

WEEKEND WARRIOR

A look at verdant Vermont, and what you need for quick trips.

BY SANDY ROBINS

There's a great sense of adventure to spontaneously planning a weekend getaway. To be a weekend warrior this fall, all you have to do is pack a bag, along with your dog's gear, program your GPS to find a beautiful leaf-peeping destination within a 50- to 100-mile radius of your home and instruct your dog, "Come on, let's go!"

This time of year, the entire country is awash in brilliant autumn colors. *FIDO Friendly* decided to zoom in on the Champlain Valley in Vermont. The spectacular Green Mountains make a perfect fall backdrop to tranquil Lake Champlain. The countryside is an artist's palette of color. The orchards are laden with plump apples just ripe for picking. From here, the country roads lead to quaint towns just waiting to be discovered and are dotted with signs denoting dairy farms that are a part of the famous Vermont Cheese Trail. Falling leaves swirling to the ground to chase + crunchy apples and cheese = doggie nirvana. Plus there are lots of Fido-friendly accommodations to suit every pocket. **f**



The Mountain Top Inn and Resort in Chittenden offers sweeping views of a mountain lake and the Green Mountain Forest (www.mountaintopin.com), and the Honeywood Inn and Lodge at Stowe is famous for its breakfasts, in particular the homemade muffins, ideal fare for weekend warriors (www.honeywoodinn.com).

Before you rush out the door to our chosen destination or a similar one closer to home, here's a quick canine checklist:

- ✔ Be sure that the ID information on your dog's collar is up to date.
- ✔ Pack any medications in a cool bag. It's always a good idea to include an antiseptic spray for any cuts and scrapes.
- ✔ Make sure you have an old towel in the car to wipe down muddy paws.
- ✔ A reversible coat with a fleece on one side and a bright colorful waterproof fabric on the other is ideal for fall weather. Depending on your dog, a warm, wool sweater would be a good idea, too.
- ✔ A collar and leash that glow in the dark are an excellent idea for dark rural country roads. A flashlight is a useful added extra.
- ✔ A dry shampoo will tide you over for a weekend and efficiently deal with any particularly dirty spots on your dog's coat.

IF YOU GO

In Vermont, the color starts getting good in mid-September and continues until late October. www.Foliage-Vermont.com is a great resource for up-to-date foliage information, as is www.FoliageNetwork.com, a site that has volunteer leaf-peepers who post updates through the season about areas around the country.

For accommodations, the website www.VermontInns.com offers a variety of accommodations in the area: country inns, hotels, motels, charming bed and breakfasts, lakeside cottages and rooms on a working farm.

Basin Harbor Club and Resort has what families are looking for: time together in a matchless destination. www.basinharbor.com

The pet-friendly Shoreham Inn (www.shorehaminn.com) has newly renovated pet rooms available this fall. The Champlain Orchards (www.champlainorchards.com) welcomes pets to come apple picking.

Driving is part of the fun of being a weekend warrior. www.Vermontvacation.com is a great website that details what to see and do in the area.

Many of the working farms on the Vermont Cheese Trail (www.vtcheese.com), such as the Fat Toad Farm in Brookfield, known for its fabulous goat cheeses (www.fattoadfarm.com), and the Willow Hill Farm in Milton (www.sheepcheese.com), welcome dogs. You can taste and buy.

Dogs ride for free on the historical Ticonderoga Ferry that crosses Lake Champlain and links Shoreham with Ticonderoga, NY. They also get a free bone on the seven-minute ride.

As you meander through the countryside, be sure to stop at the quaint galleries and typical general stores that are a highlight of these picturesque towns. They are packed with beautiful and irresistible goods, such as handmade quilts and homemade fudge. The Norton Gallery, which is also on the shores of Lake Champlain, is a terrific destination for dog lovers; woodcarver Norton Lafourelle is famous for his whimsical canine carvings. He does custom dog carvings, too (www.nortongallery.com).

Anything from these stores would make a great souvenir to take home as a reminder to become a weekend warrior again—soon.