by the family's descendants in 1972 and since then Alec Webb and his partner Megan Camp have worked hard to not only keep it as a working landscape but to make it a center for education and a showcase of sustainability. There is not a week that goes by in the summer without some activity or event going on. For adults there are barn tours, bird walks, medicinal plant walks and cheese-making lessons. At the Farm barn, kids can chase the chickens, pet the lambs and cows or sign up for various educational programs.

Yes, the Vanderbilt-Webbs knew how to do things right. And we thank them for that. Rooms are \$160 to \$525 a night. You can also visit the farm for \$8 for adults, \$6 for children. www.shelburnefarms.com.

Green Mountain Girls Farm

"Are you sure you can't come down this afternoon? We can put 13 goat kids in your lap," Mari Omland wheedles over the phone. Omland is a Vermonter, a Williams College graduate, a former Junior National Champion skier and World Cup ski racer. For nearly a decade she worked on Conservation International's management team and for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

When she adds that I could also milk the goats, learn how to make chèvre, wander the farm to pick my own organic vegetables, or take a class with master butcher Cole Ward (author of *The Gourmet Butcher's Guide to Meat*) it's nearly impossible not to book a stay at Green Mountain Girls Farm immediately.

In 2007, Omland and her partner, Laura Olsen, a University of Vermont grad, moved to back to from D.C. to a farm in Northfield just two miles off I-89, about halfway between White River Junction and Burlington. There, they began to raise goats, pigs, chickens and turkeys, organic vegetables, herbs and flowers and run what they call an "omnivore" CSA and a farmstand.

The couple turned the barn into the "Guest House" with an apartment that sleeps up to five. From October through May the Farmhouse Inn, a full house with three bedrooms and a beautiful cook's kitchen, is also available to rent.

"We often have multi-generational families come stay and we can tailor the farm experience to whatever you want," says Omland—be that learning to milk a goat or to pick and pickle beets.

Recently, Green Mountain Girls Farm had a family show up with their grandmother's recipe for sausage. "It worked out beautifully," says Omland, "We have a meat processing area in the barn and pork in the freezer and were able to collect all the other ingredients from what we grow on the farm." Rooms are \$300 a night for up to five people in the Guest House and \$475 a night for up to six in the Farmhouse Inn.

www.greenmountaingirlsfarm.com



Scott Farm

From 1892 to 1896 Rudyard Kipling holed himself up in his home "Naulakha" in southern Vermont to write. Naulakha, Hindi for "jewel beyond a price" was designed to vaguely resemble a ship, a long thin structure with Kipling's study at the prow. There, in the four-bedroom house, he wrote *The Jungle Book*, *Captain Courageous* and the *Just So Stories*. Today the house is owned by The Landmark Trust. It still holds many of the original furnishings including the tub where, Kipling wrote, he "luxuriously parboiled myself in a hot bath knowing I was beholden to no man."

Today, you can rent Naulakha, Kipling's carriage house or any of the three other houses on Landmark Trust's adjacent 571-acre Scott Farm. With orchards that date back to the early 1800s, the farm is famous for its heirloom apple collection. Resident orchardist Ezekiel Goodband can tell you the history of the more than 110 varieties that are currently cultivated there as he strokes a beard that falls midway down his chest. Goodband has searched abandoned orchards throughout New England and as far as Kazakhstan, the birthplace of apples, for old varieties to cultivate.

Every fall, the farm hosts Heirloom Apple Day (October 11th) when you can taste the varieties, pick your own or sample cider. Plenty of other fruits and berries grow on the farm and throughout the year you can take clinics on topics such as how to make cider, pies, galettes or beer. Scott Farm is also home to The Stone Trust, which holds workshops on restoring and building old dry stone walls (walls with no mortar.)

Naulakha rentals start at \$390 a night for the home or \$275 for the adjacent carriage house (with three night minimums). There are also three other buildings available. www.scottfarmvermont.com



At Scott Farm, orchardist Ezekial Goodband (top left) has helped grow and preserve more than 100 varieties of heirloom apples, some grown from seeds he collected around the world. Each fall you can taste them on Heirloom Apple day. The farm is also home to a variety of other fruit trees and berries, which you can enjoy if you rent out Naulakha, the house where Rudyard Kipling wrote *The Jungle Book*. The house still holds much of the original furnishings (below left).

Trevin Farms

In three days at Sudbury's Trevin Farms, Troy Peabody (a trained chef-turned-farmer,) can teach you to milk a goat, make chèvre, bake bread, create appetizers, soups and entrees, hitch and drive a draft horse and feed the pigs. In short, you get a taste what farm life in the Champlain Valley is all about.

Or, you can take a short drive over to play the Neshobe golf course, drive or ride a bike to Lake Dunmore, go antiquing in Brandon or see a play in Middlebury. But for most of Trevin Farms' guests, the farm, the food and, especially, the goats are the main attraction.

Peabody and his partner moved from Cambridge, Massachusetts to the little red farmhouse and began amassing animals nearly a decade ago. Trevin Farms's 40 acres are now home to more than 50 goats as well as chickens, pigs and draft horses.

The farms' two-night/three-day cooking class package (\$475 per room, double occupancy) includes all instruction and lodging, plus breakfasts and one dinner prepared by Peabody. The three bedrooms are beautifully appointed, one with a crystal chandelier and another has a four-poster bed.

Yes, this is a working farm but it's a lovely one. Room rates start at \$110 a night and include breakfast. www.trevinfarms.com



Grand View Farm

It was sheep that led Kim and Chuck Goodling to buy Grand View Farm in Washington, just south of Montpelier. "We'd been living in a smaller place and had a few sheep but wanted to expand the herd," Kim recalls. In 2004 they became the fourth family in 220 years to move onto the farm. The Goodlings not only brought in sheep, but also a border collie and a llama to protect them, pigs and chickens.

But the Gotland sheep are the farm's pride. Not only do the Goodling's breed, raise, shear and sell them, they also use the wool in knitting and felting classes and sell the soft gray yarn via their side business, the Gotland Wool Company.

For those interested, Kim will teach spinning, rug hooking, knitting and weaving. Her guests have ranged from knitwear and fashion designers from New York who wanted to understand where wool comes from, to families who just want to get a taste of farm life.

Guests stay in the Farmhouse Suite's two bedrooms, with four-poster beds and a small kitchenette. Farm stays are \$170-\$180 a night for 2 or \$240-\$250 a night for 4 and include a country breakfast on weekends. www.grandviewfarmvt.com. ■



Set on a hillside in central Vermont, Grand View Farm is more than 220 years old. Today the Farmhouse Suite has been restored with beautiful antiques and guests sleep in four-poster beds. The Goodling's prized flock of Gotland sheep are an endless source of amusement that Kim documents in her blog livingwithgotlands.com. The sheep also provide the wool Kim spins into yarn and sell.