Exploring the Landscape
An Educational Outdoor Guide to the Middlebury Area

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"I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in."

- John Muir
Thank You

The editors would like to thank John Elder for a fantastic culmination to our Environmental Studies major and for opening our eyes to the world of environmental education.

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Table of Contents

Introduction........................................4
Mind and Body...................................5
Cultural History..................................6
Natural History..................................7
Leave No Trace..................................8
Trail Around Middlebury.......................11
Hiking............................................17
Swimming Holes..................................21
Canoeing..........................................28
Skiing............................................30
Rock Climbing...................................35
Ice Climbing.....................................37
Mountain Biking..................................39
Road Biking......................................45
Hunting...........................................49
Fishing............................................54
Kayaking..........................................57
Re-creation.......................................60
Regional Map.....................................62
Mind and Body
by John Elder
Stewart Professor of English and Environmental Studies

"Mens sana in corpore" is a Latin saying that translates as "a healthy mind in a healthy body." It has often been used to explain the importance of athletics within an academic community. The connection between mental well being and physical health might seem so obvious as to require no reminder. In fact, though, our educational tradition has a certain tendency toward abstraction and compartmentalization. Recalling the wholeness of our humanity, and taking steps to express it in our daily practice, is thus never amiss.

Beyond the role of intercollegiate sports and of the physical education program at Middlebury College, outdoor recreation in the surrounding landscape has long had a special importance for this community. Just as the beauty of the Green Mountains has influenced the prominence of environmental studies in our curriculum, so too it has led many of us out under the sky for our leisure hours. Hiking, running, skiing, canoeing, climbing, and biking are among the ways people in this community like to stay in shape. But these activities also contribute significantly, as the Latin quotation implies, to our alertness throughout the week.

Physical recreation in the Vermont landscape is a kind of mapping. It situates our College in the Champlain Bioregion, reminding us that we read our books and pursue our discussions between a northern extension of the Appalachian chain and one of the major lakes of North America. As writers like Gary Snyder remind us, there is power in an historical awareness that encompasses geological developments and not just human history. Traveling over the land can help us see that the land, too, is going somewhere.

A richer social vision can also emerge from our outings in the countryside. We don't have to go far from campus in any direction to see that we are in an agricultural region. The farms of Addison County, especially those to our south and west, are among the most successful ones in Vermont. Biking or running on country roads can help us to think more about where the food in our dining halls comes from, as well as to appreciate a local, deeply rooted culture that is not always registered very clearly by the academic world's cosmopolitan perspective.

Whatever insights outdoor recreation may offer into our surrounding topography or our immediate social context, its main appeal is obviously that it's so much fun. What could be more exhilarating than physical adventures amidst the beauty of this northern New England landscape? With our packed schedules and our ambitious studies, we can sometimes forget the importance of intellectual play: our minds need to be elastic as well as disciplined if we are to be capable of new thoughts. Carrying an aerobic playfulness back indoors with us, from our pursuits in the dramatic seasons of this place, may just help us sustain a spirit of adventure in the reading, thinking, and writing we do here, too.
Cultural History

To begin to understand the natural history of Addison County, it is first important to learn about the cultural history of the area. For the land that we may now call Green Mountain National Forest was not always so. The lands described in this guidebook were largely unmanaged until the arrival of the first European in 1609, French explorer Samuel de Champlain. Until this time, the indigenous Abenaki were the only humans to use this area. After Champlain's explorations, the land was shared by the Native Americans and the trappers of the fur trade. Trappers from Vermont were quite prosperous during the 17th century as beaver, fisher, lynx, marten, mink, moose, muskrat, river otter, and raccoon pelts were sold to Europe and bear, deer, and wolf pelts were traded at the local colonial markets. Eventually it became unprofitable as these mammals began to disappear from the countryside, due to unsustainable methods of trapping. By 1800 bear, deer, elk, and lynx had disappeared from the region.

In 1763 the Treaty of Paris ended the war between Great Britain and France for the rights to the area. After this time, large numbers of British began to colonize the region. This was disastrous for the Abenaki as diseases from the Europeans wiped out the native populations. The land of the Champlain Valley was no longer in the hands of the mobile Abenaki. It now rested with British settlers whose agricultural lifestyle would be a large impact upon Vermont's forests.

In order to supply fuel, fields for agriculture, and fields for grazing livestock, the forests of the Champlain Valley were clear-cut. White pines were reserved under the Broad Arrow Policy for the ship masts of the British Navy. Northern white cedar and white oak were used for construction, and hickory for firewood. An absence of forests caused an increase in flooding and erosion following the massive logging. To combat this, the Green Mountain National Forest was set aside for control by the state government in the 1920s.

As the conservation movement gained momentum in the middle of the twentieth century, programs to manage the uses of the state's forests were established which actively aided the return of forests to the region. Farming declined due to economic reasons at this time, further increasing the growth of forests as they gradually encroached upon old farmlands left vacant by the increase in urbanization. These events set the stage for the land today. The forests of Addison County are now a valuable resource because of the draw of tourism to the area. The Champlain Valley is presently a hot spot for recreation in the summer, fall, and winter months (the spring season is known as "mud season"). The future of this land will continue to be shaped by our culture. It is important that we realize this impact and strive to maintain a healthy natural community for enjoyment into the twenty-first century and beyond.

Natural History

Upon first glance it is easy to realize that forests dominate the landscape of Vermont. Since glaciers receded from the area more than 11,000 years ago, forests of one kind or another have covered 95% of Vermont. Today 75% of Vermont is forested land, with two major types existing in Addison County, boreal and northern hardwood.

Boreal forests are found at elevations above 2,500 feet where the trees have adapted to severe cold and high winds throughout most of the year. The trees of boreal forests are mostly coniferous, consisting of mainly red spruce and balsam fir as well as white spruce, black spruce, paper birch, and yellow birch. Due to the high acid content of the soil of coniferous forests, a unique blend of herbs have adapted to these conditions. Close inspection while recreating in these areas may lead to the discovery of whorled aster, mountain sorrel, blue-bead lily, bunchberry, shining club moss, mountain wood fern, and twinflower, among others.

At elevations below 2,500 feet lies the northern hardwood forest. Plants growing here have adapted to conditions intermediate between extreme winter cold and summer heat. The deciduous trees of this forest type are the annual participants in the fall foliage season of Vermont. They are sugar maple, American beech, yellow birch, white ash, hemlock, basswood, white pine, black cherry, striped maple, butternut, hickory, red maple, northern red oak, mountain maple, and paper birch. Several variants of these forest types may be found based on the local soil conditions and climate as well as which species share dominance with the beech, birch, and maple. Other plants that may be found growing in the northern hardwood forest are evergreen wood fern, Christmas fern, red trillium, white wood aster, starflower, and thimbleberry.

The forests of Addison County are not only important for their recreational and resource value, they are also home to a diversity of wildlife. Over two hundred species of bird and fifty-four species of mammals call these forests home. Many of the birds are migratory, spending only part of the year here and traveling southward during the winter. The mammalian population ranges from the tiny deer mouse to the beefy black bear weighing in at as much as four hundred pounds. Other carnivores found in this area are foxes, coyote, raccoon, weasels, fisher, marten, striped skunk, wolverine, otters and bobcat. Mountain lions and timber wolves who used to call this region home were unfortunately extirpated in the 1800s, although there is talk of reintroduction efforts in the near future. The other large mammals of the region's forests are deer and moose.

Forests have been the dominant natural-community type in this region for several thousand years. They are comprised of many different species which are connected to each other by complex interactions and natural processes. It is important to remember that although the boreal and northern hardwood forests of Addison County are beautiful places to recreate, they are also vulnerable ecosystems in which hundreds of other life forms call home.

Adapted from:
Leave No Trace

When engaging in outdoor activities it is inevitable that an impact will be made upon the land. Therefore, in order to foster a strong relationship to the land it is vital that this impact be minimized. Minimizing one's impact in the backcountry is largely a matter of technique, yet these practices must be motivated by an ethic. Low-impact recreation requires care, effort, and most of all a respect for the environment.

It is important to define a wildland ethic before venturing outdoors. We must become aware of our impact upon the environment and to then set limits for ourselves regarding this impact. Aldo Leopold, a forester, wildlife biologist, and conservationist discusses wildland ethics in A Sand County Almanac. In “The Land Ethic,” the final essay from this book, Leopold writes, “An ethic, ecologically, is a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence.” Wilderness is intrinsically valuable and therefore there are limits on freedom of action regarding its use. As wilderness travelers, we must believe in the wilderness ethic and subsequently strive to implement minimum-impact backcountry practices.

What follows is a short summary of the principles of low-impact backcountry techniques as found in Leave No Trace: Outdoor Skills and Ethics for the Northeast Mountains, developed by the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS). “Simple living, adventure and solitude can still be part of our backcountry travels, but in order to assure their continued existence we must take the responsibility to educate ourselves and to become equipped with skills and habits that enable us to Leave No Trace.”

Plan ahead and prepare

* Know the area and what to expect
* Keep group size to ten or less
* Select appropriate equipment
* Repackage food to reduce the amount of potential litter

Travel and camp on durable surfaces

* Stay on trails to avoid trampling vegetation
* In alpine areas walk only on the trail or on exposed rock to avoid harming extremely fragile alpine vegetation
* Take rest breaks on durable surfaces, such as rock or bare ground
* Choose an established campsite at least 200 feet away from trails and water
* Arrive at your destination with time and energy to set up a good camp
* Choose a campsite that is somewhat elevated so water will not pool if it rains
* Choose a site big enough for your group to avoid enlarging the hardened area
* Leave your site clean to increase the likelihood that other visitors will use it

Catholes

An individually dug “cathole” is the most widely accepted means of backcountry waste disposal. Catholes should be located well away from water, trails, camp, and gullies. Use 200 feet as a good guideline, but remember that local regulations or environmental factors may dictate greater distances. With a small garden trowel, dig a hole four to eight inches deep and four to six inches in diameter. After use, mix some soil into the cathole with a stick, cover it with the soil plug, and disguise it with natural materials. To promote decomposition, locate catholes in organic soil rather than sandy mineral soils.

Properly dispose of what you can’t pack out

* Dispose of human waste responsibly
* Avoid polluting water sources
* Eliminate contact with insects and animals
* Maximize decomposition
* Minimize the chances of social impacts
* Minimize soap and food residues in waste water
* Keep fishing and hunting waste away from trails and water
* Be careful with food and odors in bear country
* Pack out toilet paper and feminine hygiene products

Dispose of waste properly

* Reduce litter at the source
* Dispose of trash and garbage properly
* Cook only as much food as you plan to eat
* Do not leave behind food; Pack it in, pack it out!

Portable Fire Pans

Fire pans are metal trays with sides high enough to contain wood and ashes (over 3 inches). They should be lined with several inches of inorganic soil, or propped up on small rocks to protect the ground from heat.

Leave what you find

* Minimize site alterations
* Avoid damaging trees and plants
* Leave natural and cultural artifacts
* Respect private land
The Trail Around Middlebury

Hidden in the woods and pastures surrounding the town of Middlebury is an interconnected network of trails almost 14 miles in length. The Middlebury Area Land Trust, a local grassroots conservation group, initiated the development of this trail system called the Trail Around Middlebury, or "TAM." The TAM includes the Colin O'Neill trail to the south and west of the college campus, trails through the Otter Creek Gorge Land Trust and Wright Park, and Battell and Means woods.

The TAM is an excellent place to run or walk. Parking is available at most trailheads, and signs indicate whether the trail can accommodate mountain biking. (see the Mountain Biking section for portions open to bikes)

The Colin T. O'Neill Trail
By Jill Hindle '97.5

If you're traveling south on route 30 past the Center for the Arts, past the gym and the new weight room and the new pool and the new hockey rink, past sad, sag-roofed old Fletcher Field House, and up the hill toward Kirk Alumni Center, there is a trailhead on the right side of the road marked with a sign. It reads: "The Colin T. O'Neill Trail...dedicated by the class of '97.5." Enter here, and a narrow path will lead you into a modest grove of mostly third generation trees, an inconspicuous corner of the College's property I myself didn't really notice until we had marked the site for the trail. The path winds sharply at first, its edges rutted and cluttered with cut logs. Sapling stubs show their blunt heads mid-path and live roots, unearthed, twist motionless in the leaves. The trail takes advantage of the varied terrain, bulging into a sudden rise before plunging again, weaving between trees, around boulders, over stream rivulets. My favorite segment, just past a small footbridge, runs parallel to a rude rock slope topped with birch trees that hover weightless—particularly in the dim light of overcast winter afternoons—like thin ghosts above and beyond the darker trees.

Colin and I were both Environmental Science majors. During our sophomore year at Middlebury we took one of Don Mitchell's ES writing classes together. One of our assignments was to spend an afternoon outside—under a tree, in a tree, by a stream, on a trail—then write a poem about it. Mine turned out to be a clumsy meditation on man's role in nature inspired by an imagined conversation I had had with a squirrel in Ridgeline Woods, a pre-ski-chalet complex. Colin's poem was about birches. It was simple and clean, entirely unlike mine. I tucked a copy of it in one of my notebooks and didn't find it again until after his death, two years later. Before the trail was complete, I took his poem into the woods and sat on the footbridge reading it over. Though his diction lacked the grace and majesty of the nature poets we had studied (no Wordsworthian longing or Whitmanesque zeal) he seemed to understand the beauty of the trees, the way one might be familiar with the beauty of a woman. Looking up at the west-facing ledge fringed with a grove of white birch, I could see what he had seen.

Beyond this point, the trail winds into thicker woods where the canopy leaves little room for light to filter through. While planning the route, I remember clamoring across dozens of old, downed trees, their dried roots stripped and propped on end like the woody altars of so many pagan gods. We chewed through the trunks of those fallen monarchs with
chainsaws, revealing the tight-textured rings of their age. Bisected, their insides shone, like bright moons in a landscape of gray bark and brown leaves.

As the trees thin out again, the grade steepens and the trail winds north. A fallow field stretches west from the bottom of the hill. Stripped logs built into the embankment serve as steps leading down to the edge of the wood. From here the trail continues south and west along the edge of the field, then north along an outcropping of pine trees growing in a narrow stand perpendicular to route 125. The trail follows the pines, eventually crossing the road and along a haphazard network of gulleys, fences, and hedgerows until it meets up with Perkins Road in Weybridge.

At the news of Colin's death on February 25, 1996 I ran along this road to its highest point where the view of the sunset is best. Just off the road, deep wheel ruts grown up with grass lead to a weathetd barn still stocked with hay and regularly visited by pigeons, starlings, and barn swallows. Part of a fox carcass, no doubt a clutch of bleached bones by now tests in one corner of the dirt floor. It is by this barn that I sat, small in the pum of its gaping dark door—the lactic acid still surging through my legs from the sprint up the hill. the blood pulsing hot in my hands, the heart beating in the pit of my chest—realizing with a keen, abrupt horror that Colin was dead. He would not see any of this again: the big sky, the sun setting in the clouds, the golden grass, the silhouette trees. He would write no more poems. He would miss the next lambing season at Dom Mitchell's farm. He would miss the millennium, and his twenty-first birthday. This is a true loss for the world. But I am encouraged by the things that are built out of loss.

When four seniors came up with the idea to dedicate a trail in Colin's name to the school as our class gift, no one disagreed. Matt Rakison, Matt Ireland, Pete Schneider, and Greg Horner designed the basic layout for the trail and, after permission for a land easement was passed, spent two full days cutting through the big stuff. After the basic ground work was complete, the whole class was invited to help clear out the rough cut. Teams of five to ten people worked on the trail once a week, and within three and a half to four months (which included a lot of time exploring the woods searching for the driest and least intrusive course) the trail was complete. The five signs posted along the path, made out of recycled scrap from the Ridgeline Woods expansion project, were hand-painted with a logo specially designed for the trail and engraved with informative excerpts from farmer's almanacs, poetry, and environmental literature.

At the opening ceremony, all were invited to walk the trail together. Many of us spent the whole afternoon wandering back and forth along the narrow path still smelling of upturned soil. As it grew dark, we sat on the ridge watching the sun turn the field gold below Some one said, "Colin would have come here all the time."

A rover, an adventurer, an outdoorsman, a prince, a fool, a lovable rogue, a real kid at heart, Colin made us all look old. Whether it be mud sliding, sledding, water skiing, or bream ball, he had everyone beat. The trail was created as a tribute to his spirit, his sense of discovery, his copious energy, and his bright-eyed, assiduous wit. It carries our best memories and our greatest fears, our fickle faith in this life and our drive to identify our individual purpose within it. It holds whatever it is that Colin left here, so that when we come back to these few quiet, uncut acres, we are reminded of the weakness and strength in ourselves. We pay homage to the years that have passed quickly while giving thanks for the people and the environment that shaped them. On the trail we get our bearings again. We see Colin in everything. His life is now something larger.
Trails around Middlebury College Campus

Length: 4.6 miles
Starting on South Street just north of Porter Hospital and west of the baseball fields, the trail skirts the golf course ending at Route 30 where the Colin O'Neill trail begins. This portion of the trail winds through a wooded section with signs intermittently placed describing the natural surroundings. The trail then opens up in to pastureland, and crosses Route 125. This portion of TAM extends to Route 23, meandering through woods and clearings, providing excellent views of the Adirondacks.

Jackson Trail

Length: 1.6 miles
On Route 23, 1.5 miles from Route 125, there is a parking spot on the left hand side that marks that trailhead to the Jackson Trail. To begin this portion of the TAM, follow the road and hop the fence. You might find that you are sharing the trail with cows. Follow TAM signs to a small gorge where you will then walk along a stream bank for approximately 1 mile, after which you will emerge in a meadow and then come to Hamilton Road. Turn right on this road and walk 200 yards to the Johnson Trailhead, where you will find a parking spot on your left.

Johnson Trail

Length: 1.5 miles
The Johnson Trail begins at the junction of Hamilton Road and Sheep Farm Road in Weybridge. This portion of the TAM proceeds from the parking area north along the fenceline and around a pond, which is a popular place to see waterfowl, muskrats and various birds. The trail then enters the woods and turns east coming out on Horse Farm Road.

Otter Creek Gorge Land Trust Trail

Length: 1.7 miles
This trail begins 0.2 miles north of Hamilton Road on Horse Farm Road. It starts by skirting a fence line and then enters the woods where it passes other trails. The TAM eventually leads to Otter Creek where it turns upstream. Otter Creek Gorge can be seen and heard from this portion of the trail. The trail then leads you over a footbridge at Belden Dam and into Wright Park.

Wright Park
by Kate Shick '00

Length: 3.8 miles
Wright Park is located north of the town of Middlebury, nestled between the curves of Otter Creek and the stark line of the railroad tracks. It offers the ambling visitor an enjoyable walk through rustling meadows populated with ant hills, forests streaked with slender birch and carpeted with pine needles, and the dim solemnity of a hemlock grove. It is a place where human footprints are mixed with those of coyote, fox, and deer. This is a startling discovery because of the park's proximity to town (ten-minute bike from campus) and the recent history of the area. Most people, both college students and town residents, simply do not know that Wright Park exists. One resident referred to the place as the location where he and his neighbors went to dump their trash up until about twenty years ago. This aspect of the park's history is no longer evident, and perhaps lends well as a testament of the healing potential of a landscape, and the redemption possible after human exploitation of a place.

Wright Park encompasses approximately 150 acres of land, with at least 3.8 miles of trails in easy access. The main loop trail has been absorbed as part of the Trail Around Middlebury (TAM), and offers a traverse along amazing limestone cliffs as well as a walking mimic of the meanders of Otter Creek. The TAM continues out of the park to the Belden Gorge. The other trails in Wright Park lead one to beaver ponds, myastic swampy places abounding in cat-tails, and through open meadows full of fading insects and wildflowers. Wright Park offers a venue for a variety of recreational inclinations besides hiking and running. The TAM is open for mountain biking. In winter, trails are made for cross-country skiing and snow-shoeing. There are wonderful opportunities for animal tracking, as the trail is often muddy and scat is plentiful. For those seeking soothing meditation or solitude, the park has a large endowment of spaces which can be adopted as personal cathartic habitats. Any exploration may lead to an interaction with the abundance of wildlife in the park: beaver, otter, fox, coyote, fisher, deer, skunk, piliated woodpecker, turkey, grouse, raven, and red eft. The transitions between forests are phenomenal as well, moving from white pine stand, to mapley deciduous mix, to silent hemlock. Wright Park offers an integration of physical and sensory stimuli that sparks mindful contemplation. The change in seasons is an unbelievable metamorphosis, yet leaves one with a sense of rhythmic continuity. Members of the Middlebury community are invited to adopt and explore Wright Park as their own wild place.

Directions: Follow Seymour Street out of town, towards the Pulp Mill Bridge. Turn right just before the bridge crossing, following signs for Wright Park and the Stump Dump. Go straight past the Stump Dump to the Wright Park gate and parking area. Essentially, you will be on the east side of Otter Creek, opposite from the Morgan Horse Farm.

The love of wilderness is more than a hunger for what is always beyond reach; it is also an expression of loyalty to the earth, the earth which bore us and sustains us, the only home we shall ever know, the only paradise we will ever need.
—Edward Abbey

The greatest wonder is that we can see these trees and not wonder more.
—Ralph Waldo Emerson, from a conversation with John Muir
Chipman Hill

Length: 2.5 miles
You can either access the Chipman Hill trail network from High Street or the TAM trailhead off of Seminary Street Extension, just east of the Co-op Fire Insurance building. With an elevation of approximately 360 feet, Chipman Hill is the most prominent feature in town, with the exception of Bicentennial Hall. This is a favorite place for mountain bikers.

Battell and Means Woods
Length: 1.1 miles (Battell) and 0.7 miles (Means)
The trailhead for Battell and Means Woods is located on Seminary Street Extension east of downtown Middlebury.

Means Woods trail starts on the north side of Seminary Street Extension, 100 yards east of the parking lot. This portion of the TAM follows an old road grade through a wooded section to Peterson Heights which is a paved road that leads to Washington Street Extension. Follow TAM signs across an open meadow to the base of Chipman hill.

Battell Woods trail starts on the south side of Seminary St. Extension, and proceeds through the woods on a gravel road where it opens up into farmland. The trail winds past old farm house along Route 7 where it ends on Boardman Street near G. Stone Motors.

Jeffrey Murdock Nature Preserve

Length: 0.6 miles
This trail runs from Route 7 across from G. Stone Motors to the Middlebury Union Middle School.

Rules of the Trail
* Bring food and plenty of water
* Wear clothing that is appropriate for the season
* Pack out what ever you pack in
* Keep dogs on a leash and avoid taking them on cross country trails
* Wear bright colors when walking along roads
* Lock your car at the trailhead and keep valuables out of sight
* Let someone know your plans, and then stick with them
* Use mountain bikes only where specifically permitted
* Stay on the trail

This was adapted from The Trail Around Middlebury by the Middlebury Area Land Trust Inc. 1998.

Hiking

Hiking is one of the simplest ways to become acquainted with the wilderness around us. All you need is a willing attitude and a sturdy pair of shoes. Many of the trails described here will take you to places with breathtaking views, but do not forget to experience the world around you on the way there. The forests of the Champlain Valley and the Green Mountains are brimming with a rich diversity of life that could easily go unnoticed by hikers too focused on reaching a peak. Walk at an easy pace, keeping your eyes and ears open. The keen observer will constantly be rewarded by the countless surprises contained within Vermont’s wilderness.

Texas Falls

Length: 1.2 miles
Located just east of Middlebury Gap in the Green Mountain National Forest, the Texas Falls Recreation Area offers an easy hike through beautiful scenery. Since the trail is short and not too rugged, Texas Falls is an ideal location for the inexperienced hiker to become acquainted with the forest. The main feature of the area is the deep, narrow gorge carved out by the flow of the Hancock Branch of the White River.
Thousands of years of the relentless rush of the river has hollowed out many deep pools, towered over by sheer cliffs. The hiking trail is an easy loop of just over one mile. At the trailhead, you may pick up a pamphlet that serves as a guide to the natural wonders surrounding the trail. Each of series of numbered plaques corresponds to an entry on the pamphlet describing a point of interest at that location. Following the trail clockwise, you will advance upstream with the river. As the trail climbs right, the roar of the falls will slowly fade to a slight gurgle and eventually to a nearly inaudible whisper. In the quiet of the forest, let the sounds of nature surround you. Hear the rustle of the breeze through the tree branches and the chatter of the birds that inhabit the forest. The trail eventually wanders back to the lower section of the falls, and finally returns you to the parking lot. You will probably not want to return too quickly, so take time to observe the life around you, or simply to sit down and listen to the cascade of water rushing past.

Directions: Take Route 7 south to Route 125. Drive east on Route 125 13 miles over the mountain. The access road for Texas Falls is on the left soon after you reach the bottom of the mountain. A sign clearly directs you where to turn. Drive about half a mile until you find the parking area on the left. The trail starts across the road.
Rattlesnake Cliffs and Silver Lake

Length: 4.8 miles

Overlooking Lake Dunmore, the Rattlesnake Cliffs provide a spectacular view of the southern Champlain Valley. The trail climbs moderately from the parking lot, and forks left from the Silver Lake Trail. To reach Silver Lake, just stay on this trail. The Rattlesnake Cliffs Trail brings you past the Falls of Lan to across a wooden bridge over Sucker Brook. You will pass junctions with the Aunt Jenny Trail and the North Branch Trail. After about 1.5 miles of fairly steady ascent, you will reach a rocky outcropping that seems to drop straight into Lake Dunmore. Parts of this area may be closed in the spring and summer to protect nesting peregrine falcons, so pay attention to any signs denoting closure. The cliffs offer panoramic views to the south and west, and on a warm summer day you may be able to watch swimmers and paddlers enjoying the lake below. On the way back down, you may wish to veer right onto the Aunt Jenny Trail, which provides a steeper, more direct descent. Before you reach the parking lot, follow your ears to the Falls of Lan to and take a dip in the pool at the base of the falls to cool off.

Directions: Drive south on Route 7 out of Middlebury and turn left onto Route 53. Follow Route 53 to a parking lot just past Smuggler's Notch State Park.

Abbey Pond

Length: 3.8 miles, 1250'

This moderate hike climbs briskly at first, then tapers off before reaching a cascading mountain stream. Just past this stream there is a nice view of the Champlain Valley from a ledge on the left through the oak woods. At the top, Abbey Pond offers interesting views of Robert Frost Mountain, while supporting a diverse community of marsh plants and animals. The blue-blazed trail maintained by the US Forest Service climbs 1.250 feet. Upon entering the area, notice the predominance of sugar maples (Acer saccharum) in the forest, several of which have been tapped for maple syrup.

Directions: Take Seminary Street (past Grand Union) to Quarry Road to Route 116. Turn left (east) and continue about 0.3 miles to sign for Abbey Pond on the right. Drive in 0.3 miles before parking.

How Maple Syrup is Made

Pure maple syrup is made by concentrating the sticky sweet sap of the sugar maple tree. As winter comes to an end, usually in late February or early March, sugarmakers prepare for their annual harvest of the maple trees. The sap begins to flow when the nights are below freezing and the days are mild; conditions also referred to as "sugar weather." The trees are tapped by the sugarmakers at this time by drilling holes \(7/16\) of an inch in diameter and about \(3\) inches deep into the tree trunk which carries the sap. Buckets are then hung from a hook on the tap to collect the sap. Throughout the 4-6 week sugar season, each tap will yield approximately ten gallons of sap. Once the sap is collected, the buckets will be brought to a sugarhouse where an evaporator boils it down into syrup.

* It takes about forty gallons of sap to make one gallon of pure maple syrup.
* Coming from the tree, maple sap is approximately 98% water and 2% sugar. When the syrup is finished, it is only 33% water and 67% sugar.
* If proper tapping procedures are followed, tapping will not endanger the health and vitality of the tree.
* The sap collected for the making of syrup is only a small portion of the tree's total sap production.
* A healthy sugar maple can produce sap every year for a hundred years or more.
Snake Mountain

Length: 3.6 miles, 1,287'
Rising over 1,000' above the farms of Addison County, Snake Mountain is a distinctive north-south running ridge of hills. The views from Lake Champlain and the Adirondacks from the cliffs at the summit are magnificent, especially in the late afternoon. This is a great spot to watch the sun slowly sink behind the Adirondack backdrop, but remember to bring a headlamp or flashlight, because the trip down will get quite dark. From the gate, walk up the pleasant woods road. At the "T," turn left and the route will steepen and zig-zag up the mountainside. Once you are on the ridge, watch for the side trail to the left which leads out onto the top of the cliffs. Here you will find the remains of an old hotel foundation that burned down at the beginning of the century. Snake Mountain's proximity to campus, relatively short hike, and rewarding views make it an ideal afternoon getaway.

Directions: Take Route 125 west to Route 22A, then drive south for 4.5 miles to Wilmouth Road. Turn right and continue to end and junction with Mountain Road. Turn left, parking area will appear shortly on the left. A gated woods road to the right is where trail begins.

A Snake Mountain History

This area provides phenomenal views of Lake Champlain and the Adirondacks. Snake Mountain consists of durable sandstone called Mendon Quartzite that was folded roughly 540 million years ago. Its name comes from the shape of the long, thin crest of the mountain. Consisting of the same rock formation as Mt. Philo, these quartzite peaks are part of the Champlain Thrust Fault that was active 375 million years ago. Other rock types found on Snake include black shale and limestone. On the summit there is evidence of previous glacier activity in the form of north/south running striations found in the quartzite. Rocks carried by the glaciers sliced the quartzite marking the direction of their flow. Roughly 12,000 years ago Snake Mountain was an island in the middle of Lake Vermont, a glacial lake that stretched from the Adirondacks to the Green Mountains. The rich clay soil of the Champlain Valley can be attributed to this water body. Over a century ago, in 1874, the Grand View House served as a hotel resort atop the mountain. The resort included a roller skating rink, croquet grounds, a dance hall, and a 68 foot observation tower. Evidence of previous human impact remains today. The concrete slab on top is evidence of the remains of an attempt to build another house, although the foundation of the original Grand View House can be discovered. The reservoir to the south of the concrete slab was created by the hotel using existing rock formations to provide a permanent source of water. Now Snake Mountain is part of a nearly 1,000 acre wildlife management area. From the top one can also see Dead Creek below which is another wildlife management area mostly concerned with waterfowl.

1.287'
Fall Foliage

Beginning in late September and continuing throughout October, the forests of Addison County explode in a sea of vibrant color as the leaves of deciduous trees prepare for the coming winter. The secret to this magical process is due to photosynthesis and chlorophyll. Photosynthesis is the process by which plant cells use the energy of light to synthesize carbohydrates from carbon dioxide and water, making plants grow. Chlorophyll is a green plant pigment that enables the plant cells to absorb sunlight. Daylight hours decline with the coming of autumn, reducing the available fuel for photosynthesis. Trees then pull chlorophyll into their trunks from the leaves because it is more valuable to them as a vitamin source in the winter months. With the loss of chlorophyll from the leaves, green is no longer the dominant color, and other leaf pigments begin to preeminate. This colorful autumn vision of oaks, maples, beeches, apple trees, ash, cherry and other hardwoods was there all along, but the green of chlorophyll suppressed these pigments.

The Robert Frost Trail

Length: 1 mile

The Green Mountains do not boast to have spectacular and dramatic rises and falls like those ranges in the West that inspired such artists as Ansel Adams. There is no Grand Teton shooting out of the Champlain Valley, yet one only has to take the twenty minute drive up to the Robert Frost Trail to see what is so uniquely special about the Green Mountains. As Robert Frost knew and expressed in his poems, there does not need to 10,000 foot colossal mountains to make a place beautiful. The mile long Robert Frost Trail is something that everyone should visit at least once. No matter what season, the combination of Frost’s poetry along the trail and the natural beauty of the Green Mountains evokes a sense of wonder towards nature every one feels, but never quite realizes. Take an hour or so to walk the trail and realize how special our surrounding environment really is.

Directions: Take Route 7 south to Route 125. Drive east on Route 125. Park about 2 miles east of Ripton, turn south onto USFS Road 59 and drive 3.5 miles to the parking area for the Skylight Pond Trail.

RELUCTANCE

Out through the fields and the woods
And over the walls I have wended;
I have climbed the hills of view
And looked at the world and descended;
I have come by the highway home,
And lo, it is ended

—Robert Frost

Skylight Pond

Length: 4.8 miles

This hike can easily be done in a half day, but you just might be tempted to spend the night in the lodge at the summit. If so, you will be rewarded because not only is the lodge one of the nicest cabins along the entire Long Trail, but the sunrises can be spectacular on a clear morning. The mountain ridges and valleys come to life as the dawn fire is reflected in Skylight Pond. There is also an excellent ledge for viewing sunsets that looks down upon Middlebury College’s Breadloaf Mountain Campus.

Directions: Start on Route 7 south to Route 125 east. From Route 125, 2.8 miles east of Ripton, turn north onto USFS Road 59 and drive 3.5 miles to the parking area for the Skylight Pond Trail.

Additional Resources:
Hiker’s Guide to the Mountains of Vermont, Jared Gange
Hiking, snowshoeing, and backcountry skiing throughout Vermont. Includes maps and excellent trail descriptions of day and overnight trips.

New England Hiking, Michael Lanza
A complete guide to more than 350 of the best hikes in New England.

Fifty Hikes in Vermont, Heather and Hugh Sadlier

Polar Bearing
by Piper Platte '02

There are times at school when the going gets tough. When dark bags form under everyone's eyes and students resort to grunting as a means of communication because they lack energy enough to hold a coherent conversation. We have all experienced these times - we know what it's like when the intensity level gets too high to possibly be deemed healthy. Luckily, at Middlebury, the more insane people have the option of an extremely healthy remedy to such dilemmas - Polar Bearing! When the going gets tough, the tough go swimming.

Many of my favorite memories from college have taken place during late night or early morning Polar Bear excursions from the Middlebury area. I love the density of an atmosphere full of excitement and nervous anticipation when driving with a van full of Midd-kids through the midnight air away from the Middlebury campus, south on Route 7 and up to Lake Dunmore to go for a late night Polar Bear dip. You can feel the energy building as the chariots of swimmers near the lake. School has been forgotten and people are living in the present, thrilled about being alive (and believe me, that water definitely makes you feel alive). Once at the lake people pile out of cars (sometimes it's just one car, but other times we've taken up to eight cars loaded full of people), and run through the darkness to the beach of Lake Dunmore. Clothes quickly melt away as the frigid night air cuts into bare skin, reminding people of their insularity in choosing to do such a thing. Chatter becomes intense, anticipation builds, energy erupts - like a pot of water, heating, bubbling, boiling, and literally exploding as someone finally chooses to take the leap, charging into the water for the destined plunge. The crowd follows. Sounds of screams and splashing water echo through the night air. People are jovial, laughing and aware of their body in their present surroundings. The crowd rushes out of the water, some brave souls going back in for a second dip, but most are decided finished with the water as they fumble around in the darkness desperately grasping for their towel and pile of clothes in the confusing darkness.

I love these moments. Each time as I dress myself on the beach of Lake Dunmore, each layer of clothing feeling like heaven against my numb skin, I look around me and I can't keep from smiling. I love to see the people forgetting about their papers due. It's as if the cold water sucks away all thoughts of work or school and instead locks the mind in the excitement of the present moment. I love too, to see people so happy in taking advantage of their youth and their surroundings, and in such a healthy way.

After the Polar Bearing momentum has worn off, the group usually gathers at the water's edge to tilt their heads skyward to take in some star-gazing. On nice nights, the sky has been incredible, awe inspiring - and if it hadn't been for the unanswerable urge to thrust myself into a body of ice cold water, I would have missed the whole show. There are many things that I would have missed had I not been Polar Bear inclined. After these experiences I always feel renewed, alive, and happy to be living in the moment and place that I am.

So take my word, when the going gets tough - go Polar Bearing. It's not something you will soon forget.

A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise. -Aldo Leopold

Swimming Holes

Do not let Vermont's climate fool you, opportunities to get your feet wet in the area's swimming holes abound in late Spring, Summer, and early Fall. Bartlett's Falls in Bristol offers fine river swimming, while Lake Dunmore and Lake Pleiad are great places to bring along the picnic basket. Whichever spot you choose, the beautiful Vermont scenery will abound. So grab your trunks and a towel and dive into the waters of Addison County!

Dog Team Tavern

Nestled behind the Dog Team Tavern Restaurant, it is possible to cool off in the refreshing waters of the New Haven River as diners enjoy their lip-smackin' sticky bun on the shore. At this spot the river takes a lazy bend providing a sandy beach area and a gentle current. Upstream the water runs over a small cliff and flows into a tight gorge. Follow the paths along the bank of the river until you find a spot to swim that appeals to you. There are endless possibilities starting just off the lawn of the Dog Team Tavern to a 500 yard walk downstream past the gorge into the open pools. Afterwards, take the opportunity to dry off on the Tavern deck while you enjoy a cold one (Root beer if underage).

Directions: Take Route 7 north out of downtown Middlebury. After 3.1 miles, take a left on Dog Team Road. Follow it for 0.4 miles and park on the left at the Dog Team Tavern. Walk behind the restaurant to the river.

Munger Street Swimming Hole

Just under the bridge where Munger Street meets River Road lies the Munger Street Swimming Hole. Follow the small path down from the parking area down fifty yards to get down to the river. Here you'll find that a bend in the New Haven River has created a beach for all to enjoy. At its deepest part of four feet the Munger Street Swimming Hole offers a relaxing place to go on a sunny summer day. Two large rocks in the center of the river provide an excellent place to sit and get a natural Jacuzzi from the flow of the current as it accelerates through the hole. The beach here offers a great venue for skipping stone contests among your friends while drying off in the sun.

Directions: Take Washington Street (past Grand Union) bearing left at the multi-way fork. After 3 miles you reach a T-intersection with Munger Street. Turn left onto Munger and follow for 4.3 miles until you are about to cross a bridge over the New Haven River. Bear right into a dirt parking lot at the corner of Munger Street and Cove Road, and follow a trail down to the water.

Lake Dunmore, Silver lake, Falls of Lana

Lake Dunmore is a popular swimming hole that offers picnic tables, fireplaces, a sand volleyball court and in season (Memorial Day to Labor Day), a snack bar and boat rentals. The floor of the lake is smooth sand, a quality your feet will love. A thin strip of beach and a large grassy area make this a great spot to catch some rays while hitting the books or toasting a beer in nice weather. Silver Lake and Falls of Lana can be reached by a short hike described in the hiking section.

Directions: Drive 7 miles south of Middlebury on Route 7, then 3.6 miles south on Route 53 to the entrance to the park on the right. For Silver Lake and Falls of Lana, go 4 miles past the park entrance to a parking lot on the left.
East Middlebury Bridge

Just past East Middlebury, on the way up to the Snow Bowl lies a great swimming hole under the first bridge after the Waybury Inn. At a depth of roughly six feet, this pool offers fun little five-foot jumping rocks all over the place. It is actually a natural swimming pool that stretches about 75 yards in length and is 20 yards across at its widest part. This is an ideal spot to bring your friends and have a chicken fight tournament some warm spring day. The opposite shoreline offers a patch of grass to lie in the sun and relax while drying off.

Directions: Take Route 7 south out of downtown Middlebury and turn left onto Route 125 east. Continue through the village of East Middlebury, past the four-way stop. The road will take a sharp right turn just past the Waybury Inn and cross a bridge. Park on the right just after the bridge, and follow a trail down to the river.

Bittersweet Falls

Nestled in the heart of the Champlain Valley among farms and forests hides Bittersweet Falls. This twenty-five foot moss covered waterfall is a small tributary that empties into the Lemon Fair River. The natural shower offers both a relaxing spot to cool off and a nice place to just fall asleep to the soothing sound of falling water. The surrounding area provides a great spot for a picnic and an afternoon worth of entertainment exploring the numerous hiking trails.

Directions: Take Route 125 west past the college. After the blinking yellow light at Cider Mill Road, Route 125 makes a sharp left turn. Instead of making this turn, continue straight onto Lemon Fair Road. Follow Lemon Fair for 1.2 miles, and then turn right onto Bittersweet Falls Road. Continue for 0.7 miles, until you cross a small bridge. There is a dirt pull-off on the right side of the road. Park here and you will see the falls on the other side of a small field on your right.

Additional Resources:
Make A Splash: Swimming Holes and Waterfalls of the Green Mountains, Jason Miner

Bartlett's Falls (Bristol Falls)

Upstream from the Munger Street Swimming Hole on the New Haven is a personal favorite of many veteran swimmers—Bristol Falls. Upon arrival, one only has to follow the sound of falling water to get to the swimming hole. If for some reason you can't find it, all you have to do is give a shout for help. The popularity of Bristol Falls rarely leaves it empty, but rather a place full of shouts of joy and excitement from the numerous people getting small adrenaline rushes from jumping off the twenty-foot cliffs. Depending on the season, the depth of the water under the jumping points is only about six feet deep. Pay attention to the sign: "Danger Beware" and jump carefully. The two main jumping points are directly adjacent to the falls and forty yards downstream by the pine trees. From each jumping spot, the current will bring you downstream past the cliffs where an easy exit is available on river right. The falls themselves are a beautiful sight during any time of the year, especially during the winter when partially frozen water creates crafted works of water crystal.

Just down the road lies probably the best creamie stand in Addison County—The Squirrel's Nest. Be sure to try the "Crazy Squirrel", the local and better equivalent to Dairy Queen's Flurry. There are also great burgers and dogs if a more substantial meal is needed after a long day of swimming.

Directions: Drive north on Route 7 out of Middlebury. After 8 miles, turn right onto Route 17. Continue east on Route 17 past the junction with Route 116 and through the town of Bristol. After 6.8 miles cross a bridge and turn right onto Lincoln Road. After 0.2 miles there are several dirt parking areas on the right side of the road. The river can be reached by scrambling down one of a number of paths.

Lake Pleiad

Hidden away in the slopes of Middlebury College's Snow Bowl, Lake Pleiad is truly a gem. Reminiscent of Walden Pond, this body of water may be one of the Earth's eyes. From swimming in the summer, picnics in the spring or fall, and skating and broom-ball games in the winter— it can be utilized at any time of the year. Large rocks on the western end provide an excellent place to take in the beautiful surroundings. An idyllic setting in any season, Lake Pleiad is a special place that should not be missed.

Directions: Take Route 7 south to Route 125 east toward the Snow Bowl. Park on the right in small lot. 0.7 miles past the Snow Bowl entrance at junction of the Long Trail. Hike 0.5 miles along LT South, wading right on Lake Pleiad trail.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

-Henry David Thoreau
Canoeing

From the swift waters of the Lemon Fair river to the deep waters of Lake Dunmore, the region is full of opportunities for water recreation via canoe. Don’t forget to bring your sense of adventure, for you can spend hours exploring the islands and coves of Lake Champlain or the twists and turns of Otter Creek.

Otter Creek

This is the longest river in Vermont and one of the few rivers in New England that flows northward for its entire length. It is possible to canoe 80 miles of Otter Creek, from South Wallingford all the way to river-end at Lake Champlain. The scenery is of rural Vermont, with good views of the Green Mountains.

Cornwall to Middlebury

Length: 11 miles

This is a favorite trip encompassing both flatwater and quickwater. Beautiful views abound of farming country and mountains. This route also passes under the Station Bridge, a 136 foot Towne Lattice covered bridge built in 1836.

Directions: Take Route 30 South approximately 10 miles to Whiting. Take left onto Leicester Rd. Put in at Leicester Junction. Other car can be left at termination of South Street with junction of More Road in Middlebury. Put in at the bridge at the Leicester Junction and take out at the Three Mile Bridge.

Weybridge to Vergennes

Length: 11 miles

After putting in on the left about 1/2 mile downstream from the dam in Weybridge, this trip offers pleasant flatwater and quickwater paddling in a rural setting. The take out is above the dam in Vergennes on the right.

Directions: Take Route 23 (Weybridge Road) about 3 miles, turn right onto Village Road and proceed another 3 miles to put in at Weybridge Dam. Other car can be taken to the take out point by continuing on Village Road until it turns into Quaker Village Road and then Hallock Road after crossing Route 17. Continue on Hallock Road into Vergennes, taking a left on Main Street and parking at the No. 9 Dam.

Lemon Fair River

A wonderful little river for wildlife lovers. You can put in at West Cornwall and paddle the river to its confluence with Otter Creek, a trip of about 12 miles, and then on for another 18 miles to Lake Champlain. The river bottom is clay, making for a rich, turgid flow. You can count on seeing many turtles, birds, animals, and jumping fish. This is one river where you'll really appreciate the stealthy quiet of your canoe.

Vergennes to Lake Champlain

Length: 9 miles

The only problem with this canoe trip is that the river is navigable for larger boats in this area so waves can be a problem at times. This is offset by the beautiful views from the mouth of the river. It is enjoyable to paddle south along the shoreline of the lake past Basin Harbor to Burton Bay from the mouth of Otter Creek, especially on calmer days. The lake is narrower here, making the peaks of the Adirondacks seem close. This side trip will add five miles to the adventure but it will be well worth it. It is also possible to camp out on several of Lake Champlain's islands, as some are equipped with picnic tables and fire pits.

Directions: Follow the directions for the No. 9 Dam above in Vergennes where the put in is located. Take out at the Fort Casin Fishing Access in Lake Champlain. To arrive here by car, turn left off of Main Street onto Sand Road. Continue on Sand Road for 5 miles, turning left towards Fort Casin Point.

Route 74 bridge to Otter Creek

Length: 12 miles

This is an easy paddle through farming country. It should not be hard to spot many aquatic birds and animals.

Directions: Take Route 30 south, turning right onto Route 74 west and proceeding just over 3 miles to put in at bridge just west of West Cornwall at junction of Route 74 and the Lemon Fair. Take out is where the river joins Otter Creek, approximately 5 miles on Route 23 (Weybridge Road) just before intersection with Thompson Hill Road.

Then here's a hail to each flaming dawn
And here's a cheer to the night that's gone
And may I go a roamin on
—until the day I die

—On a grave marker in the Adirondacks
Middlebury College's Snow Bowl: The Last of a Dying Breed

By Trina Homer '00

The leaves have fallen to the ground or are about to embark upon their journey, torn away by the biting November wind. The mud that stuck down your sneakers only weeks before is beginning to firm up. Let's face it, you haven't seen the sun in weeks and the cold rain is buming you out. It's about this time that "The Big Pass," a season's ticket to skiing several mountains in New England, becomes tantalizing. But really, it is a trip to Killington to ski one scantily covered trail really worth ruining your brand new skis? You're best off to hold out and spend your time preparing for Middlebury's own Snow Bowl. If you've made your decision to invest in the Big Pass based on comparing trail maps, you've been deceived. The map shows nothing the Bowl has to offer. There aren't high-speed quads, summit lodges or one piece Bogner suits at the Bowl. In fact styles range anywhere from the late 50s to today's latest gear. At the Snow Bowl you will never wait in line, you will never pay a small fortune to ski for a day. Your fellow skiers will even wave and call your name as you ski by, rather than making obscene gestures and using foul language to express their displeasure at being passed. And if you think the Bowl's terrain is not difficult or extreme enough for you, you're once again mistaken. The Mac truck size rolls on Rou have been known to take a few knees and rifts from top collegiate racers. You best be on your toes on Allen as well. The cliff on the skier's right can jump out at you, leading to an embarrassing yard sale for your latest crush to laugh at as they ride up on the lift. And if this is not enough for you, head to the back bowls. They are not covered in powder, as Veil's are, but are equally enjoyable. Sit back, arc turns, just avoid cruise control; a few dirt spots are intentionally placed as obstacles to turn blue squares into black diamonds.

The Snow Bowl is a dying breed of ski mountains, like romantics say of the rugged cowboy. It gives a look into the past while still allowing the timeless sport of skiing to be enjoyed (or snowboarding if you prefer). If you're not convinced just take a trip up there and take a few runs. It's not about looking good or showing-off. It's about the right things, like having fun, getting outside and making some turns. At the end of the day you can stop at the Waybury Inn for a drink using, all that money you saved from not buying the Big Pass.

Skiing

During our century skiing has become synonymous with both Middlebury and Vermont. Beginning with the North-South interstates that replaced overnight ski trains, and increased the weekend exodus from the cities, skiing has influenced the history and landscape of Vermont. Many Middlebury students first came to Vermont on ski trips. For Feb graduates skiing down the Snow Bowl to a diploma will be their farewell.

Every discipline of skiing can be practiced within a 20 minute drive of Middlebury. The College owned Snow Bowl offers lift-serviced skiing, while just down the road the College's Carroll and Jean Rikert Nordic Center links its 25 miles of groomed trails to the backcountry touring of the Catamount Trail. To the north the unpowered pitches of Lincoln Gap provide excellent telemark skiing.

While there are many ways to slide over and down the following locations they share a common history; all were owned and willed to be kept wild by Joseph Bartell. A Vermonter, the state's largest landowner, Middlebury drop-out, Middlebury Trustee, amateur author, philosopher and politician, Bartell spent his life accumulating wilderness, in his own words, like art. "Some folks pay $10,000 for a painting and hang it on the wall where their friends can see it while I buy a whole mountain for that much money and it is hung up by nature where everybody can see it and it is infinitely more handsome than any picture ever painted."

Joseph Bartell died in 1915 and left Camel's Hump to the State of Vermont, 25,000 acres around his Breadloaf estate, and 5000 acres of ridge line between Mt. Ellen and Mt. Abe to the government for a national park. The government turned down the gift and the land was given to Middlebury College.

Bartell's will clearly directed that all these lands should remain wild, uncultivated, whether for lumber or for ski trails. However, the idea of wilderness having intrinsic value was judged as wasteful by the trustees and attorneys of the College. They decided Bartell meant something other than what he wrote, and in 1917 logging began. Old-growth spruce was sold to build bi-planes for the first World War, and to finance the construction of campus buildings.

During the Depression the College sold much of the land to the U.S. Forest Service, with a second sale in the 1950's. In the property shuffling, Bartell's intent was forgotten, allowing the development of the Sugarbush ski area.

The Breadloaf Wilderness, created by the Vermont Legislature in 1984, and which many of us ski through, is the closest approximation of Bartell's intent. It can't be logged or developed. It exists for its own sake, and for us to ski, hike and hunt through.

Carroll and Jane Rikert Ski Touring Center

Winding through the forests and fields given to Middlebury by Joseph Bartell the Center's 25 miles of trails form the nordic counterpart to the Snow Bowl. Like the Snow Bowl there are trails for all ability levels. Most of the loops are groomed for skate and classic techniques. If you need instruction in either lessons are available. The Center also provides an excellent base from which to explore the Catamount Trail (described below).

Directions: Same as to the Snow Bowl except stop at the yellow buildings of Breadloaf. The ski shop/ticket window is in the large yellow barn.
The Middlebury College Snow Bowl

Often catching thick snow while it rains down on campus, the Snow Bowl is the premiere college ski area in the country. Three chairlifts cover 100 acres of open and gladed skiing. There is a 1,020 foot vertical drop from the 2,520 foot summit, and 22 miles of trails. The college ski area is a result of the passion Middlebury students have long held for skiing.

The precursor of the Mountain Club, called the Outing Club, first organized a ski and snowshoe team in 1916. In 1921 the Club organized the first intercollegiate ski races on Chipman Hill. Three years later the Club had added a ski jump, still visible on the west side of the hill. In 1934 the first trail was cut on Worth Mountain, and in 1940 a rope tow was installed. In the years after the second World War the focus of competition shifted from Chipman Hill to the Snow Bowl. The third-oldest ski area in Vermont the Snow Bowl has continued to expand and add technology. In the 80's the college bought Piston Bully groomers and a modern snow-making system.

The Snow Bowl remains the training ground for the Ski Team, consistently one of the top in the nation, and home to the Middlebury Winter Carnival in February. Just under 15 miles from campus, the Snow Bowl is accessible after or instead of class. Students reach all disciplines of riding at the ski school. The ski patrol is also made up of students, selected for their exceptional medical and skiing skills. Of all the College's facilities, the Snow Bowl is perhaps the one most appreciated by the community. In a decade which has seen skiing marketed as a lifestyle to those who can afford it, the Snow Bowl has remembered its roots. Here, skiing remains about reveling in the starkness of winter; about camaraderie, competition, and sweeping effortlessly down a snowy mountain.

Directions: Follow Route 7 South to its intersection with Route 125. Follow 125 up through East Middlebury, Ripton, and Breadloaf to Hancock, home of the Snow Bowl.

One is constantly reminded of the infinite lavishness and fertility of Nature - inexhaustible abundance amid what seems enormous waste. And yet when we look into any of her operations that lie within reach of our mind, we learn that no particle of her material is wasted or worn out. It is eternally flowing from use to use, beauty to yet higher beauty.

—John Muir

The Catamount Trail

The ski touring equivalent of the Long Trail, the Catamount Trail follows logging roads, snowmobile highways and ski trails between the Massachusetts and Canadian borders. Ninety-percent complete, the trail was first put together in the 1980's as the thesis project of a University of Vermont student. The trail passes through mostly private lands, and is open only in the winter. It is designed to allow skiers to travel between touring areas and country inns. There are two excellent trips accessible from the Touring Center.

Trip 1: North

Begin at the Touring center and follow the Myhre Trail across the road, and up into the forest. When the trail forks follow the Frost Trail to the Holland Trail. Bear right here and ski around the beaver pond. When you rejoin the Frost Trail turn right onto the Poet Road, which is a Forest Service trail. The Poet Road will lead east until it joins USFS Road 59, a wide unpaved road packed by snowmobiles. USFS Road 59 will in turn lead to USFS Road 54, which is known as the Natural Turnpike.

The intersection of USFS Roads 54 and 59 is 5.5 miles from the Touring Center. You can now ski north another 5 miles to Lincoln Gap for a good one-way trip, or turn back for the car. Continuing on will give you a hard climb to the Gap, but an exciting run down to end the day. This is a beautiful section of trail, rolling through hardwood forests raspering with dry beech leaves. You will cross the prints of other animals out in the snow, coyotes, snowshoe hares, grouse, deer and moose.

Trip 2: South

Also beginning at the Touring Center, follow the Thomas trail south to gain access to the Catamount Trail. This 15 mile section which ends at the Blueberry Hill Inn and Nordic Center is a good representation of the Catamount Trail, and a bit less strenuous than heading north. Using Forest Service Roads, ski touring center trails, power lines and a hiking trail, the route winds through private land, the Breadloaf Wilderness, and the Green Mountain National Forest. If you arrange transportation you can end the day by the stove at the Blueberry Inn, enjoying a beverage, and resting tired muscles.

Lincoln Gap

Unplowed in the winter, this road is popular with telemark skiers wanting to make a few turns. It is a quick ski up the road to the top of the Gap. The leafless trees and destruction of the '97 ice storm allow views to the eastern and western horizons. Skiing towards the east will give you a bit steeper run, while the western face throws hair-pin turns at you. When spring comes and the snow softens the skiing only improves.

Directions: Follow Route 7 North for 8 miles to New Haven Junction and turn right on Route 17, following the sign toward Bristol. Continue through Bristol and take the first right over the bridge beyond the Squirrel's Nest Restaurant. Follow this road four miles to Lincoln and continue through town towards Mt. Abe. The road will end in a large snowbank. Begin climbing towards the Gap.

Many eyes go through the meadow, but few see the flowers in it.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

32

33
The Norske Trail

A good half-day ski, this trail runs between Breadloaf and the Snow Bowl on the north side of Route 125. Depending on when you want to do your work, park at the Touring Center (work first) and ski up, or park at the turn out on the left of 125 just above the Snow Bowl (turn first). The 3.5 mile trail climbs or descends through hardwood forest filled with beech (look for the claw marks from climbing bears), serviceberry (named because in the spring when its branches budded settlers knew the ground had thawed enough to bury the winter dead) and sugar maple. Ski up the trail in the late afternoon when the light is warm and from the west. Refuel with hot chocolate at the Snow Bowl and ski down to Breadloaf on bluing snow.

Directions: Start from the Touring Center, or park at the pull-off on the left of 125 just above the entrance to the Snow Bowl.

Additional Resources:
The Camrast Trail Guidebook available by calling (802) 645-5794 or in Starr Library
Classic Adirondack Ski Tours, Tony Goodwin
25 Ski Tours in the Green Mountains, Sally and Daniel Ford
25 Ski Tours in the Adirondacks, Almy and Anne Coggeshall
Classic Backcountry Skiing, David Goodman

Relevant phone numbers:
Middlebury College Snow Bowl 388-4356
Carroll and Jane Rikert Ski Touring Center 388-2759

Rock Climbing

When life on the ground has got you down, take a trip to the vertical world and leave your cares behind. The area surrounding Middlebury offers a number of climbing opportunities for those interested in exploring this exciting sport. The most accessible location is the increasingly popular climbing wall in Fletcher Field House. This man-made structure offers routes for climbers of all abilities and is the local hang out for those looking to hone their skills. Equipment and basic instruction are available at designated times each week. For a broader indoor climbing experience the Green Mountain Rock Climbing Center in Rutland provides ample opportunities for top-rope routes of all levels. A bouldering cave and lead-climbing practice area round out this extensive climbing resource.

If the weather is nice and you know how to anchor a top-rope, the cliffs at Lake Dunmore are excellent for beginning climbing and rappelling. If you're looking for more difficult climbs it is necessary to drive a bit, but the rewards are well worth it. The Keene Valley of New York, only about an hour away, is one of the best areas for climbing in New England. However, if staying in Vermont is of interest, the Smuggler's Notch area is loaded with cliffs of all varieties just waiting to be scaled.

Climbing is a sport that requires some know-how, but is possible for anybody to do. Furthermore, climbers tend to be friendly bunch, so if you need help learning a move or just getting directions don't hesitate to ask.

Smugglers Notch Area

This area north of Stowe is a popular skiing spot in the winter, but provides excellent climbing opportunities year round. There's heaps of bouldering on schist faces off the side of the road and a few nice rock routes on Elephant's Head Buttress. The cliffs are fairly obvious from Notch Road.

Directions: Take Route 7 north to I-89 in South Burlington. I-89 south to exit 10 for Route 100. At the town of Stowe find Notch Road (Route 108) leading north to Smuggler's Notch. Note: This is about an hour and a half away.

This grand show is eternal. It is always sunrise somewhere; the dew is never all dried at once; a shower is forever falling; vapor is ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal sunset, eternal dawn and gloaming, on sea and continents and islands, each in its turn, as the round earth rolls.

-John Muir
Keene Valley, New York
This spectacular scenic area offers the best place to climb within an hour's drive. Top-rope and multi-pitch lead routes range from 5.3 to 5.12 on nice Anthracite cliffs. Chapel Pond Canyon and the Bierwells are the most popular spots. For more specific information consult the Guide to Climbing in the Adirondacks listed in the additional resources section.

Directions: Go west on Route 125 until Route 22A intersection. Take a right and soon after a left to rejoin 125 west. Cross the Champlain Bridge and at intersection with 22 and 9N take a right into Port Henry. Continue on 9N through Westport and Elizabethtown until reaching Route 73. Take a left on Route 73 to Keene Valley. Continue through the town of Keene Valley and look for roadside parking areas. All trails lead to cliffs suitable for climbing.

Lake Dunmore Cliffs
This nearby climbing area above the shimmering lake offers unobstructed views west to the Adirondacks and south down the Green Mountain range. Climbing opportunities include a few moderate top-ropes and leads of 50 to 100 feet. The routes range from 5.3 to 5.7. Be sure to bring plenty of webbing or other anchor material as the trees are offset from the cliff edge.

Directions: Follow directions to Lake Dunmore in the swimming holes section. Use the trail above the falls and cross the river towards the lake. Continue a short distance west until you reach the cliffs along the ridge edge.

The Vertical World
By Evan Stevens '00
After a few seasons of climbing rock, which was a great complement to the ski season, I began to wonder what this ice climbing business was all about. A good portion of the school year is cold, dark, snowy and icy, so I decided to take advantage of the long winter as much as possible. If the amount of ice that is normally on the ski trails is any indication, then you know that Vermont must be loaded with places to ice climb. The only problem is that most people don't have ice-climbing equipment and it is a wee bit of an investment. I went out on a limb, dropped a few hundred bucks and convinced myself that ice climbing would be my next passion.

J-Terr 1998 roll around and I posted my climbing partner Seth, to take me out to Bristol Falls, in the Bristol Cliff Wilderness area only 15 minutes from Middlebury. Anyone who's gone out to the Green Mountains via Bristol (i.e. to Mad River Glen or Sugarbush) has caught the white gleam of this ice flow in the corner of their eye, but never though much of it. This faint gleam is what we were after, about 300 feet of low angle ice. Now ice climbing must be one of the most ridiculous activities conceived by man; scale a frozen waterfall with really sharp things attached to your hands and feet. What holds that damn ice to the rock anyway?

As I sat and stared at the flow the first lesson of ice climbing was almost painfully introduced. I scrambled for my brain bucket, avoiding some softball size chunks of ice. Obviously nothing much is holding the ice to the rock. After roping up and getting Seth on belay, I watched every move, every swing, kick and placement he made. When it was my turn I donned my shiny new gear and kicked and scratched my way quite uncomfortably up the ice. As I neared the belay, I realized that I had discovered a whole new world in which to climb, a new way to scare the crap out of myself, and that I hadn't wasted that few hundred dollars on ice tool.

When you first start climbing, getting your body organized and coordinated seems impossible. Your balance and movement are about as smooth as a 15 year old kid trying to skateboard. But, as you spend more time in the vertical world, it all starts to come to you, as thoughtless and 'natural' as scaling vertical ice and rock can be. Along with the appreciation for life that climbing gives to many people, it is a most Zen-like activity where you are completely 'in the zone'. Your world is just the few square feet of rock or ice directly in front of you, no noise, people or danger, just the simple motions of moving in the vertical world. Your mind is cleared, you forget to breathe and blink, and before you know it you are at the top.

Some people practice yoga, others meditate. I climb. Just as folks need to run or meditate a few days a week, I need to climb. Luckily these places are right here in Vermont, and I now find myself moving quickly and easily up the ice of Bristol Cliffs. The learning curve is fast and last year I returned to Bristol with a different perspective. Now the ice looked low angle and easy, my swings came smooth and natural, my movement calm and regular. I forgot the fact that I did not have a rope or protection with me and that I had total confidence in what I was doing, meditating. I topped out and turned to catch the sun set behind the Adirondacks.

My friends and climbing have taught me more than anything else here at Middlebury. Bristol is where I learned to ice climb, found a love, and opened other friends' eyes to a whole new world. Learning, living, teaching and meditating through the avenue of the vertical world. I can't think of a better way to spend my time.

-John Muir

Fresh beauty opens one's eyes wherever it is really seen, but the very abundance and completeness of the common beauty that besets our steps prevents its being absorbed and appreciated. It is a good thing, therefore, to make short excursions now and then to the bottom of the sea among dulse and coral, or up among the clouds on mountain-tops, or in balloons, or even to creep like worms into dark holes and caverns underground, not only to learn something of what is going on in those out-of-the-way places, but to see better what the sun sees on our return to common everyday beauty.

36
Ice Climbing

Bristol Cliffs Wilderness

Just a short drive from campus this spectacular ice flow provides grade 2+ - 5 climbing with two to three pitches possible. At the top walk off to the North. Be aware that the flow is west facing and often melts out in the afternoon.

Directions: Take Route 7 north for 8 miles and a right at Route 17 to Bristol. At the traffic light in the center of Bristol take a right to find Bristol North Road. Follow this road for approximately five minutes until you notice the flow on the hillside Park at the entrance to an old logging road. Follow a path or make your own way up to the ice. It is about a twenty minute approach.

Smuggler's Notch

This excellent area offers endless possibilities as ice is everywhere. Climbs are from one to four pitches and range from grade 1 - M7+.

Directions: Follow same directions as rock climbing.

Keene Valley, New York

Frozen cascades drape the cliffs throughout this valley. The best climbing is found in Chapel Pond Canyon and the pond area itself. The routes range from one to three pitches with grades of 2 - M7

Directions: Follow the same directions as rock climbing. It is a 10 to 45 minute approach depending on the route.

Additional Resources:
Climbing in the Adirondacks, Dan Mellor 1995
Smuggler's Notch Ice Climbs 1998

Mountain Biking

Within a ten minute ride from the Middlebury College campus, there are numerous excellent opportunities for mountain biking. Chipman Hill Park, Means Woods and Bartell Woods provide a large area of both singletrack and wider trail riding accommodating all levels of skill and fitness. Although there are other riding options available this guide will focus on the network of trails known as TAM. The recently established Trail Around Middlebury (TAM), developed by the Middlebury Area Land Trust, runs through all three areas. These trails are marked with small square yellow signs picturing the TAM logo. Some, but not all, are marked with very basic directions.

Means Woods and Bartell Woods were given to the town by Elinor Means, a longtime resident of Middlebury, and Colonel Joseph Bartell respectively. Means Woods now serves as a nature preserve used by local students, the college and community members for nature study and general recreation. Former college professor of Biology, Howard Woodin, conducted extensive ecological research of the area in the mid to late 1970's. He determined that the forest make-up is a deciduous forest biome with several subdivision climax forest types. Common species of trees include beech, birch, maple, oak and hickory as well as some coniferous trees. Means Woods is unusual in that it offers a mix of not only species common to the coniferous forest biome which is a large band stretching east-west generally above 50° north latitude, but also the deciduous forest biome which spreads south of Vermont. The full report by Professor Woodin can be found in the archives of the library.

Chipman Hill, located north of town on the east side of Route 7, is a microcosm of the prevailing natural history of the area. Created during the last ice age around 10,000 years ago, the hill was formed by glacial till. Then as the entire area between the Adirondacks and the Green Mountains was filled by Lake Vermont, the pre-curser to Lake Champlain, Chipman Hill remained visible as an island. The soil on the hill is different than the rest of the Champlain valley because glacial sediment was not deposited on top of the island. In more recent history, the succession of land use has been evident on Chipman Hill. At the end of the 19th Century, the hill had been cleared and was used for cattle grazing. In the 1920's, when the forest had returned, Chipman Hill was birthplace to the skiing tradition at Middlebury. In 1924 a ski jump was completed and served as a source of competition and entertainment during the winter months. An extensive networks of trails was cut and at one time there was even a rope tow on the east side of the hill. Chipman Hill was the primary site for skiing and even hosted the first Middlebury Winter Carnival.

The road which winds up Chipman Hill was open until 1980 when raucous parties at the top clearing forced the town to close it for safety reasons. The road had originally been constructed in the 1930's to access a fire tower which afforded a view of much of the valley. Other man-made features still visible include the natural gravel pits on the east side which were actively mined in the 1920's and 30's. Also the reservoir near the Springside Road entrance was the original version of a water tower for the town. In 1976 a new 1.5 million gallon enclosed reservoir was built higher up on the hill. In his will Joseph Bartell, the same Bartell of the dorm namesake, Bartell Woods and the donator of the Breadloaf area, left his 125 acres of Chipman Hill "to be used, improved and maintained as a public park forever."

You cannot stay on the summit forever; you have to come down again. So why bother in the first place? Just this: What is above knows what is below, but what is below does not know what is above. One climbs, one sees. One descends, one sees no longer, but one has seen. There is an art of conducting oneself in the lower regions by the memory of what one saw higher up. When one can no longer see, one can at least still know.
— René Vaumal
The Chipman Hill Horse Shoe

Approximate Time: 35 minutes
The rough and broken asphalt road climbs moderately snaking to the top of the hill. Although technically quite easy, your legs will burn. Once past the clearing and wooden barriers, the asphalt gives way to a dirt and rocky jeep road. Follow the road as it turns south and downhill over more uneven ground to the Springley Drive entrance. Return to campus bombing down Springley then right on Washington Street toward Grand Union and back to town.

Directions: Access to the area via High Street can be reached by following Route 7 north out of town for 1/4 mile to Seminary Street on the right (east) and subsequent turn left (north) onto High Street. Follow High Street to the end where you will find a metal gate preventing motor vehicle use of the road.

The Chipman Hill Loop

Approximate Time: 50 minutes
Follow Chipman Hill Horse Shoe directions to the top of Chipman Hill jeep road. As the road bends south find the TAM dropping east (left) onto singletrack. The trail falls steeply before leveling out under power lines and traversing south across the hill. Pay attention to follow the yellow TAM signs as the trail continues south and skirts above a gravel pit. Pass the first branch on the left to Washington St. and Means Woods before reaching a three-way intersection. Take the fork left which climbs gently up and completes the loop emptying out onto Springley Drive. Return to campus as mentioned above.

A slightly shorter loop can be made by following the jeep road further downhill until a second spur is found to the east (left). Similarly this trail drops steeply through the woods until it reaches the three way intersection mentioned above. Follow the loop as mentioned above.

Directions: Follow the directions above.

Note: The times given for the Chipman, Battell and Means’ rides are based on round trip from campus. Also these two suggestions are just a few of the rides possible on Chipman Hill. The area’s proximity to the town and well marked trails allow for ample exploration without the worry of becoming lost. Most trails will either loop around or empty out onto recognizable roads.

Battell Woods Loop

Approximate Time: 45 minutes
The singletrack trail enters the woods as part of the TAM. Follow the relatively flat and rough trail south until it curves east. Be watchful for an unmarked trail diverging from the TAM right and up a short rocky hill. Take this trail through the woods ignoring any branching trails. Stay on the main, obvious trail as it loops clockwise and becomes a wider gravel path. Continue on the trail with houses bordering to the west. The trail empties onto Seminary St. a few hundred yards closer to town than the parking area. Return to campus as you came.

Directions: To reach the access to Battell Woods take Washington Street (past Grand Union) to confusion 3-way intersection. Here fork right onto Seminary St. extension for 1/2 mile to the Battell Woods parking area on the right (Means Woods is directly across the street on the left).

Chipman, Means, Battell TAM

Approximate Time: 1 1/2 hours
Follow the Chipman Hill Loop to the Washington St. and Means Woods turn-off just before the three-way intersection. From the turn-off there is a short downhill section which is very steep and difficult (don’t be ashamed to walk it). An alternate route cuts left (east) off the traverse a hundred yards earlier downhill and through the gravel pits and then right onto a wider trail. The TAM continues down across the aforementioned wide trail and out into a cleared field. Follow the obvious singletrack along the edge of the field until the TAM hits Washington Street Extension. Cross the street to Peterson Terrace and pick up the TAM at the back of the cul de sac. Enter Means Woods on singletrack which rises gently before merging onto a fire road halfway through Means Woods. This wide and flat section of the TAM dumps out onto Seminary Street Extension. Cross the street to Battell Woods where the TAM once again enters the forest. Follow the marked TAM out onto the edge of farm land where it skirts a field and passes some farm buildings before exiting out onto Route 7 south of Middlebury across from the used car dealership. Follow Route 7 right (north) to town.

Directions: Use the Chipman Hill Horseshoe directions.

Moosalamoo Area

The trails in this section are centered around the Blueberry Hill Inn and Churchill House. Both are very helpful in offering information and highly encourage the use of these trails. Although it is possible to ride to this area, we recommend driving the 14 miles to the Blueberry Hill Inn. Blueberry Hill is a very popular cross-country ski area in winter, but is open to both hiking and mountain biking. The well-marked network of trails uses an easy-to-follow numbering system where each intersection is marked with either blue or yellow numbers. The intersection numbering system is as follows: the top number at each intersection marks the location. The farther out you go the higher the number. If at any point you don’t know where you are just follow signs pointing you to lower numbers. The inn is at #1.

Directions: Follow Route 7 south to Route 125 which heads east through the Green Mountains and up towards Ripon. One mile past the Ripon Country Store turn right on US Forest Service (USFS) Rd. 32, also known as the Green-Ripton road. Follow this dirt road for 5 miles before arriving at the Blueberry Hill Inn on your left.
Blueberry Hill Beginner's Loop

Approximate Time: 30 minutes
This fairly easy trail leaves from the backyard of the Blueberry Hill Inn and loops around Irven Field clockwise. Go right at intersection #3 and continue making rights at subsequent intersections #23, #4 and #2. The trail will finish directly across the road from the inn.

Hogback Mountain Loop

Approximate Time: 1 hour
This scenic loop begins behind the Inn taking a left at intersection #3 following the trail up to intersection #7. Go right here and follow the wide trail along a contour of the western flank of Hogback Mountain. At intersection #21 bear left and continue on the trail south before reaching an open clearing with outstanding views. This side of the mountain is covered with wild blueberry bushes which ripen in late summer. In order to promote the continued growth of these bushes the Forest Service practices controlled burning each April. A spur trail leading up to the summit of Hogback gives great opportunity for tough climb. If you go up, follow one of the few singletrack trails weaving down the southern slope back to the loop trail. As you follow the trail around counter-clockwise it drops onto a gravel road. 150 yards further on the trail re-enters the woods with a left at intersection #25. Follow the trail past a birch-filled ravine until it hits intersection #27. Here bear right and continue to #29 where a left should be made. Continue making lefts at each intersection until the trail comes to #7 where you can retrace your journey back to the Inn.

Sucker Brook-Stewart Loop

Approximate Time: 1 hour
This ride is more technical than the previous two in the area, encountering more brooks and other obstacles. Users should expect mud even during dry periods. The trail climbs from 1650 feet to 2175 feet in the first 1/3 of the ride and is followed by some great downhill sections. To complete this arduous counter-clockwise loop leave from the back of the Blueberry Hill Inn towards intersection #5. Continue straight on the main trail until reaching intersection #9 where you should follow the fork right. The trail leads up to intersection #17 where it then goes left before reaching #19, the beginning of Sucker Brook Trail. Make a left here and continue climbing before topping out and beginning the descent to Sucker Brook Clearing and intersection #33. Take a left here staying on the Sucker Brook Trail until hitting intersection #35. Once again make a left and enter onto Stewart Trail. This trail leads south until intersection #9. Here the loop goes right and cruises back down to the Inn.

Note: It is possible to connect the Hogback Mountain and Sucker Brook-Stewart Loops. At junction #27 on the Hogback Loop go right until intersection #29, the beginning of the Lee Todd Trail. Follow this short trail to #19 where it picks up the Sucker Brook-Stewart Loop. Approximate Time: 2 hours

Romance Mountain Loop

Approximate Time: 3 hours
This extraordinary loop combines many trails of the Blueberry Hill area and provides the most challenging ride. Following the Hogback Mountain Loop out to the dirt road this loop continues straight past intersection #25 and follows the Halfdan Kuhle Trail up and around Romance Mountain. This section of the trail gains almost 1000 feet of elevation in 1 1/2 miles before dropping down into Romance Clearing. The trail continues left at intersection #31 and then joins the Sucker Brook Trail at Sucker Brook Clearing, intersection #33. From here the loop follows the same trail as mentioned above back to the Inn.

Note: A longer loop is possible by linking the Romance Mountain Loop and the Sucker Brook-Stewart Loop. Take the Romance Mountain Loop until you reach the descent to Sucker Brook Clearing and intersection #33. Take a left here staying on the Sucker Brook Trail until hitting intersection #35. Once again make a left to join the Stewart Trail. This trail leads south until intersection #9. Here the loop goes right and continues back down to the Inn.
Road Biking

Biking in Vermont is a fantastic way to see the picturesque rolling green farmland and the renowned seasonal foliage. There are many loops to explore not to mention numerous out-and-back rides through this gorgeous area. People flock to the area, especially during the leaf-peeping season, to ride the solemn country roads. This section offers rides on dirt roads and paved roads with varying degrees of physical demands.

---Dirt Roads---

**Around Snake Mountain**

*Length: 23 miles*

From campus go out Route 23 (Weybridge St.) across from Twilight Hall. Continue on Route 23 to Prunier Rd, which is a dirt road, 1.2 miles past Weybridge Hill. Just after crossing Lemon Fair River, turn left onto Mountain Rd. to begin the clockwise loop around Snake Mountain. Turn right on Mountain Rd. Extension to connect again to a different Mountain Rd. Turn right again and follow along the base of the mountain until reaching Route 17. Take another right and follow to Route 23 where you turn right yet again. Follow 23 back to campus.

**Ripton to Goshen (USFS 32)**

*Length: 17 miles*

This route is very straightforward. Simply ride south on USFS road 32 all the way to Goshen. The road undulates with interspersed views. Half way to Goshen you pass by the Blueberry Inn. Return by the same route.

**Additional Resources:**

Mountain Bike Vermont, Kate Carter 1998
22 Mountain Bike Tours in Vermont, William Busha 1996
Around Lake Dunmore

Length: 12 miles

The majority of this ride is on paved road, but a short section is gravel. The ride follows the road clockwise around the lake for seven miles. Beware of the narrow road as cars pass. At the far south end of the lake, make a right sharp turn onto Fern Lake Road. Turn right again one mile later onto West Shore Road. This is the short gravel section. A short stint after the gravel road is Rogers Road from which you turn right onto West Shore Road and return to Kempserville.

Directions: Start in Kempserville which is reached from Middlebury by traveling south on Route 7 about 6 miles to Route 53 where signs indicate a left turn to lake Dunmore. Park in Kempserville.

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Breadloaf to Lincoln
Length: 15 miles one way

Follow road 59 until turning north (right) on USFS road 54. This is known as the Natural Turnpike. Pass through South Lincoln then turn left on Main Rd. into Lincoln. Return as you came or the alternative is to return via the reverse of the next ride, Ripon to Lincoln.

Directions: Start at Middlebury’s Breadloaf campus by continuing past Ripon on Route 125 (see directions above). Just before the campus, USFS road 59 is marked on the left. The ride begins here.

Ripon to Lincoln
Length: 10.5 miles one way

From the store turn north (left) off of 125 onto Lincoln Rd., which turns to a dirt road after 1.5 miles. The route is simple, just follow this road. The road climbs, then levels before dropping into South Lincoln. See above to get to Lincoln.

Directions: Starting at the Ripon Country Store (see directions for Ripon to Goshen ride).

Middlebury-Bridport-Chimney Point-Addison Loop
Length: 38 miles

Begin riding west out Route 125 (toward the blinking light) for 8 miles to Bridport and onto Chimney Point (there is a short section where Route 125 is the same as Route 22A). Turn north (right) onto Route 17 and continue 8 miles east to Addison. Four miles past Addison, turn south (right) onto Route 23 following this road back to campus.

Middlebury-Cornwall-\nShoreham Loop

Length: 30 miles

Start the ride following Route 30 from campus for four miles to Cornwall. Turn right on Route 74 and ride 12 miles to Shoreham. Head south briefly on Route 22A before turning east (left) onto Richville Road. Ride through Shoreham Center to the junction with Route 30 in Whiting. Turn north (left) and return to campus.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
—F. S. Elliott
Cider Mill Loop
Length: 9.5 miles
From campus, ride out Route 30 past the athletic center and the golf course. About one mile past the golf course, turn north (right) on Cider Mill Road. Follow this road as it passes orchards and overlooks the college to the blinking light on Route 125. Cross 125, staying on Cider Mill Road and meet up with Route 23 (Weybridge St.) Turn right and pedal back to campus.

---Gap Rides
These rides are significantly more demanding than the previous rides. There are four rideable gaps over the spine of the Green Mountains: Middlebury, Lincoln, Appalachian and Brandon. Some would consider the ride over the mountains a healthy dose of exercise. Others will find these rides ludicrous—don’t feel ashamed.

Middlebury Gap: Middlebury to Hancock
Length: 42 miles
The first part of the rides takes you from Middlebury to East Middlebury south along Route 7 out of campus and then east (left) onto Route 125. From here the road is steep and windy to Ripton followed by easier riding past Breadloaf and the Robert Frost Trail. A final difficult climb reaches the top of the Middlebury Gap signified by the Long Trail, not far past the Snow Bowl. This may be a good time to turn around if you’re not feeling you could climb up the mountain again because once you bomb down to Hancock, the only way back is over the mountain again.
Variation: If you say to yourself “I’ve seen that gap, what’s next?” head south on Route 100 in Hancock, through Rochester to Route 73. Turn back toward the mountains (right) and head over the Brandon Gap and meet back up with Route 7 in Brandon.

Middlebury-Appalachian Gap: Middlebury, Bristol-Waitsfield-Hancock
Length: 73 miles of pain
From Middlebury, ride to Bristol by way of Route 116. Follow 116 north through Bristol to Route 17, which takes you over the Appalachian Gap to Waitsfield. Turn south (right) on Route 100 to Hancock. In Hancock, turn west (right) on Route 125 to return via the Middlebury Gap

Additional Resources:
25 Bicycle Tours in Vermont, John Friedin 1996

---Hunting
Of the outdoor activities in this guidebook, hunting is certainly the most controversial. It is attacked and defended with equal amounts of passion, honesty, and often, self-righteousness. While far fewer Middlebury students hunt than hike, mountain bike, or ski, hunting is included to provoke thought. Like all the other activities in this guide, hunting, when practiced ethically, is a wise relationship with the land, and can foster a greater understanding of its ecology. For many hunters watching wildlife while in the field is as important as taking the animal set out for. Hunting gives us a framework in which to examine the differences between the college and town community, as well as the role food plays in our environmental beliefs. In addition hunters were among the first conservationists. They have long spoken up for wilderness and open space. Whether or not we choose to go into the field for game, hunting plays an important cultural and biological role in the region we have chosen as home.

Deer Hunting
The abundance of orchards, woodlots and edge habitat throughout Vermont have given the state an enormous population of whitetail deer. Since humans eliminated the large carnivores (panthers and timber wolves) during settlement, hunting now plays an important role in regulating the size of deer herds in Vermont. Three seasons, bow and arrow (current Oct. 2-24), rifle (Nov. 13-28) and Muzzleloader (Nov. 13-28) give Vermont a long, and for hunters, successful, season. Of the New England states Vermont has the second highest number of bucks killed annually, and the highest number per square mile.

The Middlebury area is surrounded by good hunting land. The areas listed here are public areas, and permission is not needed to hunt on them. However, if you wish to hunt on private land, or are unsure of who owns the land, ask first. Respect for the rights of property owners is one of the most important parts of ethical hunting.

To hunt legally you need a Vermont hunting license appropriate to the game you are going after. While non-resident licenses are very expensive, the Vermont Fish and Game Department allows full-time college students to buy some licenses at special rates. The license for the deer rifle season is $14, rather than $85. For more information contact the Vermont Fish and Game Department, or pick up a law book at a sports store.

Bird Hunting
In addition to many woodland birds like pheasant and grouse, the Champlain Valley is part of the great flyway of migratory waterfowl. Canadian geese, snow geese, and several kinds of ducks pass through the valley on their migrations. The locations given in this guide are public land, but there is much good hunting to be done on the farmland around the area, be sure to ask permission. The seasons and license requirements vary according to species, so check at your field sports store or Fish and Game office.

The Breadloaf Wilderness and Green Mountain National Forest
Hunting is allowed in these areas, and deer are abundant. The larger, more wary bucks often escape into the mountains as hunting season progresses. Good hunting can be accessed off of 125 and the many Forest Service roads which lead off of it.

Directions: To reach the Breadloaf Wilderness/Green Mountain N.F. drive Route 7 south to Route 125. The Green Mountain N.F. begins about 2 miles beyond East Middlebury, and the Breadloaf Wilderness surrounds Middlebury College's Breadloaf campus.
The Cornwall Swamp

Located Southwest of Middlebury in the towns of Cornwall and Whiting, the Cornwall Swamp is the largest interior wetland complex in Vermont. It provides a rich habitat for deer, raccoon, cottontail rabbit, grey squirrel, ruffed grouse, turkey, woodcock, and black, wood and mallard ducks. As the name implies, however, it is a swamp, and areas of it will suck the boots off your feet. Go prepared with a map, compass and waterproof boots.

Directions: To reach the Cornwall Swamp drive on Route 30 south out of Middlebury. After about 5.5 miles take a left onto the Swamp Road. After 1.5 miles there is a parking area. The W.M.A. now lies to your north.

Note: WMA maps courtesy of Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Snake Mountain Wildlife Management Area

Popular for hiking and mountain biking, Snake Mountain is also home to a Vermont W.M.A. The wooded slopes of the mountain are home to white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbit, grey squirrels, coyote, bobcat, woodcock, turkey and ruffed grouse. It is also an excellent site for watching red-tailed hawks.

Directions: To reach the Snake Mountain W.M.A. head north through Weybridge on Route 23. After 3.5 miles take a left onto the dirt Pruin Road. This will intersect with the Snake Mountain Road on the east slope of Snake Mountain. The Snake Mountain Road can be followed south to its intersection with the Mountain Road, which provides access to the western side of the mountain.
Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area

Located west of Middlebury in the towns of Addison, Bridgeport, and Panton the Dead Creek area is carefully managed to create favorable habitat for a range of animals. Some of its residents are white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbit, grey squirrel, bobcat, beaver, mink, muskrat, otter, red fox, coyote, raccoon, woodcock, ruffed grouse, black mallard, and wood ducks, blue-winged teal, flocks of migrating Canada and snow geese. There is excellent bird hunting in the W.M.A., but it is also designated as waterfowl refuge. Certain areas are off-limits to hunting, before hunting in any area it is required that you check in with the staff. Over 200 species of birds have been spotted in this area, and it is an unique place for birdwatchers, and birdwatchers who hunt.

Directions: To reach the Dead Creek W.M.A. take Route 23 north to its intersection with Route 17. Turn left and drive west through the crossroads at Addison and down onto the plain of the valley. The W.M.A. is on the left, and the office is well marked.

Additional Resources:
Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife
(802) 244-7331
http://www.anr.state.vt.us/fw/fwhome/
The website has season dates, license fees, and downloadable maps and descriptions of every W.M.A. in the state.

Dead Creek WMA Refuge Office
(802) 759-2398

Vermont Field Sports
(802) 388-3572
Route 7 South across from the A&W
A field sports store, but also a place to meet others who hunt, and to draw on the experience of the hunters who work there

The Committee to Abolish Sport Hunting
An anti-hunting organization based in New York. Their web page outlines their philosophy and gives ways to contact the organization.
http://all-creatures.org/cash/index.html

Heart and Blood: Living With Deer in America, Richard Nelson
A book about the place of deer in our lives, culture and county by an anthropologist, conservationist and hunter.

A Hunter's Heart, editor David Petersen
A collection of essays on hunting by people ranging from Edward Abbey to Terry Tempest Williams. Hunting, anti-hunting and ambivalent viewpoints are all represented.

It is astonishing how high and far we can climb in mountains that we love.
The life of a mountaineer is favorable to the development of soul-life as well as limb-life, each receiving abundance of exercise and abundance of food. We little suspect the great capacity that our flesh has for knowledge. Oftentimes in climbing canyon walls I have come to polished slopes near the head of precipices that seemed to be too steep to be ventured upon. After scrutinizing them, and carefully noting every dint and scratch that might give hope of a foothold, I have decided that they were unsafe. Yet my limbs, possessing a separate sense, would be of a different opinion, after they also had examined the descent, and confidently have set out to cross the condemned slopes against the remonstrances of my other will. My legs sometimes transport me to camps in the darkness, over cliffs and through bogs and forests that are inaccessible to city legs during the day, even when piloted by the mind which owns them.

- John Muir
Fishing

There is a great variety of fishing opportunities in and around Middlebury, with the deep waters of Lake Champlain to the west, and ample cold water streams running throughout the Green Mountains. Species that you might come across include landlocked salmon, large and small mouth bass, and trout of many varieties. However, there are a few things that you should know before going out.

Rules and Regulations

Before you start fishing you must have a current Vermont Fishing license. You can purchase these at sporting good stores (such as Vermont Field Sports on Route 7 south), general stores, and town offices. These fees support the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, the organization responsible for stocking lakes and streams. These establishments can provide you with detailed guides to Vermont fishing laws that come with your license.

Seasons

Open Water Season (lakes and streams):
- Second Saturday in April through through the last Sunday in October
- Bass season is from second Saturday in June through November 30th
- There is no closed season for trout on Lake Champlain

Ice fishing:
- From safe ice through the second Sunday in March
  (or sooner if your ice house breaks through)

Environmental Awareness

Nuisance Aquatic Species:

Eurasian watermilfoil and zebra mussels are the most common exotic species that have wreaked havoc with natural ecosystems in Vermont waterways. These species, which are not native to Vermont, have been inadvertently introduced by boaters traveling through the region. Once introduced, they grow uncontrolled, partially due to the lack of natural predators, and disrupt the local native ecosystem.

It is important to help stop the spread of these exotic species from moving between lakes and streams. The Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife (VDFWL) suggest the following tips:

1) Inspect your boat and trailer for any plants or other foreign objects. Dispose of them by putting in a water-tight plastic bag.
2) Drain all water from boat and discard all bait.
3) Rinse your boots and equipment with water and dry in the sun for five days.
4) Learn to recognize nuisance aquatic species.
5) Report sightings of nuisance aquatic species to the VDFWL.

Lead poisoning:

In recent years, more than half of the fish found dead in Vermont have died as a result of ingesting lead tackle. There are nontoxic alternatives such as sinkers made from tin-plated steel, and high-density resin putties that are harmless to waterfowl.

Where to fish

Lake Champlain

Some of the best fishing in Lake Champlain is between Chimney Point and Burlington Harbor, particularly off the mouth of Otter Creek, just north of Vergennes. Large and small mouth bass fishing in this lake is touted as being excellent.

Directions: For Chimney Point, simply head west out of town on Route 125 toward Lake Champlain. Also check out a spot across the Crown Point Bridge on the New York side. For the mouth of Otter Creek, take Route 7 north to Vergennes. Once on Main Street in Vergennes, take a right onto Sand Road, just before the bridge over the Otter Creek. Take your second left turn which takes you near the Otter Creek delta.

Since 1978 approximately 690,000 trout and salmon have been stocked annually into Lake Champlain. More than 80 fish species live in Lake Champlain.

Silver Lake and Goshen Dam (Sugar Hill Reservoir)

These locations are good for fishing from canoes or floats. You can find brown and rainbow trout here.

Directions: For Silver Lake, follow the hiking directions. For Goshen Dam, take Route 7 south to Route 125. Turn left and go approximately 1.2 miles past Breadloaf to the USFS sign pointing to Sugar Hill Reservoir. Turn right and follow the proper signs.

Lake Dunmore

Even though Lake Dunmore is a relatively small lake in comparison with Champlain, it has produce record size fish. Dunmore is best accessed by canoe. Dunmore is home to both the Vermont state record for rainbow trout (13.5 pounds) and largemouth bass (10.25).

Directions: Drive out of town on Route 7 south for 7 miles. Turn onto Route 53 and drive 3.6 miles to the entrance to Branbury State Park. Either fish from the shore or launch your canoe here.

Fishing in Streams around Middlebury

There is excellent fly fishing in streams around the Middlebury area where you might find brook, brown, and rainbow trout. Matthew Dickerson, a professor at Middlebury College, is an avid fly-fisherman, and has compiled a great web-page devoted to fly-fishing (www.middlebury.edu/~dickerso). The following is adapted from his page.

New Haven River

The New Haven is a good place to find brown and rainbow trout. According to Dickerson big browns tend to reside near the confluence of the New Haven and Otter Creek. Upstream in Bristol you can find rainbows and up in Lincoln you can find brown trout.
Middlebury River
You will find rainbow and brown trout in the Middlebury River which is as heavily fished as the New Haven. In several branches of the river above the gorge you might find small native brook trout.

Otter Creek
The addition of cold water from the Middlebury River and New Haven makes Otter Creek a good spot to catch cold water fish such as brown and rainbow trout. A good place to find these fish is above Middlebury Falls. Beldin Falls is also a great place fish for big trout.

Adapted from *The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department Official Map and Guide* and with help from Matthew Dickerson at http://www.middlebury.edu/~dickers0

Kayaking

by Fred Carrell '02

The Green Mountains of Vermont are home to some of the most spectacular whitewater paddling locations in the United States. To list these rivers in their entirety would require a book of their own; this article contains three rivers located near Middlebury. This short summary illustrates three separate bodies of water within a twenty minute drive of the town of Middlebury.

Please use this short descriptive guide as a springboard for further adventures and learning. It is not intended as an in-depth guide to these three rivers. All water sports have their inherent risks and rewards, each of which should be evaluated by the individual.

Otter Creek

The Otter Creek is the river that embodies the quality of Middlebury's own Otter Creek Brewery. It boasts some great whitewater for kayaking enthusiasts, but sadly it is also one of the most polluted rivers in Vermont. Run-off from farms has deposited pollutants that make the river unsafe to swim in. A common sight to see is trash floating down the river as well as the occasional dead farm animal. It is highly recommended that if you paddle on this river you do not swallow any water.

Otter Creek Falls
The label the company affixes to their brown bottles paints the waterfall that falls just beneath the Route 125 Bridge. This expert stretch of river is a 250 yard rapid including the 18-foot waterfall, a ledge-hole (tasty at high flows), and several play spots. Walking distance from Middlebury College makes this a popular spot among the local student paddlers. A normal post-class afternoon paddle consists of a few runs over the falls and an hour of playing in the ledge-hole (a great left-hand cartwheel spot). At higher flows the ledge is usually avoided, but a great surfing wave develops just downstream. This stretch of the Otter Creek is quickly gaining reputation as the ultimate play spot. Parking is located downstream of the waterfall on Mill Street. WARNING: The waterfall is not as forgiving as it looks. A shallow landing (3-4 feet deep at low flows) means it should only be attempted by competent kayakers who have experience dealing with this type of situation. Wood is always an issue at the bottom of the falls so it should be scouted thoroughly before running.

Otter Creek Gorge
The beginner/intermediate stretch is located downstream, below the Dog Team Power Station. This run is known as the "Otter Creek Gorge Run" by locals. It consists of Class II rapids with one limestone chute of turbulent water before emptying into a large pool. After "the gorge" there is 2 miles of flatwater and class II rapids.

The put-in is located off Route 7 about 2 miles north of Middlebury. New Haven Mills Road is on the right side, but directly across is an unnamed dirt road. Make the left here and follow it until you reach a parking area for the Dog Team Hydroelectric dam. Walk down the wooden stairs to get to the river. The take-out can be reached by driving down Weybridge Street and making a left on Pulp Mills Farm Road. Immediately after a green iron trestle bridge that crosses the river there is a dirt turn-off on the right.

56

57
Middlebury River

The Middlebury River is one of the geologic gems of Vermont. Large granite boulders line the riverbed forming a magical scene of deep clear pools divided by cascades of falling whitewater. The upper stretch of this river, which parallels Route 125 as it winds east towards Breadloaf Campus and the Middlebury College Snow Bowl, contains some of the most spectacular scenery in Vermont. As the river falls away from the road it enters a 100 foot deep gorge. The walls are smooth, plunging directly into the river. Slight overhangs on the walls make paddling through here like being in an isolated cave.

This area is isolated from the masses because of the steep canyon walls and rugged whitewater. The only way to get into the gorge is by kayak. Any paddler wishing to attempt this stretch, must be confident boat scouting Class V whitewater. Once you enter the depth of the gorge, you are fully committed to the entire run. There is no way to portage or shore-scout the three hardest rapids. Stakes are high, but the rewards are immense. Before running the river, it is strongly recommended you contact a local kayaker who has paddled it.

Heading east on 125, the put-in is the last roadside turn off on the left before you enter the town of Ripton. A short Class II section serves as the only warm-up for this challenging run, so be ready. A stone bridge just outside of East Middlebury is the takeout. There is a dirt turnout on the right side of the road.

Most will choose to view the upper stretch from the banks, or paddle the lower section (The put-in for the lower section is the same bridge of the upper run's takeout.) The take-out is at the Route 7 bridge below East Middlebury (a large parking lot can be found on river right.) This stretch is filled with many of the same rock features of above, but at a more moderate gradient with open banks on both sides. This section is rated as a Class II or III- at higher flows. The lower section boasts some excellent smaller surfing waves.

New Haven River

Bristol, Vermont is home to one of New England’s most exciting and forgiving steep creeks: the New Haven River. As with the other rivers above, there are multiple sections available to paddle down (for a full guide to the river, check the additional readings at the end of this section for details). This section will focus on the advanced/expert section immediately above the Route 17 bridge and the intermediate section just below the same bridge. There is a gauge located on the downstream side of the river left abutment of this bridge. Below one foot is low water, expect to be bouncing off rocks (class III to IV). 1.5 to 2.5 on the gauge is ideal flows (class III+ to IV).

Once the river gets above 3 feet it becomes a solid class V run. Also, the USGS website lists flows for the New Haven river. Anything above 200 cfs is worth the trip.

The take-out for the upper section and the put-in for the lower section are located 1.8 miles east of Bristol on Route 17. There is a white church with a large parking lot on the right side of the road. Kayakers routinely park in the back of the lot closest to river. To paddle the upper section cross the Route 17 bridge and take the immediate right. The normal put-in is .8 miles up this road at a dirt turn-off. If you are still unable to find the run, head back into town and ask a local.

Bristol Falls

There are ten notable rapids on this stretch, with each displaying their own unique characteristics. Bristol Falls (a.k.a. Toaster Falls) is the largest drop. The river slides down an angled shelf and then drops 14 feet into the pool below. At higher flows the hole at the bottom of this drop must be looked at seriously. All of the rapids can be seen from the road making it easy to decide if you are up to this section or not.

The lower section of the New Haven can be run when the gauge reads over 1.5 feet. It is a fun class II-III play section with one notable class III drop. At very high flows (class III-IV) the river turns into a continuous wave train with some large holes that may want to be avoided. The take-out can be reached by heading back into Bristol and making a left at the first traffic light. Drive down this road for .6 miles. There is left turn onto a bridge. Park at the turn-off before the bridge.

Additional Resources:
http://bowdishbow.es.usgs.gov/
The USGS Water Resources website were you can find daily water conditions all over Vermont, specifically for the New Haven River.

Watch for Brian Totten’s A Kayaker’s Guide to Vermont, due out in the Spring of 2000!
Re-creation: A Meditation on Religion, Ecology and Experiential Learning

Rebecca Knade Gould
Assistant Professor of Religion and Affiliate in Environmental Studies

Any qualitative sociologist will tell you that the first challenge for an ethnographer is "gaining an entrée" into a particular social setting. In plain English this means having some point of connection with the people you are observing and interviewing that will help you to establish shared interests and, eventually, relationships of mutual understanding and trust. When I began to interview modern homesteaders in rural Maine, I found that many back-to-the-landers were flinging the limits of "ivory tower" education which, to their minds, had stood in the way of practical and spiritual education they longed to have. In this context, I soon realized that my Harvard credentials would be more of a liability than an asset. So I focused on other ways to foster ties: I talked about compost.

There is a lot to be said on this matter: composting methods, composting toilets, composting bins and composting sins. For the composting aficionado there is no limit to the discussion; you can always "pile more on!" In conducting my research on homesteading, I found that my conversation partners were often eager to open up once they found I could "talk compost," had no aversion to outhouses and had experience storing food in caves. For this, and countless other gifts, I have Carter notch to thank.

I first called Carter Notch home in the summer of 1985 when I came to live there as a "hut girl" under the auspices of the Appalachian Mountain Club. The previous summer I had worked in Pinkham Notch and the summer before I had cleaned the bathrooms of wealthy Harvard Summer School Students for my quota of college funds. Each summer brought scant wages and a wealth of experiential education, but by the time I reached Carter Hut I felt truly upwardly mobile.

A few steps from the front door an inviting alpine tarn awaited the intrepid swimmer. A short walk from the back of the hut brought me to a boulder field created by the glacial crumbling of Carter Dome. Here I could observe a geological symphony of sorts: a rocky crescendo and decrescendo frozen in time. From the boulder field one could also regularly engage in a delightful evening activity known as "purpling." The hut crew would lead their unsuspecting guests out to the boulder field for an after-dinner sunset observance. But at Carter the only proper way to conduct this ritual was to balance on a boulder, orient one's backside to the sunset, bend at the waist and then peer through one's legs at the purple-red horizon. This approach to sunset-gazing often offered a transcendent perspective on the August sky and a thoroughly absurd perspective on the nature of humanity.

The absurdity of much human enterprise and the de-centering of human concerns was, in fact, a constant theme in my time at Carter Hut, though it was a theme more often felt than named. Working in the huts placed the ways of "the valley" in sharp relief. In the huts, we packed in our food and packed out our garbage. Because both consumption and waste were physically measured by the burdens on our backs, we were also made aware of these burdens on the backs of the huts. When cocky hikers rushed to "bag a peak" in their cotton clothes and sneakers, we some-