

# AMERICAN PASTORAL

With its quaint villages,  
rolling hills, and  
covered bridges  
on country roads,  
**NEW ENGLAND**  
has been charming  
visitors for centuries.

By Mark Fitzgerald

Vermont's Route 12  
offers many views  
of classic American  
barns and  
farmhouses.

rom shining sea to majestic mountain, lighthouse to farmhouse, trading post to covered bridge — everything they said was true. For years, I'd heard family and friends rave about time spent in New England, its wonderful sights and sounds, haunts and hallmarks, and how the food and culture resound in the buoyant local character. But I decided that I'd had enough of other people's stories. It was time for me to behold that celebrated corner of America firsthand.

A single stop wouldn't do; I needed a fully immersive quest, a near lifetime's worth of New England exploits in one trip, so I opened an atlas and charted a course.

Now *I'm* the one who raves, and if you follow my lead, you'll soon discover that everything *I* say is true. That the splendor of the varied terrain from Cape Cod up into New Hampshire's White Mountains is jaw-dropping, and it only gets better as you meander along the rustic roads of east-central Vermont and head into the lush hills and picturesque towns of the Berkshires. That it's all quite enchanting. And that if you drive through the region in autumn, with the trees exploding in red and gold and every hue in between, well, that makes it all the more postcard-perfect.

"There is a pang there that makes poetry," wrote Robert Frost in 1907, after he vacationed near Bethlehem, New Hampshire. He was referring to the White Mountain region, but it's easy to apply the sentiment to all of New England.

### DOWN AT THE CAPE

After navigating Massachusetts' mainland, I played Vivaldi while crossing the Bourne Bridge and following Route 28 past Pocasset and North Falmouth. I

could smell the salt air from Buzzards Bay as I drove down Sippewissett Road and into the southwest corner of Cape Cod (somewhat confusingly called the Upper Cape) to Nobska Light.

Located outside the village of Woods Hole, the lighthouse stands 42 feet high and 87 feet above sea level. It's one of more than a dozen beacons that grace the contours of the Cape, and its flash is visible 17 miles out to sea.

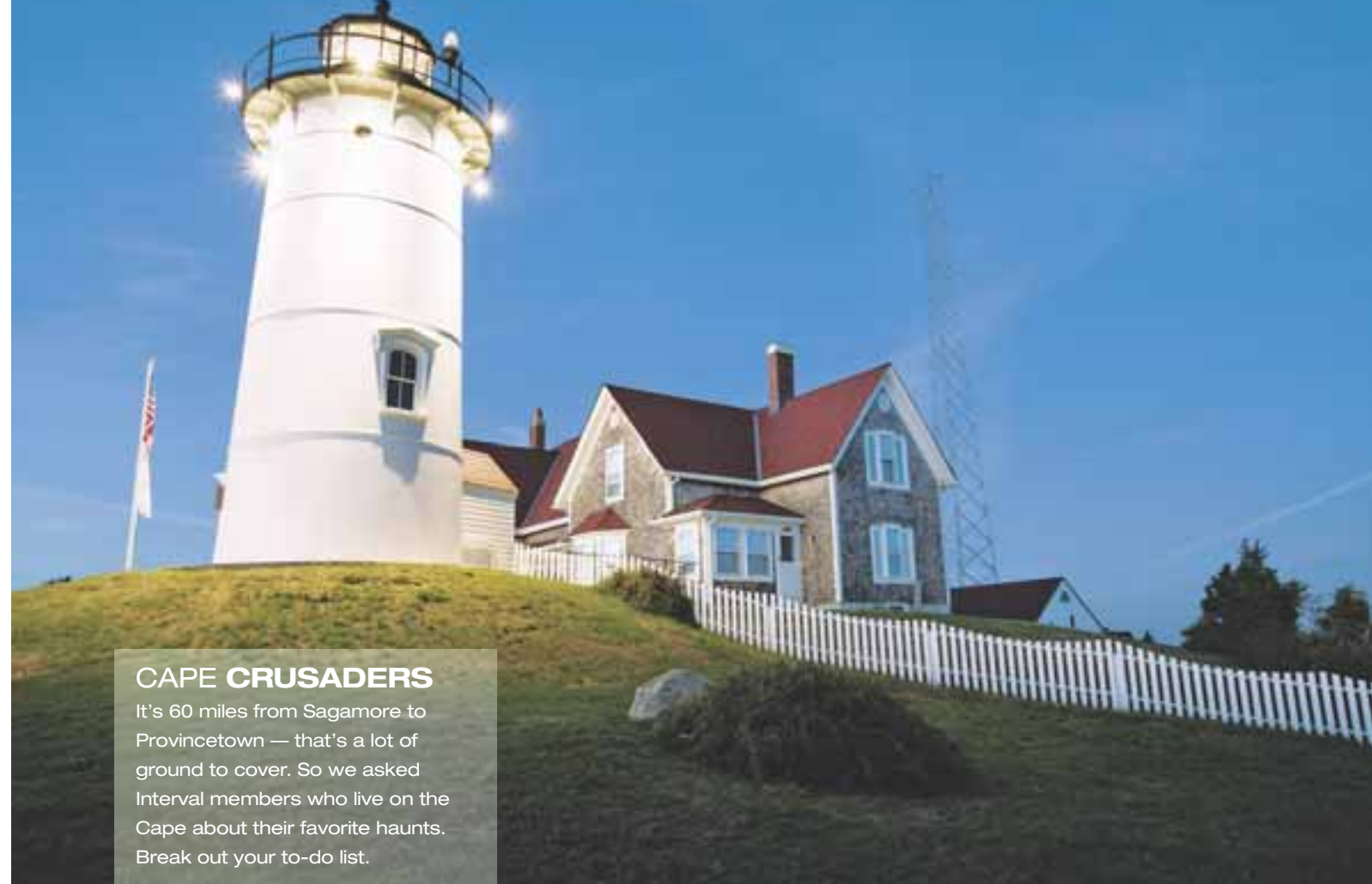
From Woods Hole, you also can board your car on ferries bound for Martha's Vineyard (about a 45-minute trip), and the town is home to the Woods Hole Science Aquarium (a federal facility featuring approximately 140 kinds of marine inhabitants) and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (the largest privately funded ocean science organization in the world).

I was impressed by the creations at Woods Hole Handworks, a cooperative gallery on Water Street that features original pieces by regional artists. Who would've thought fused glass, ceramic tile, and yukata fabric could be so much fun? Strolling farther along Water, I marveled at the bustling harbor and stepped into a tavern called The Captain Kidd. The place is a haven for village fishermen and visitors alike, and the beer flows about as freely as the conversation. If you're hungry for seafood, I recommend starting with oysters on the half shell, followed by crab cakes over field greens with red pepper aioli or scallops broiled in wine and butter.

There's plenty to do and see in and around Falmouth, too, including gazing at grand homes, popping into specialty shops, and sampling great



The Cape Cod Museum of Art houses a collection of works by artists associated with Cape Cod and the neighboring islands. **FACING PAGE:** Nobska Light, in Woods Hole, on Cape Cod. The present tower was built in 1876.



### CAPE CRUSADERS

It's 60 miles from Sagamore to Provincetown — that's a lot of ground to cover. So we asked Interval members who live on the Cape about their favorite haunts. Break out your to-do list.

#### BONNIE FREDETTE, CUMMAQUID

**Top Restaurants:** Scargo Cafe, in Dennis; Ardeo Mediterranean Taverna, South Yarmouth (plus three other Cape locations)

**Best Day-Trip:** "Take 6A all the way to Provincetown, and stop along the way at the beaches, walking paths, lighthouses, and the National Seashore."

#### ROSEMARY HERLIHY, YARMOUTH PORT

**Lunch Pick:** Captain Parker's Pub, West Yarmouth

**Favorite Live Music Venue:** Trader Ed's, at the Hyannis Marina

#### JOEL CHAISON, YARMOUTH PORT

**Top Restaurants:** The Impudent Oyster, Chatham; Napi's, Provincetown

**Best Day-Trip:** "Provincetown. Walk the streets, and visit the galleries and the Provincetown Art Association and Museum to view the works of Provincetown painters."

restaurants. Historic Falmouth Village is best experienced on foot, and offers a variety of sights and activities. I walked down to the First Congregational Church to see the bell Paul Revere sold to the town in 1796. It hangs in the belfry and bears the following inscription: "The living to the church I call, and to the grave I summon all."

Anticipating some quiet mornings and lazy afternoons in my future, I dropped in to The Inkwell Bookstore and grabbed a mystery novel, before driving out to the Mid Cape along Route 6A, which parallels Cape Cod Bay. In Yarmouth Port, you'll find quaint neighborhoods boasting stately homes, including the Winslow Crocker House, a Georgian beauty with a vast array of antiques. Another nearby highlight is the Cape Cod Museum of Art in Dennis. (I was

mesmerized by Charles Hawthorne's *Portrait of Anita*.)

### UP TO THE WHITE MOUNTAINS

I didn't need music on the drive up I-93 into the White Mountains. The majesty of the Presidential Range was a symphony in its own right. From Mount Webster to Mount Madison, these summits are arresting and define the local terrain. At 6,288 feet, Mount Washington is as commanding as its namesake — and the highest peak in the Northeast.

In the White Mountain National Forest, a number of backpackers and casual hikers were making use of the marked footpaths. I decided to explore the Lincoln Woods Trail, just off the Kancamagus Highway. I took a suspension bridge across Pemigewasset



The Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.



River and caught a nice view of Mount Bond about one-and-a-half miles into the hike. After a few more miles, I stopped at Franconia Falls to watch the white water cascade over a sloping rock.

Later, strolling around the town of Lincoln itself, I found plenty of places to shop and eat. I stepped into a quaint antiques store called The Dreaming Pig and bought a wonderful silver candleholder. Then I walked down to the Vita Cafe and Wine Bar, a friendly and low-key establishment with windows big enough to watch the people walking outside. Ordering a glass of red was easy compared with the formidable task of selecting *tapas*. The owner recommended the *trio de crustini* (a delicious ensemble of olive tapenade, red pepper and artichoke, and pesto and goat cheese), and nodded with approval when I pointed to the *gambas al jerez* (spicy shrimp in sherry) and *albondigas* (spiced pork and veal meatballs served in a red wine sauce).

Before heading over to Vermont, I took a quick 5-mile drive down I-93 to Woodstock, which is certainly worth a gander. The town has a gentle, easy-going feel, and there are some delightful antiques shops and eateries.

#### WEST TO VERMONT

Coasting along Vermont's sinuous country roads, I veered onto Route 12 and eventually headed into Brownsville. I say eventually because you really want to take your time here. Scattered barns and farmhouses characterize the

landscape, and there are some splendid covered bridges designated as historical landmarks. I drove slowly through the Bowers Bridge, which spans Mill Brook, off Route 44. Built with a tied-arch design in 1919, it stretches 45 feet and looks like an old wooden barn. I stopped the car halfway through and rolled down the windows. The air was calm and crisp and I could hear the stream flowing gently below.

On North Main Street in Windsor, the Old Constitution House will give you a taste of how Vermont was brought into existence in a tavern in 1777. There are some historical items on display, including the original table on which the state constitution was drafted at Elijah West's pub. I was struck by how progressive Vermont was in prohibiting slavery, promoting voting rights, and establishing public schools more than two centuries ago.

About 16 miles north, you'll find another Woodstock, where the Billings Farm & Museum is located. Here you can experience what it was like to operate a dairy farm in the 19th century. I thought it



Billings Farm and Museum in Woodstock, Vermont, lets young and old experience what life on a working 19th-century dairy farm would have been like.

funny that many of the kids visiting were so eager to see the cows get milked, and I highly recommend the 30-minute film, *A Place in the Land*. It offers a glimpse of how three families lived and worked at Billings.

#### SOUTH TO THE BERKSHIRE HILLS

The scenic beauty and culture of Berkshire County are well documented: the small villages in the river valleys surrounded by rolling wooded hills, the museums, the performing arts venues, galleries, boutiques, and restaurants. And once I merged onto Highway 7 and headed down to Stockbridge, those allusions began to take shape.

In and around town, the tasteful storefronts, tidy sidewalks, and groomed parks speak of an elegance imagined centuries before. Many of the passersby wore tweed or suede and strolled at a leisurely pace. I wandered in and out of a few shops and galleries, and admired the architecture.

The Norman Rockwell Museum is nearby — and a regional highlight. Founded in 1969, it contains the largest collection of Rockwell's original work, as well as an archive with some 100,000 photos, letters, and mementos. The illustrator lived and worked in Stockbridge for 25 years, and his studio and its original contents were moved to the museum site in 1986. "I was showing the America I knew and observed to others who



**ALL THE LEAVES ARE BROWN ... AND ORANGE AND YELLOW** The fall is the perfect time to visit New England — for the spectacular foliage and the busy events calendar. Here's what's going on:

#### CAPE COD

**CAPE LAND AND SEA HARVEST (CLASH):** Sample food from local chefs, learn how beer is made or how to harvest and shuck your own oysters, tour a cranberry bog, and listen to live music in Hyannis and throughout the Cape. September 25 – 28, [capecodclash.org](http://capecodclash.org).

**PILGRIMS, PATRIOTS & PRODUCTS:** How have marketers used images of Paul Revere, *The Mayflower*, and Myles Standish to sell everything from gelatin to insurance? You'll find out at this exhibit at the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum. Through November 30, [pilgrim-monument.org](http://pilgrim-monument.org).

#### NEW HAMPSHIRE

**FOLIAGE TRAIN:** It's hard to take in the gorgeous fall colors while you're focusing on the road. Hop aboard the Hobo Railroad at the Hobo Junction station, in Lincoln, for vibrant views as you chug, chug, chug along the banks of the Pemigewasset River. September 9 – October 18, [www.foliagetrains.com](http://www.foliagetrains.com).

**THE GHOULLOG:** Take a ride 2,000 feet to the top of North Conway's Cranmore Mountain, where a host of hair-raising sights and characters are sure to frighten your socks off! An outdoor food court will offer fried dough, popcorn, and caramel apples, plus hot chocolate and apple cider. October 2 – November 1, [cranmore.com](http://cranmore.com).

#### VERMONT

**VERMONT FALL FOLIAGE SAMPLER TOUR:** Start in Manchester, and for three hours, wend your way past experimental farms, general stores, artisans' studios — even an alpaca plantation! Daily throughout the fall, [backroaddiscovery.com](http://backroaddiscovery.com).

**IMPRESSIONS OF NEW ENGLAND:** See New England from a variety of artists' perspectives at the Bennington Center for the Arts. In this collection of 70 works, you'll see seashores, rolling hills, and, of course, foliage. September 5 – November 29 (except Tuesdays), [benningtoncenterforthearts.org](http://benningtoncenterforthearts.org).

#### THE BERKSHIRES

**HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES:** Shakespeare & Company presents energetic live performances throughout the fall season at the Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre in Lenox, including the American premiere of this Monty Python-esque spoof. September 24 – November 8, [shakespeare.org](http://shakespeare.org).

**HOT AIR BALLOON TOUR:** Elevate yourself and see autumn's vibrant hues from up high in the sky. Worthington Ballooning offers customized flights, with hors d'oeuvres and a champagne toast to cap off the experience. Be sure to book at least a few weeks in advance. Through November, [worthingtonballooning.com](http://worthingtonballooning.com).

## fastFACTS

**RESORT DIRECTORY:** IntervalWorld.com or pages 41 to 45 and 48 to 51

**INTERVAL TRAVEL:** IntervalWorld.com

**RENTAL CAR:** Highly recommended

**CONTACT:** Woods Hole Science Aquarium, aquarium.nefsc.noaa.gov;

The Captain Kidd, thecaptainkidd.com;

The Inkwell Bookstore, inkwellbookstore.com;

Cape Cod Museum of Art, ccmoa.org;

The Dreaming Pig, thedreamingpig.com;

Vita Cafe and Wine Bar, vitanh.com;

Old Constitution House,

historicvermont.org/constitution;

Billings Farm & Museum, billingsfarm.org;

Norman Rockwell Museum, nrm.org;

The Lenox Gallery of Fine Art, lenoxgallery.com;

Trattoria Il Vesuvio, trattoria-vesuvio.com

**VISITOR INFORMATION:**

capecodchamber.org, 508.362.3225

lincolnwoodstock.com, 603.745.6621

windsorvt.com, 802.674.5910

berkshirechamber.com, 413.499.4000

might not have noticed," he once said. All told, he produced more than 300 covers for *The Saturday Evening Post*. Published as a Post cover on June 11, 1955, *Marriage License* is one of my personal favorites, and can be viewed on the main floor.

Lenox also offers a nice assortment of art galleries. I must've spent two hours in The Lenox Gallery of Fine Art on Church Street. The oil paintings depicting scenes from the area engaged me the most, but I also enjoyed the representational art and many of the watercolors, pastels, ceramics, and sculptures on display. I was especially attracted to a painting of trees in autumn hanging on the front wall of the lower gallery.

A friend had recommended Trattoria Il Vesuvio, an Italian restaurant a short distance away from the gallery on Pittsfield Road. In addition to a soothing, candlelit air that imme-

diately made me want to linger, they were playing the theme song from *The Godfather* when I walked in. Recalling Sollozzo's line from that movie — "Try the veal, it's the best in the city" — I began a conversation with the owner. When I asked about the *vitello alla Mancini*, he kissed his fingers and looked reverently to the ceiling. He was right; the veal was exceptional.

### BACK TO THE CAPE

After an excellent tour of the region, it was time to head back to Cape Cod. This time I played Mozart for the last leg of the drive. It was a windy day and I wanted to fly a kite. I'd bought one at Kaleidoscope Toys in Falmouth, and now I was cruising along Route 6A to Sandy Neck Beach in West Barnstable. It was late afternoon, and, except for a few joggers and an old gentleman sitting in the dunes with a pair of binoculars, the beach was mine.

The breeze off the bay was refreshing. I stepped barefoot out onto the sand and began prepping the kite. As I worked the strings, I thought of my drive through New England and its varied landscape. The kite was just a dot in the sky, but it would never climb to the heights of Mount Washington. And the water over my shoulder was a deep blue oasis, but not the blue I remembered seeing in a river painting in one of the Berkshire galleries.

I walked backwards, trying to control the kite as it leaned over the sea. The day was creeping into dusk, the horizon shifting from amber to rose to violet. Eventually I reeled it in and decided to saunter down the beach toward Sandy Neck Light.

A few gulls were gliding along the shoreline in the distance. One swept past me and landed several yards ahead. I watched it peck twice into the water and hop onto the sand. For a second, the wind seemed to disappear. I stood still and observed the gull. It bobbed its head a few times in my direction, and then flew away into the drowning sun. ■

Mark Fitzgerald wrote about Williamsburg, Virginia, in the Fall 2008 issue of *Interval World*. He teaches writing at the University of Maryland.



This way to the beach: Sandy Neck, in West Barnstable, Cape Cod, is a six-mile-long conservation and recreation area.

J. Schwane/Alamy



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