

NEW HAMPSHIRE'S MONADNOCK REGION



THRIVE GUIDE 2023 / 2024



Peak Inspiration

ONE FAMOUS MOUNTAIN,
34 VIBRANT TOWNS,
ALL WITHIN THRIVING DISTANCE



Years before “buy local” became a movement, a Monadnock Region soap maker noted two things: 1. there was an abundance of creative, talented artists and craftspeople in the area, and 2. there was nowhere in town to showcase or sell what they were making. A lightbulb went off, one thing led to another, and in 1997, **HANNAH GRIMES MARKETPLACE** opened on Main Street in Keene. Twenty-five years later that one store has grown to sell the work of over 250 local artists and makers and has acted as a launch pad for a number of well-known brands.

As the marketplace’s mission to help local artisans and entrepreneurs gain business knowledge grew the **HANNAH GRIMES CENTER** was developed. This non-profit center has grown into a vital support system bringing seasoned entrepreneurs and passionate educators together with new entrepreneurs empowering them to create and grow businesses.

With more and more local small businesses taking part in these educational offerings and thriving off of each other’s successes, a yearly celebration sparked more lightbulb moments, and **RADICALLY RURAL** was born. This Monadnock Region 2-day event, which now draws crowds of over 500 from all over the country, gathers together thought leaders in the arts, downtowns, entrepreneurship, land use, clean energy, healthcare, and journalism to share ideas on sustainable and flourishing rural communities.

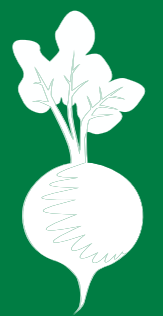
These are just three examples of what makes Keene and our surrounding Monadnock Region *the* place for people to live, work, and thrive.

Where do local shoppers, artisans, entrepreneurs, and rural thought leaders all gather and thrive?



RIGHT HERE, IN KEENE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Go to HANNAHGRIMESMARKETPLACE.COM for store hours and online shopping. For information on business programs visit HANNAHGRIMES.COM and to attend the most inspiring local event this September go to RADICALLYRURAL.ORG



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WELCOME!

I am so excited to introduce you to New Hampshire’s Monadnock Region! As you flip through these pages, you’ll see the usual New England hits—apple picking, fall foliage, farm animals, hiking and biking—but you will also no doubt discover some surprises. As President of the Greater Monadnock Collaborative, I consider the Thrive Guide to be one of my favorite projects. It’s an opportunity to honor the rural beauty, small-town charm, and generous community spirit that made me fall for this place 23 years ago as a young, newly married New Yorker. Like Mel Allen, whose essay you’ll find on p. 11, my wife and I also raised our children here, taking them to Swamp Bats games, playing mini golf at Twinkle Town, and swimming in the local lakes.



The Monadnock Region also remains a technology and manufacturing hub for large, innovative companies—companies that work with NASA, support America’s food infrastructure,

develop cures and treatments for deadly diseases. Alongside those established corporations is a thriving entrepreneurial economy, with small businesses becoming medium businesses that grow into national household names. “Shop local” was never a fad here—it’s a way of life. I’m proud of what has endured.

I’m also proud of how we’ve changed. We’ve become more diverse, something that shows up in all kinds of ways: from the people you meet, to the places you shop, to the food you can buy, to the types of festivals and events offered throughout the region. We’re embracing sustainable practices, like offering alternative energy sources and composting solutions. We’re being proactive about our future.

Feel free to check in with us anytime at the Greater Monadnock Collaborative, where we can help you find a place to stay and more. And, when you’re ready to turn a great weekend getaway into an even better life, we’ll be here to help you find a great real estate agent, too. To see more of how the Greater Monadnock Collaborative supports our business community or to become a member, please visit GreaterMonadnock.com.

Luca Paris, President and CEO
Greater Monadnock Collaborative



The **2023/2024 Thrive Guide** is published by the Greater Monadnock Collaborative Regional Chamber of Commerce.

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CHRIS PERFETTO '25

MAJORS: Secondary Education, English, and Anthropology

HOMETOWN: Chester, NH

"Keene State gives students the resources to explore and become the best version of themselves through academics, sports, extra-curriculars like Greek life, and of course, making friends!"

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clubs & organizations



PAULA DURANT '23

MAJORS: Holocaust & Genocide Studies and Legal Studies

MINOR: Politics

HOMETOWN: Nashua, NH

"In high school, I struggled to find a topic I was interested in and struggled in school. Here, I'm excited to go to class and learn. There are so many options for my future and ways to make an impact."

Average class size:
20 
STUDENTS



JEFF HUNTER '24

MAJORS: Safety & Occupational Health Applied Sciences and Business Management

HOMETOWN: Hudson, MA

"Be open minded and try something new. It's okay to move to an unfamiliar area and try to find your identity. It's not always easy to make the decision about where you want to attend school."

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Photo: Dan Millbauer, SBW Photo Contest

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Robb Reservoir in Stoddard, part of a 36,000-acre “super-sanctuary” of connected, protected land created by the Harris Center for Conservation Education in Hancock.

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From downtown festivals to farm tours and open studios, our local events calendar has something for everyone.

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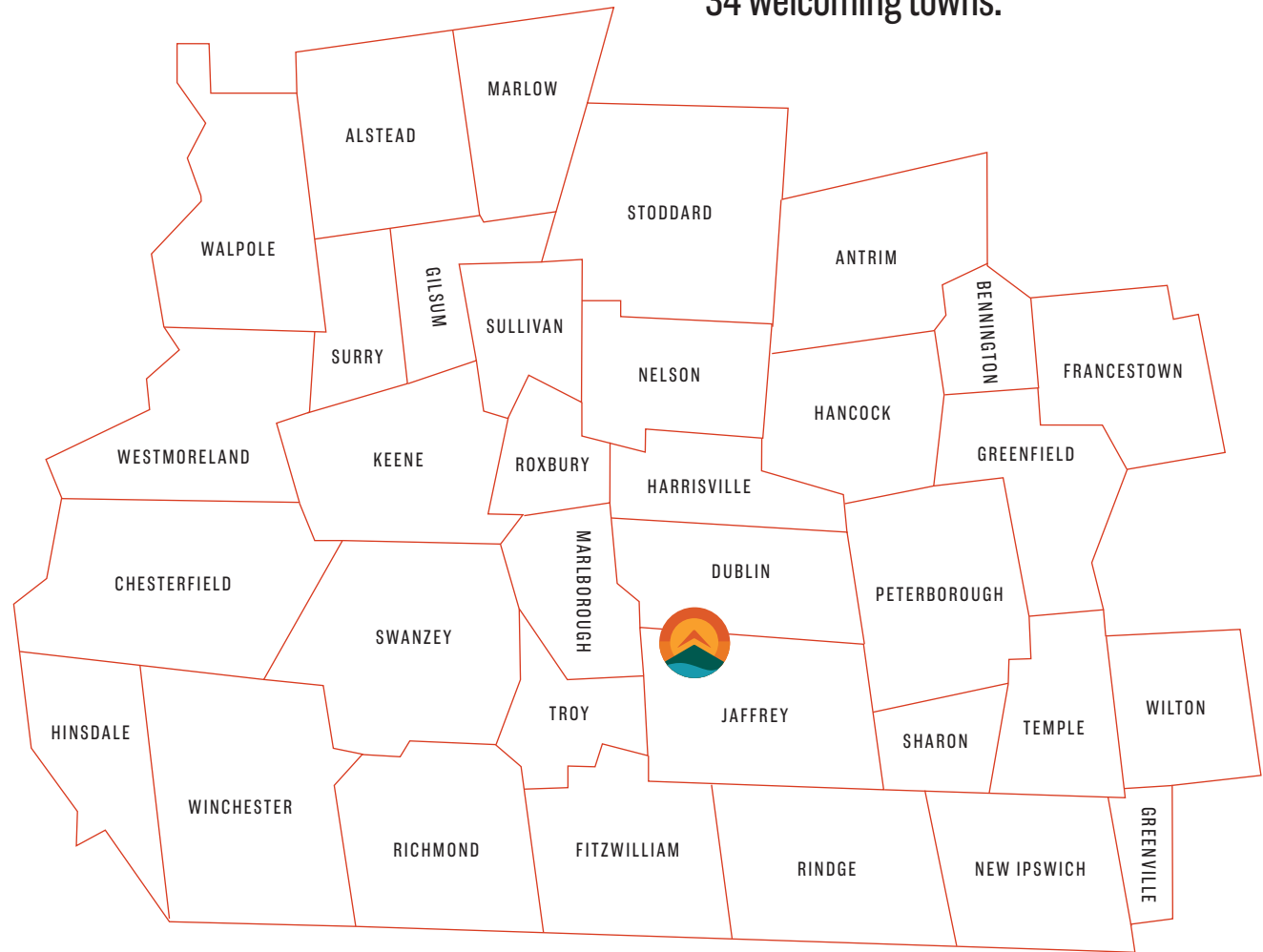
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THE MONADNOCK REGION

In the southwestern corner of New Hampshire, newcomers will find diverse and exciting opportunities to work, stay, and play in our region’s 34 welcoming towns.



Not only is New Hampshire a perennial Top 10 pick overall in *U.S. News and World Report’s* Best States rankings, but it’s also the #1 pick in the category of “Opportunity.” And that’s exactly what newcomers will find in the Monadnock Region, where history and rural beauty meet a spirit of innovation in business, education, and the arts. The area has an estimated 100,000 residents, with the greatest number living in the city of **Keene**, home to Keene State College and Antioch University New England. America’s oldest arts colony can be found in **Peterborough**, said to be the inspiration for Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town*. **Harrisville** boasts National Historic Landmark status as one of the best-preserved historic industrial villages in the country, while **Swanzey** is known for its wealth of covered bridges (four in all!). Sitting at the foot of Mount Monadnock, **Jaffrey** draws hiking enthusiasts from around the world; when winter arrives, ski buffs head to **Bennington** to hit the slopes at Crotched Mountain. To learn more about these and all the other inviting communities that make up the Monadnock Region, go to monadnocknh.com/live-here.



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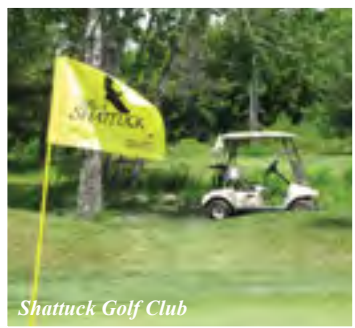
Annual Events

- JAN** Celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr..... J-R MLK Committee
Ice Racing January - March weather permitting
- FEB** Ice Fishing Derby Pelletiers Sports
- MAR** St. Patrick’s Day Parade and Shamrock Week The Park Theatre
- APR** Gala Auction Jaffrey Civic Center
- MAY** Breakfast with Superheroes TEAM Jaffrey
Memorial Day Parade Jaffrey VFW
- JUN** Art & Garden Tour Jaffrey Civic Center
Taste of Monadnock Shelter from the Storm
Farmer’s Market TEAM Jaffrey
Town Wide Yard Sale Jaffrey Chamber of Commerce
- JUL** Ron Depres Memorial Golf Classic ..Jaffrey Chamber of Commerce
Reading of the Declaration of Independence.....Citizens of Jaffrey
Farmer’s Market TEAM Jaffrey
RiverFest..... TEAM Jaffrey
Concerts on the Common TEAM Jaffrey
Amos Fortune Forum Amos Fortune Forum Committee
- AUG** Concerts on the Common TEAM Jaffrey
Farmer’s Market TEAM Jaffrey
Amos Fortune ForumAmos Fortune Forum Committee
Motorcycle Poker Run Jaffrey Chamber of Commerce
- SEP** Farmer’s Market TEAM Jaffrey
- OCT** Scarecrows on the Common..... TEAM Jaffrey
Open Studio Art Tour..... Monadnock Art
Trick or Treat on the Town..... TEAM Jaffrey
- DEC** Holiday Tree Lighting Jaffrey Parks & Recreation
Holiday Craft Fair Jaffrey Parks & Rec & Jaffrey Civic Center
Santa’s Christmas Party The Park Theatre



Monadnock State Park

Nestled at the base of the famous Grand Monadnock Mountain, with sparkling lakes, rolling countryside, and magic beauty of village greens, Jaffrey is well known as being an outstanding vacation destination. The town provides opportunities for recreation, education, commerce and industry.



Shattuck Golf Club



The Park Theatre



Main Street



Scarecrows on the Common



Gilmore Pond

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MOUNTAIN MAGIC

The key to savoring New Hampshire's Monadnock Region is to drive slowly ... and stop often. BY MEL ALLEN

For those of us who live here in the southwestern pocket of New Hampshire, we know we're home when we see our mountain, our Monadnock, on the horizon. It rises only 3,165 feet, modest enough compared with many in the Whites, or Katahdin in Maine. But geology has emboldened Monadnock. It stands alone, with no other prominence to distract us—an only child who receives undivided love. Nowhere else in New England does a single mountain give such a powerful sense of geographical identity. When I travel outside the state and people ask me where I'm from, I simply say, "the Monadnock Region," the way I imagine someone might say, "Tuscany."

"The mountain that stands alone," however, is rarely alone, if ever. Each year some 125,000 hikers head up its worn trails, climbing above the tree line in less than an hour—and suddenly the land stretches below in an unbroken vista of woods and ponds and lakes. The hikers climb higher, across the cairn-strewn, bouldery paths that bring them to the summit, where folks mingle and picnic beside their day packs. I've been there during autumn weekends when the summit has been as populated as a summer beach. Local lore says that Monadnock is the second-most-climbed mountain in the world, surpassed only by Fuji in Japan. Climbers come, in part, because Boston is only 65 miles away. And they come for the views, which on clear days take you to all six New England states in one single, circling gulp.

From the 19th century to the present, literally millions of people have walked Monadnock's trails. These have included some of the country's most famed writers and artists, who have found inspiration here, and whose creations have in turn inspired others—like Jaffrey native Christopher

Myott, whose stunning series of paintings of his home mountain can stand alongside Hiroshi Yoshida’s famed “10 Views of Fuji” series. Monadnock is a place of celebration, too: The summit is where local dancers greet the autumnal equinox each year, and where Olympic gold medalist Jessie Diggins famously got engaged in 2020, shortly before becoming the most decorated American cross-country skier in history.

From the top, visitors may strain for the glint of sunlight off the windows of Boston’s Prudential Center to the southeast, or the elusive shape of Mount Washington to the north. But we who live here look closer: to a village, a church, a cleared swath of farmland, the lake where we swim, the house where we live. The Monadnock Region isn’t made for distant viewing anyway.

Thirty-four towns and villages—including one small city of 23,000—claim kinship with Monadnock, and within them there are more streams, lakes, ponds, waterfalls, and tree-lined back roads connecting with other tree-lined back roads than you can see in months of touring around. I’ve lived here 45 years, and I still come upon hidden beauty and curiosities I never knew.

My two sons grew up here, in Keene and Dublin. We picked apples at family orchards in fall, skied local mountains in winter, played baseball in spring, jumped in any of a dozen nearby lakes in summer. The natural world was everywhere, and spotting hawks, eagles, deer, and foxes became a part of their lives that never left. Above all else, we hiked Monadnock. A mountain they saw every day. Their mountain.

For me, the most striking views of Monadnock are from Jaffrey and Dublin, the two towns that share the mountain’s craggy slopes. But neither view is my favorite. That accolade belongs to the vista as I approach Peterborough from the east, on my way back from Manchester or Boston, where just before town, the road dips, and suddenly the mountain is all I see—dark and wide, calling as insistently as a lighthouse calls sailors home.

Willa Cather, the novelist who brought the westward migration to life with *My Antonia* and *O Pioneers!*, was among those who have heard this same call. She visited the Monadnock Region for years, writing within sight of the mountain, and when she died, she was interred in a corner of the Jaffrey Center graveyard, the Old Burying Ground behind the Meetinghouse. If you come here, do what we do: Take your time, drive slowly, stop often. Chances are you’ll find, like Willa Cather, the secret of Monadnock’s hold on us. Why would anyone want to leave? ■



THIS PAGE: Youth baseball games and small-town Fourth of July celebrations reflect the Monadnock Region’s family-friendly atmosphere. OPPOSITE: Downtown Peterborough glows warmly in a winter landscape crowned by Mount Monadnock in the distance.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: DENIS TANGNEY JR./ISTOCK.COM; THIS SPREAD: LIPOFSKYPHOTO.COM (BASEBALL, FIREWORKS); CHRIS DANIELE @DIRTANDGLASS (AERIAL)





TOP: The gleaming white spire of Hancock Congregational Church lends classic New England flavor to this summer scene on Norway Pond. BOTTOM: Nelson Town Hall has been called the world capital of contra dance, a style of American folk dancing similar to square dancing that dates back to colonial times.

JENNIFER GREEN (POND); KENDAL J. BUSH (DANCERS)



TOP: Keene State College students take a break from their studies to play in the snow. BOTTOM: One of four covered bridges that grace the town of Swanzey, the Sawyer's Crossing Covered Bridge that spans the Ashuelot River was originally built just five years before the American Revolution; the current structure dates back to 1859.

COURTESY OF KEENE STATE COLLEGE (STUDENTS); DENIS TANGNEY JR./ISTOCK.COM (BRIDGE)



TOP: At just over 100 acres, Willard Pond is a small but sparkling gem set in the heart of New Hampshire Audubon's largest property, dePierrefeu-Willard Pond Wildlife Sanctuary, in Antrim and Hancock. BOTTOM: Horse and rider enjoy a peaceful moment together at Dusty Dog Horse Farm, a hunter/jumper barn in Keene.

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TREASURE TOWNS

There's always something new to discover when you eat, shop, and stay local.

About a decade ago, when a national publication declared Peterborough one of the “top 10 coolest small towns in America,” people naturally came to see for themselves. Judging by the number of license plates from across New England and beyond that you continue to see around the Monadnock Region these days, it's clear that newcomers are finding “cool” throughout the entire area—not only in its natural attractions, but also in its wealth of locally owned eateries, shops, and inns that define “small is beautiful.”

BRING YOUR APPETITE

Thirty years ago, if you lived in the Monadnock Region and had a craving for international cuisine, you'd drive to Boston. That was then. Today, you can dine around the world here in 30 miles. Just a few minutes' walk of one another in downtown Keene are restaurants serving up dishes from the Caribbean (**Yahso Jamaican Grille**), Asia (**Thai Garden** and **Kurama Omakase**), Mexico (**Margaritas**), and the Mediterranean (**Luca's Mediterranean Café** and **Granita Enoteca**). North of Keene, in Walpole, **Burdick's** lures foodies with its elegant dining room and French-inspired menu (it's a favorite of famed local filmmaker Ken Burns). In Troy, **Royal Spice** chef Sushont Dhuri, who grew up in Goa, India, raises herbs for fresh naan to accompany his soups, meat and vegetable curries, and pakoras. Strolling through downtown Peterborough on a summer evening, you'll spot diners sitting outside at **Coopershill**, enjoying the ambiance of an Irish pub as they feast on bangers and mash or Guinness stew with a side of colcannon.

Owner Katherine Forrest chats with a visitor to Bowerbird & Friends, an emporium of antiques and other one-of-a-kind finds in Peterborough.



Opened in 2019, Gail Somers's Yahso Jamaican Grille brings authentic island cuisine to Keene's Main Street. BELOW LEFT: Be prepared for big flavor at the pint-size Outlaw Brewing Company in Winchester.



And then there are those special eateries that are so established that they've become part of the landscape, a place to always bring family and visitors. **The Stage** in Keene, at the head of the town square, has been in the Benik family for four decades. The **Peterborough Diner** began in 1949; Keene's **Lindy's Diner** in 1961. Maple syrup lovers have come to **Stuart & John's Sugar House** in Westmoreland since 1975 for the always-comforting pancakes with the real stuff on top. And when warm weather arrives, families begin making their pilgrimages to **Kimball Farm** in Jaffrey, home to lobster rolls, burgers, and the biggest "small"-size farm-fresh ice cream cone in the region, with flavors you may have forgotten: buttercrunch, grape-nut, rum raisin.

Sometimes the setting is so special it shares top billing with the menu. **The Waterhouse** in the heart of Peterborough's Depot Square, for instance, gives you a table right beside tumbling Nubanusit Brook. If you come for a meal or book a stay at the spectacularly sited **Aldworth Manor** in Harrisville, you'll likely be sending photos to everyone you know: A historic mansion set on 170 rolling acres, it makes travelers feel like English royalty in a New Hampshire village. Morning people know there are few better ways to start a day than at a great café or bakery, one where you can relax with a specialty coffee and an oven-fresh treat and not feel hurried. **Brewbakers Café** in Keene is a favorite of the local college students, while **The Root** in Temple and **Hilltop**

PREVIOUS SPREAD: CHRIS DANIELE @DIRTANDGLASS; THIS PAGE: KELLY FLETCHER



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TOP: A pastel rainbow of French macarons and mini cupcakes fills the display case at Sweet Macaron in downtown Peterborough. BOTTOM: Filled with New Hampshire-made souvenirs, gifts, art, and more, Hannah Grimes Marketplace offers one-stop locally inspired shopping in Keene.

Café in Wilton combine farm-to-table excellence with a bit of country-bohemian flair. The croissants at Keene's **Fire Dog Breads** may be the tastiest and flakiest you have ever had—unless, that is, you've also sampled the ones at **Flag Leaf Bakery** in Antrim, where lining up for the doors to open is a weekend ritual for many residents. And if you want a touch of extra sweetness with that morning espresso, **Sweet Macaron** in Peterborough has almond-flour French delights. When evening falls, craft beer enthusiasts can also get their fill here. In the mid-1990s, Keene's **Elm City Brewing Company** had the brewery scene practically to itself; today, it's still going strong but it's now joined by the likes of **The Outlaw Brewing Company** in Winchester, **West LA Beer**

Co. in Swanzey, **Modestman** in Keene, and **Post & Beam Brewing** in Peterborough, to name just a few. **FILL YOUR SHOPPING BAG** In a region famous for outdoor recreation, it's fitting that **Eastern Mountain Sports** has long had a flagship store in Peterborough, a town that also caters to sporty types at **Hubert's Family Outfitters**. Just down the road, Depot Square's riverside shops invite browsing for treasures. **Toadstool Bookshop**, one of the best independent bookstores in New England, anchors the square (there's a second shop in Keene). **Bowerbird & Friends** is where you'll find that antique butcher's block, perfect linen-covered chaise, or vintage Scandinavian hutch in hushed shades of gray. Across the street, **Alice Blue** is an eclectic

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TOP: In Peterborough, the elegant bed-and-breakfast Cranberry Meadow Farm Inn is a newly renovated historic home that was originally built as Wilson Tavern back in 1797. BOTTOM: Fine dining is among the lures at the Chesterfield Inn, set on 10 countryside acres in West Chesterfield.

boutique (think woven scarves from Japan, cotton sundresses, chunky jewelry).

Keene's famous wide Main Street makes walking and window-shopping an outdoor outing of its own. The standout among the myriad inviting storefronts here is **Hannah Grimes Marketplace**, where you'll find the work of more than 250 local artists and makers, housewares, and home decor as well as New England-made foods. And you won't shop many places like **Frye's Measure Mill**, a National Historic Landmark in Wilton: Its rooms are filled with folk art, artisans' wares, colonial- and Shaker-style boxes, antiques, and the classic wooden measuring vessels once essential to merchants in the 1800s.


REST UP AND RECHARGE

Even the greatest day in the Monadnock Region eventually must come to an end. The happy news is that beyond a solid selection of brand hotel chains in Keene and the recently debuted **Riverhouse by Weekender** in Peterborough, the tranquility and grace of the Monadnock Region's small towns extends to its historic inns and B&Bs. **Cranberry Meadow Farm Inn** in Peterborough is a luxurious eight-room B&B set on 80 rolling acres with an outdoor pool, trout pond, and miles of hiking trails nearly on the doorstep. To the west of Keene, the **Chesterfield Inn** welcomes pets to romp with you on its 10 acres, including a wildflower-filled meadow. At the base of Mount Monadnock, in Troy, the **Inn at East Hill Farm** has hosted families for 76 years. In Walpole, one of the country's prettiest villages, the **Inn at Valley Farms** lets you awaken on a 105-acre working farm that has endured for 250 years and ranks as one of the most romantic stays in the state. ■

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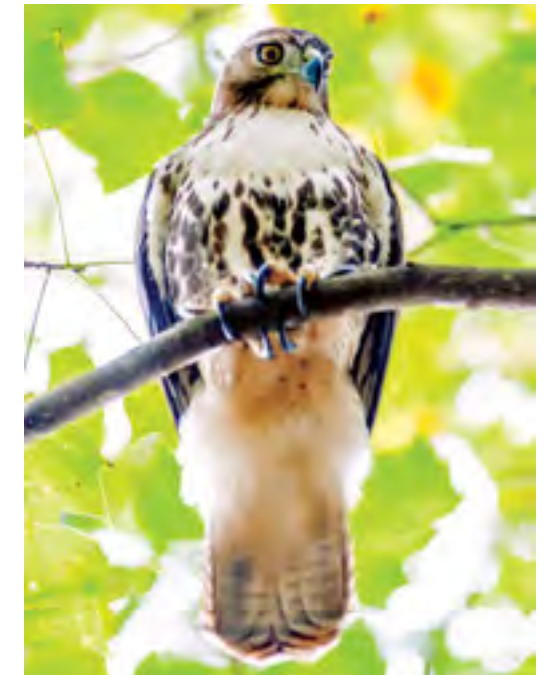
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THE GREAT OUTDOORS

The secret to the Monadnock Region's four seasons of fun? It's in our nature.



Outdoor enthusiasts will be jumping for joy at the Monadnock Region's thousands of acres of forests, trails, waterways, and recreational opportunities. TOP RIGHT: Peterborough's Pack Monadnock, the smaller sibling of Mount Monadnock, is known among birders as New Hampshire's premier hawk-watching site.



In a place so defined by beautiful landscapes, it should come as no surprise that the Monadnock Region is chock-full of outdoor adventures. There are endless routes to hike and cycle, or cross-country ski; there are acres upon acres of sparkling waters to paddle. Go big with a multi-day hike, spend a lazy summer afternoon gliding in a canoe, or settle in for s'mores while camping under the stars. Ready for a breath of fresh air? Then read on for some of the best outdoor adventures the Monadnock Region has to offer.

TAKE A HIKE

Climb **Mount Monadnock**, and in less than two hours you can be atop the only peak that offers views of all six New England states. Different trails in Dublin and Marlboro will lead you to the top, but the best starting point for newcomers is Monadnock State Park, whose 6,000 acres spread across parts of both Dublin and Jaffrey. The grounds include a visitors center, campground, and more than 35 miles of trails, including the White Dot, the mountain's most direct route.

The region's grand hiking route is the **Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway**, which runs from Mount Monadnock in Jaffrey nearly 50 miles north, to Mount Sunapee in Newbury. The trail puts the Monadnock Region's beauty on full display as it winds across the Monadnock Highlands, through historic villages and past many rivers, lakes, and ponds. The Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway Trail Committee oversees

the route and maintains backcountry campsites and lean-tos for backpackers.

You'll find more walks to remember in the region's many state parks, which rank among the best New Hampshire has to offer. At **Rhododendron State Park** in Fitzwilliam, get an up-close view of the property's namesake via a half-mile stroll around a 16-acre rhododendron grove. In Chesterfield, the **Chesterfield Gorge Natural Area** offers a nearly one-mile out-and-back trek highlighted by a stunning gorge and several waterfalls. **Pisgah State Park** is New Hampshire's largest state park, whose 13,300 acres stretch across the towns of Hinsdale, Winchester, and Chesterfield; it's a popular year-round destination not only for hiking but also for mountain biking, ATV riding, and snowmobiling. And don't miss a chance to climb Pack Monadnock in Peterborough's **Miller State Park**, where a summit fire tower offers sweeping views that can stretch all the way to Boston.



Finally, in the spirit of opening the outdoors to everyone, Walpole's **Distant Hill Nature Trail** and the **Dutton Brook and Gregg Trails** on Crotched Mountain were made to accommodate wheelchairs and strollers, creating a natural but accessible hiking experience for people of all abilities.

HIT THE ROAD

The Monadnock Region is laced with miles of biking trails, many of which have been restored and maintained by the nonprofit **Monadnock Region Rail Trails Collaborative**; the group's website is an excellent place for new bikers to get their bearings. In Keene, you'll find the **Ashuelot Recreational Rail Trail**, a 21-mile trek over trestle bridges and past farms that concludes in Winchester. The 42 miles that compose the **Cheshire Recreational Rail Trail** also runs through Keene, as well as the neighboring towns of Fitzwilliam and Troy, on its way into Massachusetts. For a shorter but no less scenic jaunt, the nine-mile **Fort Hill Recreational Rail Trail** in Hinsdale is a river-focused ride along the Connecticut River.

There's also two-wheeled fun to be had right in the heart of town, thanks to a pair of new facilities that allow riders of all ages catch some air as they hone their mountain biking skills: **Peterborough**

Bike Park at Adams Playground, and **Keene Bike Park** in Wheelock Park.

MAKE A SPLASH


You could build an entire summer vacation around exploring the Monadnock Region's pristine ponds, lakes, reservoirs, and rivers. A number of these waterways make for exceptional canoeing and kayaking, but for our money **Powder Mill Pond** in Bennington is right up at the top. There are different inlets and eddies to explore, and if you go far enough you'll paddle under a beautiful covered bridge on the Greenfield-Hancock town line. (Don't have a watercraft of your own? Fitzwilliam's **Monadnock Paddle** has kayak and canoe rentals at the ready.)

The same waters that attract paddlers can also offer a proper cool-down when the temperature begins to soar. Among the 200 or so ponds and lakes within the Monadnock Region, there are many gems



Hikers make their way to Mount Monadnock's bald summit, where the reward is a stunning 360-degree view of the region and beyond. TOP RIGHT: Biking through the foliage on a quiet back road in Harrisville.

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Bennington's Crotched Mountain has been a beloved downhill skiing destination for more than 60 years. TOP: Paddleboarding at sunrise on Willard Pond.

open to both visitors and residents, such as **Otter Lake** at Greenfield State Park, **Spofford Lake** in Chesterfield, and **Surry Mountain Lake** in Surry. A bonus of moving to the Monadnock Region: the chance to access the lovely residents-only swimming spots, too, like **Cunningham Pond** in Peterborough and **Thorndike Pond** in Jaffrey.

PLAY IN THE SNOW

When winter hits, the skis come out, as many of the Monadnock Region's paths transform into prime Nordic terrain. XC fans gravitate toward the trails at **Stonewall Farm** in Keene and **Shieling Forest** in Peterborough, but the best of the best can be found in Dublin, courtesy of the 20 kilometers of professionally groomed trails at the **Dublin School Nordic Center**. Even better: The dedicated crew that oversees the network posts daily updates on the center's website, so you know the conditions before you've even clicked into your skis.

While southwestern New Hampshire is within an easy

day's drive of several famed New England downhill skiing destinations, it's also home to two family-friendly mountains that will keep your crew going the whole day. At **Crotched Mountain Ski and Ride** in Bennington, 25 trails, 80 acres of glades, and two terrain parks round out the scene. Night skiing makes the days wonderfully long, and on select nights Crotched runs its lifts all the way till midnight. Newly reopened in 2023, **Granite Gorge Mountain Park** in Roxbury is in the process of updating its facilities, but the skiing, snowboarding, and tubing remain as exhilarating as ever.

MEET THE NEIGHBORS

While wildlife watching is a perk for any outdoor sport, it's worth making the effort to head up Pack Monadnock for the autumn **Hawk Watch** run by New Hampshire Audubon and the Harris Center for Conservation Education. As raptors pass overhead on their way to southern wintering grounds, it's a spectacle of migration not to be missed. ■

DAVE WHITE (POND); CHRIS DANIEL @DIRTANDGLASS (SKIER)

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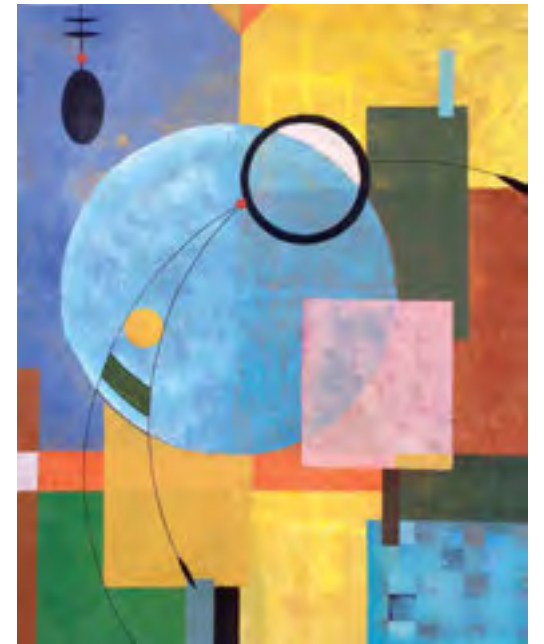
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Dave Painchaud of the New Hampshire band Omoo Omoo performs at Nova Arts in Keene. TOP RIGHT: The annual Monadnock Art Tour offers the chance to meet local artists such as Soosen Dunholter of Peterborough (work shown: *Ideal Conditions*).



It was in the early 1900s that the American composer Edward MacDowell discovered what the members of the Dublin Art Colony had figured out decades earlier: that the woods and waters of the Monadnock Region could be a powerful muse. He dreamed of bringing other artists to this place, and after his death, his wife, Marian, made it so. More than 100 years later, the residency program at Peterborough's **MacDowell** still attracts a who's who of established and emerging artists.

For most of the year, these creatives work quietly, and their attendance is unpublicized. The exception is MacDowell's annual **Medal Day** event, when the public is invited to walk the property's wooded pathways from studio to studio, meeting the artists and seeing (or hearing) their work. This year's event, on July 23, will honor filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin. But Medal Day is not the only opportunity to interact with MacDowell's tenants. From March through November, **MacDowell Downtown** offers free public presentations at area venues by artists in residence.

Over the years, artists have continued to be drawn to this part of New Hampshire, some answering the call of that rich history, others seeking their own inspiration and community. And where there are great artists, there must also be great venues.

The **Colonial Performing Arts Center** in Keene celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2024. Originally opened as a venue for film, opera, theater, and vaudeville before becoming

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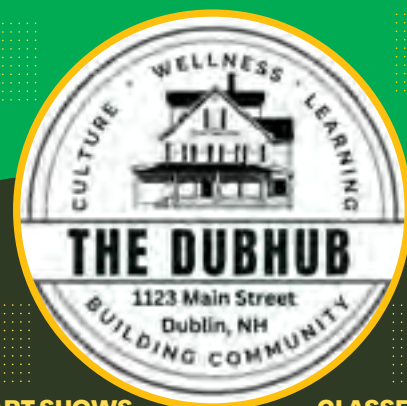
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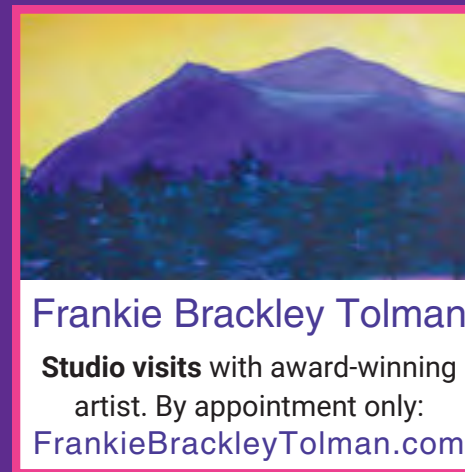
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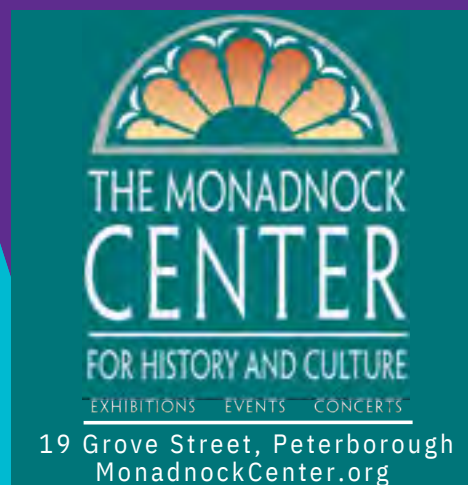
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ABOVE: The next generation of acting talent steps into the spotlight at Andy's Summer Playhouse in Wilton. LEFT: During MacDowell Medal Day, the venerable art colony opens its campus to the public for a celebration of honorees such as Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Art Spiegelman.

a dedicated movie theater in the 1950s, the restored Colonial has reclaimed its place at the center of the region's performing arts scene. The three-stage **Redfern Arts Center** at Keene State College also hosts a diverse array of

artistic performances, both by students and visiting artists. Down the road in Jaffrey, the **Park Theatre** reopened in 2021, nearly a century after the launch of its namesake predecessor, which had closed in 1976. The venue has two

theaters for the presentation of movies, concerts, and stage shows. And for an extra layer of arty interest, its four WPA-era murals depicting *The Four Seasons of Mount Monadnock* are being restored and readied for a new generation's spotlight. Based in a converted 18th-century barn just three miles from downtown, the **Peterborough Players** is a professional theater company that has been operating since 1933. Main Stage programming ranges from world premieres to classics, while Second Company shows are geared toward younger audiences.

Speaking of younger audiences, **Andy's Summer Playhouse**, a youth theater based in an 1860 former town meeting house in Wilton, has been mentoring and training local actors, stage designers, directors, and playwrights in the creation of innovative plays since 1971. A more recent addition to the scene is **Project Shakespeare**, founded in 1994, which is based in Jaffrey but whose young actors perform classic drama at locations throughout the Monadnock Region. If alternative theater is your thing, it just doesn't get better than Peterborough's **Firelight Theatre Workshop**, founded in 2017. Whether performing at its own converted space or taking its show on the road, Firelight specializes in creating site-specific and immersive theater in intimate spaces.

PAGES 32-33: KELLY FLETCHER (MUSICIAN); COURTESY OF SOUSEN DUNHOLTER; THIS PAGE: JOSH GIBNEY (PLAY); LIPOFSKYPHOTO.COM (MACDOWELL)



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Looking to catch a movie? The **Peterborough Community Theatre** opened as the 500-seat Gem Theatre in 1914. Now a 95-seat theater with an adjoining restaurant, it screens movies and documentaries ranging from new releases to local works and timeless classics. In Keene, the **Putnam Theater**, aka the Putnam Arts Lecture Hall, is home to the Keene State College Film Society, and its state-of-the-art projection and sound systems make it a slightly off-the-radar gem. If it's the current summer blockbuster you seek, **Keene Cinemas 6** is a throwback strip-mall theater, complete with video games in the lobby. For something more offbeat, watch for the **Monadnock International Film Festival**, which offers free community screenings and showcases high-quality independent cinema, both local and international. And movie-history buffs will love

the **Wilton Town Hall Theatre**, located in an 1886 Main Street building listed on the National Register of Historic Places. First opened as a silent-movie house in 1912, it's known for a well-curated lineup of classics and art-house favorites. Established as the Moving Company Dance Center in 1991, **MoCo Arts** in Keene offers classes in dance and theater and multi-arts camps for children ages 18 months to 18+ years, as well as professional-quality performances by those students, both at their own facility and other local venues. Founded in 1966 and originally based at the Nelson Meeting House, **Monadnock Music** has a simple goal: to make exceptional music accessible, and to connect people through musical performances and educational programs. As evidenced by their dedication to bringing chamber

Reopened in 2022 after nearly two years of renovations, the **Colonial Performing Arts Center in Keene** draws more than 50,000 attendees annually with a busy schedule that spans everything from Broadway to comedy to family shows. music performances to area schools, the musicians behind **Ashuelot Concerts** also believe that great sounds matter. Watch for their "grownup" concerts at Stonewall Farm in Keene, Alyson's Orchard in Walpole, and the Park Theatre in Jaffrey. The **Peterborough Folk Music Society** brings a diverse lineup of singer-songwriters—including the likes of Dar Williams, Richie Havens, and Loudon Wainwright III—to stages in Peterborough and surrounding towns. In Hancock, **Music on Norway Pond** has been presenting one-hour classical and world music performances at the town Meeting House since 2008. **Electric Earth Concerts**, meanwhile, takes its show on

the road, offering affordable classical music experiences at smaller venues. On a beautiful summer day in Nelson, a concert at the **Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music** can be the centerpiece of an idyllic day. Apple Hill hosts about 300 students from diverse backgrounds each year for its Summer Chamber Music Workshop, and produces more than 50 concerts. Bands and performers like Yo La Tengo and Sammus can be found at **Nova Arts Block** in downtown Keene, where two stages feature eclectic shows in a venue that is also home to a café, a coffee roaster, a flower shop, a record shop, and an open art studio.

For 50 years, the **Thorne-Sagendorph Art Gallery** at Keene State College has hosted public exhibitions and programs featuring a wide range of contemporary and historical art, as well as lectures, artist talks, workshops, and tours. First conceived as a museum of folk art, Peterborough's **Mariposa Museum and World Culture Center** now explores contemporary human experience and culture through a range of media, while just around the corner, the **Monadnock Center for History and Culture** presents events, performances, and exhibits showcasing the region's historic and artistic culture.

Finally, there may be no better way to gain an appreciation for the region's diverse artists and just how integral they are to our communities than the annual **Monadnock Art Tour**. From modest beginnings in 1995, the tour has grown to include dozens of participating artists, who display and discuss their work and open their studios to visitors. ■

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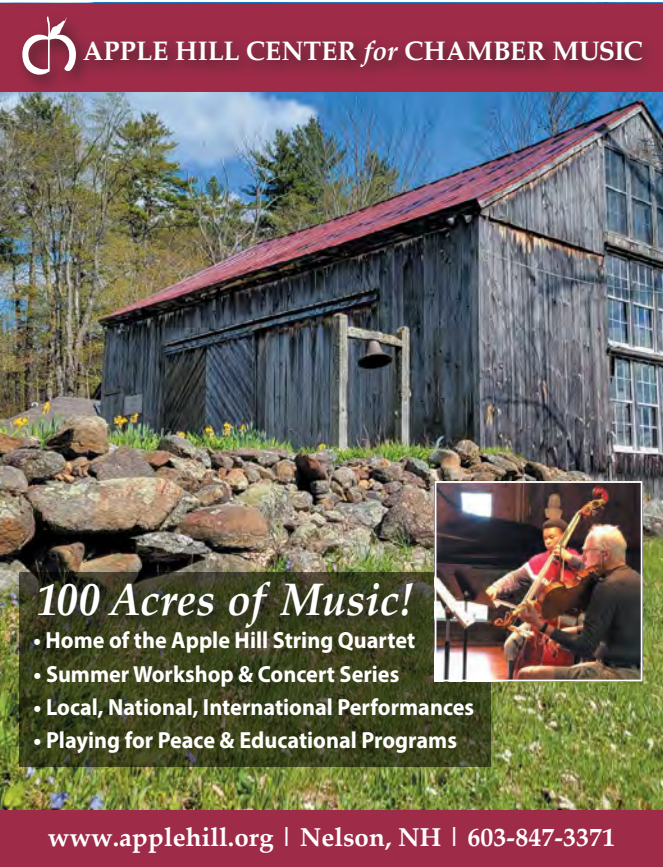
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FARMS AND ORCHARDS

Alyson's Orchard, Walpole: At this hilltop orchard founded more than 40 years ago, neat rows of apple trees—more than 50 varieties in



all—draw your eye toward sweeping views of the Connecticut River Valley. More heirloom types are added each year, and the roster now includes Belle de Boskoop, Reine des Reinettes, and Hudson's Golden Gem. Bring a picnic, and top it off with a pie from the orchard's store.

Blackfire Farm, Hancock: Luscious veggies and home-raised chickens, pigs, rabbits, and lambs are at the center of this farm's offerings. You can find their agricultural goods at the Hancock Farmers' Market throughout the summer, while the weekends feature Blackfire's



Rural delights and heritage crafts are front and center at places such as Harrisville Designs (far left); Mayfair Farm (center); Manning Hill Farm (top); and Alyson's Orchard (bottom).



made-from-scratch wood-fired pizzas at Post & Beam Brewing in Peterborough.

Manning Hill Farm, Winchester: First-generation farmers Sarah Costa and Sam Canonica keep a unique dairy herd of heritage Dutch Belted cows renowned for their sweet, super-premium milk, which you can buy right on-site at the farm store (the chocolate milk is a must-try). They also raise and sell pastured meats including beef, pork, chicken and eggs—and yes, maple syrup, too.

Mayfair Farm, Harrisville: A place of hilly pastures, lakes, and forests lined with old stone walls, Mayfair Farm sits just up the road from Harrisville Pond. Like many successful family farms in New England, it's an amalgam of businesses: an orchard, a



vegetable garden, an Airbnb cottage, and a farm store that sells maple products, prepared meals, and baked goods. There are pigs in pens, and lambs up on the hill. There's also an Instagram-ready event space that hosts weddings and community farm dinners from spring through autumn.

Monadnock Berries, Troy: There are few better ways to spend a late summer morning or afternoon than picking blueberries, raspberries, and other fruits at this farm, with Mount Monadnock rising to the northeast and the green hills seeming to float above the fields. Long after you have enjoyed the berries' sweetness, you'll recall the feeling of a day passing slowly on this hillside, feasting on what you pick and what you see.

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Echo Farm, Hinsdale: Sisters Courtney and Beth Hodge use the milk from their own cows to produce from-scratch puddings that include vanilla, chocolate, butterscotch, and rice, as well as seasonal flavors such as maple and spiced pumpkin. Their tasty treats can be found at several local groceries as well as stores across the Northeast.

Les Bonnes Miches, Peterborough: When he founded his home-based

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FROM LEFT: Jordana Korsen, owner of Hot Glass Art Center in Marlborough, demonstrates the traditional art of glassblowing; some gleaming examples of Korsen's craftsmanship. BELOW: Handcrafted and wood-fired pottery by Shana Brautigam, the Rindge potter and teaching artist behind Rooted in Clay.

Brautigam, a member of the League of N.H. Craftsmen, churns out at her home studio and education center. Visitors can watch the artist at work, take a spin through her retail shop, or try their hand at the wheel to make their own keepsake.

Harrisville Designs,
Harrisville: New England's history as a manufacturing and textile hub comes into full focus in downtown Harrisville, whose restored brick mill buildings make it the only 19th-century industrial community in the country that still exists in its original form. It's here you'll find Harrisville Designs, which beautifully links the past to the present by continuing the tradition of spinning 100-percent-virgin-wool yarn. The internationally recognized textile center offers classes on felting, knitting, and weaving, while its retail shop provides just the colorful incentive you need to start work on that next blanket, rug, or tapestry. ■



lessons, workshops, and demonstrations.
Rooted in Clay, Rindge: Nature's beauty is at the center of every pot, instrument, and sculpture that Shana

bakery, French immigrant Nicolas Papoins decided to name it simply Les Bonnes Miches, meaning "The Good Loaves." And that's exactly what the Peterborough resident has been bringing to Monadnock foodies, with his out-of-this-world artisanal sourdough bread made in small batches using 100 percent organic ingredients.
Orchard Hill Breadworks, Alstead: French, olive-rosemary, and homestyle multigrain are just a few of the many hearty breads turned out at Orchard Hill, which makes its home on a 1700s farm in quiet Alstead. Gardens

and orchards still grace the lands, adding to the summer splendor when owner Noah Elbers cranks up the heat on his outdoor wood-fired oven to serve pizzas to his picnicking visitors.
TRADITIONAL CRAFTS
Hot Glass Art Center, Marlborough: The brainchild of Jordana Korsen, former head of the glassblowing program at Franklin Pierce University, this state-of-the-art glassblowing studio is not only a showcase of her own work and that of other local artisans, but also an education center that offers glassblowing

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MONADNOCK VOICES

Meet the some of the artists, entrepreneurs, educators, and activists who help make the Monadnock Region so diverse—and discover why they are happy to call this place home.

Susie Spikol
HANCOCK
Writer and naturalist; community programs director at the Harris Center for Conservation Education

Sense of place: “I grew up in Brooklyn, New York, but I kind of knew I was going to be happier living in the country than in a city. My family would spend summers at our little cabin in Vermont, where from my bedroom window I could actually see the top of Mount Monadnock. In college I worked for Massachusetts Audubon in Greenfield, New Hampshire, and moved up to this area after graduation. I just felt like, *This is it, I found my place*. I finally got to climb the mountain that I saw from my bedroom window.”

Community connection: “Back when I was an intern at the Harris Center, I went to the Hancock Library looking for a certain book for a program; it was brand-new, so I didn’t find it. About 10 days later, they called me and said, “We got that book you wanted.” I hadn’t asked them to order it, I had only sort of mentioned it. And I thought: *Wow, I really want to live in this town*. A town with such a vibrant and responsive library felt like a town with its priorities in the right place.”

Natural rewards: “The Harris Center has a mission statement that can be boiled down to this: We’re a place that helps people fall in love with the Monadnock Region. It’s all about helping people make those connections to the natural world, either on the land that we’ve worked hard to protect or in their own communities. My job is to build programs for all ages, from babies in backpacks all the way to people in assisted living. Every single person, no matter how old they are, can find something to connect to in nature.”

Favorite time of year: “It may sound weird, but I love mud season. I do! I love the softness of the ground. I love running in the mud. I love biking in the mud. I can smell the earth again after the long cold winter, and I can feel what’s on the tip of it: all the flowers and plants and birds coming back. It’s like Christmas Eve, you know? It’s got hope in it.”

Local hidden gem: “My ‘go-to hike’ after work is actually on a Harris Center property called the Hiroshi Land, off Route 137. You enter through fields and then you end up in this forest, and then it wraps along a river and opens up into beautiful wetlands. I always see incredible wildlife there, and I love the sound of the water. It’s never crowded—often my car is the only one in the parking lot!”

Monadnock must-have: “Peterborough’s Post & Beam Brewing, which is owned by Erika Rosenfeld. Not many women run breweries, and so I’m a big advocate for that. My favorite beer is a local raspberry sour called Bloodshot Moon. It comes out at the end of the summer, when the raspberries are on, and it lasts just until the last bit of them go.”

Advice for newcomers: “Find a way you can be of service to the community, whether it’s volunteering at the library or participating in a town cleanup or even just going to the farmers’ markets. That’s what makes small towns work, is when people show up and give of themselves. Because when you give, you get back so much more.”

Emerson Sistare
PETERBOROUGH
Owner, Toadstool Bookshops

Living here: “It’s a very quick identifier when people say, ‘I’m from the Monadnock Region’—it’s something that comes to mind right away and rolls off the tongue with a lot of pride. I think people really love being from this area, and it’s a backbone of who they are. And it’s something that I missed when I was out west and living in New York and Maine.”

Community connection: “The Toadstool was a family business for 50 years before my parents and I bought it, and I think the previous owners were excited that it was going to remain a family business very much rooted in the Monadnock Region. We love the fact that our customers take a huge amount of pride in the Toadstool, that so many of them are so invested and it’s a part of their daily lives. In the Peterborough shop, the first thing you see when you walk in is the New England section, the current MacDowell Fellows and local authors and the history of the town. I think it’s important that people feel like they can see all aspects of the Monadnock Region distilled in the Toadstool.”

Positive sign: “A few weeks back, a couple in their mid-20s came into the shop. They were from Massachusetts, looking at apartments here, and said they’ve always wanted to live in Peterborough. And I was so excited by the idea that there are people who are just starting their families or their careers who looking to move to the Monadnock Region. That narrative of young people wanting to leave this area—it’s great to see it disproven, that people are eager to come here and contribute and be a part of what we all love so much.”

Recommended reading: “For a local author, [Hancock writer] Howard Mansfield, no question. I recently got a chance to hear him speak, and if the Monadnock Region ever needed a 30-second commercial done for it, we should just put Howard in there, because he’ll nail it. For books, it would have to be *Where the Mountain Stands Alone: Stories of Place in the Monadnock Region*.”

Favorite local event: “The Children and the Arts Festival. It’s the most New England, most Monadnock Region thing you could imagine. Like, an entire town shuts down so that kids can do arts and crafts. That’s crazy. And it’s beautiful.”

Advice for newcomers: “Assume good faith in people here, that what

DAVE WHITE (MYOTT); KELLY FLETCHER (SISTARE); JET PHOTOGRAPHIC (STONEHILL+BURNS); BEN CONANT (SPIKOL)



FROM LEFT, TOP ROW:
Artist Christopher Myott; Nilaja Young and Alisa Lawrence of New England Sweetwater Farm and Distillery.

FROM LEFT, MIDDLE ROW:
Emerson Sistare of Toadstool Bookshops; Nicholas Burns and Louisa Stonehill of Ashuelot Concerts.

FROM LEFT, BOTTOM ROW:
Susie Spikol of the Harris Center for Conservation Education; Molly Ola Pinney and Aja Davis, co-founders of *White People. DOING Something*.

ON PAGE 48: Joshua Velasquez and Adam Hamilton of Shire’s – Premium Plant-Based.

ON PAGE 50: Movement and ultra-running coach and podcaster Meghan Gould.



Joshua Velasquez, left, and Adam Hamilton

they're saying and how they're treating you is genuine. Approach the region with good faith, and the region will be super welcoming and hospitable, and will love you for it."

Joshua Velasquez and Adam Hamilton
PETERBOROUGH
Co-founders, Shire's – Premium Plant-Based

Living here: [Joshua] "We met working together at a summer job in Rhode Island, and we were both on the same page for starting a business that was health- and wellness-focused. ... I believe New Hampshire was the best place to do that—this region is full of entrepreneurs, and we hope what we are building in Peterborough is encouraging everyone else to see the potential in what can be done in beautiful southwest New Hampshire."

[Adam] "When Josh told me, 'It's got to happen in New Hampshire,' I have to tell you, I was a little skeptical. I'm from Rhode Island and had gone up there mainly for camping and skiing—I never knew it as, like, a place to start a business. But he said, 'No, there's something really special about this area,' because he had grown up here."

"And in Peterborough, what we discovered was, in my eyes, the true sense of community. Which was: If you're trying to do something, the response is, *How can I help? What can I do? How can I lift you up?*"

Recipe for success: [Adam] "Back when we started out, what we were doing was completely new. People were like, 'What? You're making a plant-based cheese out of cashews?' But when they got past the skepticism, once they tried the product, they realized, *Oh, OK, this is really good!*"

"We bootstrapped the company [originally called Nuttin Ordinary], beginning in a lab in our basement in 2014, and eventually we started to scale. In 2019 we built out a manufacturing facility in Peterborough. We'd picked up [orders from] Market Basket, Whole Foods, restaurants ... and then in comes Covid. But we were able to ride out the past three years—a time where a lot of companies didn't make it—through the support of our investors and the community."

Business boost: [Adam] "The thing that we were most surprised by was the level of business talent that lives in the Monadnock Region, and a lot of that comes from older or retired people with decades of experience in their given fields. What we've learned from them, we probably wouldn't have gotten in a city like Boston. They had the time and the knowledge to help us, and they had the desire to give back."

Monadnock must-have: [Adam] "Vital Provisions in Peterborough."

They're making some of the freshest food around, and they have a big plant-based menu, so of course we love that. And the quality is terrific."

[Joshua] "I'll add Bantam Grill, which has our plant-based ravioli on the menu, and Post & Beam Brewing, which has our spicy cheese!"

Local hidden gem: [Adam] "Rosaly's Garden & Farmstand, which has wonderful produce—their garlic is amazing. I think it's the oldest organic farm in the state, which to me kind of speaks to the infrastructure that's already here in the region. When we came here looking to make plant-based foods, a lot of people understood it because they'd already been eating that way."

Nilaja Young* and Alisa Lawrence
KEENE & WINCHESTER
Co-owners, New England Sweetwater Farm and Distillery
**All answers from our interview with Nilaja*

Living here: "Originally, all of us are from Brooklyn, New York—my sister and I and our families. But the New England side of the family was here. Winchester was where our parents lived, and our cousin Robert Patton-Spruill founded the distillery there about eight years ago. In 2020 when Rob presented us with the chance to take over the business, we were like, of course we will, but there's no way we're going to live there! My sister and I were actually plotting how to stay in the city and trade two-week stints at the distillery. But soon we realized we had to be here all the time."

"We didn't think we'd adapt so quickly, even the children, too—they're happy to be able to be outdoors. In New York, there's really no outdoors anything, just buildings everywhere. Lots of traffic. But here, it's calm. The scenery is breathtaking. You can find all kinds of things to do in each season of the year. The area is really amenable to small businesses. It's just everything we didn't expect, you know?"

Perfect blend: "In my previous life, I worked in healthcare and later in pharmaceutical sales. My husband, who's one of the distillers, is a retired law enforcement officer. My sister and my brother-in-law were both in entertainment business for a long time. So we bring an array of different skills together, and we make it all work."

Winning attitude: "We kept getting these emails about participating in the San Francisco World Spirits Competition, so we said, all right, let's just do our gin and our single malt. And lo and behold, we get a silver and a bronze! And then we heard we got Best of Keene and Best of New Hampshire awards. It's humbling. We're very thankful, and you know, that's what we came for: We came to not just make a mark, but to bring something more to Winchester and the Monadnock Region."

Favorite local event: "Our family's favorite here in Winchester is the Pickle Festival. It's the weirdest, funniest, best thing, and let me tell you, the entire town comes out and then some. You can barely walk down the street. Amazing. And in Keene, it would be Taste of Keene. This will be the third year that we'll be participating, and it's so much fun. We have tastings of every single thing that we make, we always get a huge turnout, and the energy is great."

Advice for newcomers: "If you come from a city life and, you know, the hustle and bustle, be ready to slow down. It's a different pace here, and a very welcome pace, if I might say. We've slowed down a lot, and I am not mad about it!"

Christopher Myott
JAFFREY
Artist

Living here: "One of the beautiful things about the Monadnock Region is that it's not too different from when I was a kid growing up in Jaffrey, and where it has changed, it's generally for the better. That's one of the reasons I was inspired to get back here, because I've always felt Jaffrey is right on the cusp. It's accessible, young people can afford to move here—something great could happen at any moment here."

KELLY FLETCHER



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Meghan
Gould

Community connection: “When you’re young, you’re always itching to get out of your hometown and do something bigger. But after college and living in Boston, I started to develop an appreciation for how beautiful this area actually was, how it had been a safe place for an angsty teenager to grow up. And one of the things that got me excited about moving back was, there was a house for sale that we were really in love with, and when I called the Realtor she said, ‘Is this Chris Myott *the artist?*’ Turns out she was part of a women’s club that had given me a scholarship in high school, and she remembered me. That’s one of the beautiful things about your hometown: People genuinely root for you.”

Art inspiration: “What seems to resonate with people the most is when I paint the things that are the most genuine to me, things that are actually around me: the tools I’m using to fix my bike, the guitar pedals I’ve set up. The next logical thing was the mountain right in my backyard. I’d sort of avoided painting Monadnock when I was younger, because there was so much of [that art] and I didn’t quite have the style or the technique then to bring something new to it. But now feels like the right time. I actually have something to contribute to that view, and it’s exciting to me.”

Monadnock must-have: “The great coffee and amazing breakfast sandwiches at The Optimist Café, a new coffee shop in Jaffrey.”

Favorite local event: “The Thing in the Spring, which is a big three-day music event at Nova Arts in Keene. Some of the artists they get to come play are just incredible. Like Bonnie ‘Prince’ Billy, one of the greatest folk musicians of all time, was there—in Keene!”

Local hidden gem: “My favorite place to go skateboarding is a little DIY park in Francestown, kind of out in the middle of nowhere, that’s run by the kids who actually skateboard there. It’s a fantastic community of young people—self-motivated, free thinkers, nonconformists. When I see those kids at the skate park, it really gives me hope for the future.”

Meghan Gould
HANCOCK
Movement and ultra-running coach; founder/host of the podcast She Runs Ultras

Living here: “I was born in Nashua and raised in Peterborough, but I’ve moved all over: Connecticut, Boston, Burlington, Arizona. And I spent a number of years traveling the country for my former job [in marketing for Pepsi], seeing different cities and suburbs and rural communities, yet none of them truly felt like someplace where I would want to come

back and live. There’s an intangible quality to being here and living in the Monadnock Region, something I can’t necessarily put my finger on. I think that’s part of what makes it so great: Each person loves it for their own reason.”

Healthy change: “I played sports all the way through college, including four years of Division II softball, and I developed really nasty sciatic nerve pain on my right side. [Working through how to treat it] helped set me on this trajectory: getting certified as a personal trainer, then as a yoga teacher, and then coming full circle to becoming interested in running ultras. And I figured if I could coach myself into that, I could help other people do it, too. And now I have clients all over the world—I’m actually tracking a client of mine who’s running a race in Australia tomorrow!”

Go-to running trails: “Drummer Hill in Keene has quite a few options. The Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway. Pisgah State Park. But you can also link together routes in the little pockets of trails around here. I can leave my front door and be on a trail in five minutes.”

Monadnock must-have: “The non-dairy cheese from Nuttin Ordinary [now called Shire’s – Premium Plant-Based]. I first had it when they were still just supplying it to their chef friends, and then when it became available on store shelves, I was like, *Yes, this is amazing!* Whenever I’m responsible for a cheese plate at a get-together, I’ll always bring their stuff. It’s the first thing that gets eaten.”

Favorite local event: “Last year was our inaugural year for a revived Hancock Farmers’ Market, which I helped in organizing, and it was so well received that the community basically demanded we add more weeks. And now it runs every Thursday all the way up until mid-August, which takes us to the next event I love, Hancock Old Home Day. I’m a big fan of small-town events where you get to actually meet your neighbors and learn about things people are doing in the community, which is something you might not get at the bigger events.”

Nicholas Burns* and Louisa Stonehill
KEENE
Classical musicians; co-founders, Ashuelot Concerts
**All answers from our interview with Nicholas*

Living here: “We were living in London when Louisa got pregnant with our first son. The question was, *Well, we probably need to move out of the city—where are we going to move to?* We’re big outdoors people, and we wanted to live somewhere where we could hike and ski and counterbalance our incredibly intense professional life with something beautiful. I had visited New England as a teenager, and it had sort of seeped into my system. So I Googled ‘best small towns in New England’ and Louisa was dropping pins on Google Maps and looking around on Street View, and we turned to each other simultaneously and said, ‘Have you heard of this place called Keene?’”

Striking a chord: “We arrived and we knew no one, so in casting around for a performance venue we just rented the Redfern Arts Center at Keene State for three concerts, placed an ad in the shopper, and crossed our fingers.... [That first night] we’re thinking, *Oh my God, this is going to be a disaster.* And then [the staff] knocked on the dressing room door and said, ‘Yeah, we’re gonna be starting late because there’s this huge line out the door.’”

Child’s play: “[With Ashuelot Concerts] basically we’ve built what is now a major international chamber music series. And whatever we happen to be presenting on the concert stage, we take some of that into the schools to play it for the kids and see what happens. At the beginning it was fascinating, because it wasn’t just that they had never heard live classical music before, they really had no concept of what it is. It’s been a magical thing to see them respond.

“And I think part of why they respond so well is because we’re not patronizing them. We’re just saying, *This is something that we love doing and we want to share it with you. This is the real deal. And hopefully you’ll find something that you love this much, too.*”

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MONADNOCK VOICES

Favorite New Hampshire discovery: "This might make you laugh, but I'd say the American diner. And particularly Lindy's Diner in Keene. It's been a staple since we first arrived."

Local hidden gem: "If you paddle to the end of Nubanusit Lake you can portage into Spoonwood Pond, which is looked after by the Harris Center for Conservation Education, so it's totally protected. I don't think I've ever quite experienced tranquility like it."

Advice for newcomers: "Be patient. Because it gets under your skin, this place, but it can take longer than you expect. That's not to say we weren't instantly enthralled, but we're coming up on seven years this summer, and it took a little while to really experience all four seasons in a way where we could get into the rhythm of the year."

Aja Davis and Molly Ola Pinney

KEENE

Founder, *Becoming Exponential*; founder/CEO, Global Autism Project; co-founders of *White People. DOING Something*

Living here: [Molly] "Aja is from North Carolina, but I'm from Dublin, and in hindsight it was pretty special to grow up here. It was lovely to know people; it was lovely to be known and felt cared for by an entire community.... More generally, I find there's a peacefulness in this area not only in the natural surroundings, but also in the way people interact with each other."

[Aja] "We met in Brooklyn, where both of us had been living for quite some time. When Covid hit, we decided to come hang out in New Hampshire for a bit, maybe six months. And now it's been three years! We bought a house here; we're having a baby here. You could say we've become New Hampshirites."

Making change: [Aja] "In the midst of the pandemic, we also all experienced the murder of George Floyd. So Molly and I started a Facebook group called 'White People. DOING Something.' We wanted to create a space for people who truly wanted a different world but didn't know where to start and didn't know how to engage in those conversations. We thought, *Oh, this will be a group of our friends, maybe a few hundred people.* By the end of the week there were 5,000 people in the group; by two weeks there were over 10,000; and now we're up to more than 45,000. It really struck a chord."

"And that's informed a lot of our work over the past few years, too, with Molly running the Global Autism Project as her full-time job, and me doing life and business coaching [Becoming Exponential] that kind of sprung out of this whole movement that we created."

Community connections: [Aja] "As a newcomer I find this region to be surprisingly open, especially when it comes to having these conversations about diversity and inclusion. It's not instinctual, and we could bring more awareness to it, but generally people are open to it.... I do think having initiatives to entice small business owners [from diverse backgrounds] to the region would be wonderful."

[Molly] "[In terms of LGBTQ+ awareness] things have certainly changed since the '90s! I think one of first events we went to after Covid was a drag show at the Colonial Theatre. And I'll say that our experience [getting ready to have a baby] at Monadnock Community Hospital has been nothing but amazing. When we toured the OB unit, they asked, 'Oh, and how do you know each other?' And we said, 'We're married.' And they were just like, 'OK.'"

Most anticipated local debut: [Molly] "The Keene Dog Park! A dog park felt like a very big missing piece when we first arrived and had a new puppy. So we sorted out who was in charge of this dog park operation and we joined the committee and we're making it happen."

[Aja] "You really can effect the change that you want to see here. It feels like you can have a real impact on the community, as opposed to some places where it feels almost impossible to get anything done. Here, it's like, 'You want to start a dog park? Let's figure out who we need to talk to.' You can go and meet with businesses and people, and they actually care and want to be supportive." ■

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The Keene Swamp Bats in action at Alumni Field in Keene. BELOW: A sweet scoop at Jaffrey's Kimball Farm.

KID CENTRAL

Bring the whole family to this part of New Hampshire, and you'll find lots to keep little ones happy. Here are 10 ideas to get you started.

1 Get to know adorable barnyard animals at The Friendly Farm.

Founded in 1965, the Dublin farm is home to "some of the most agreeable animals you'll ever meet," from bunnies and chicks to goats and horses, and most are happy to eat right out of your hand.

2 See small wonders at The Caterpillar Lab.

This Marlborough-based

education and research nonprofit hosts special open hours for the public, when you can come see what happens behind the scenes and get an up-close look at caterpillars of all stripes.

3 Cheer for the home team at a Keene Swamp Bats game.

Head to Alumni Field to see one of the top teams in the New England Collegiate



Baseball League in action, honoring the proud tradition of baseball in Keene all summer long. (Be sure to say hi to team mascot Ribby!)

4 Create the sweetest of memories at Jaffrey's Kimball Farm.

Nothing says summer like a cone or cup of homemade ice

cream, which you'll find in abundance here—more than 50 flavors in all—along with fried seafood and a country store gift shop.

5 Get revved up for action at the Monadnock Speedway.

Have a kid that likes to go-go-go? Hit the road for

COURTESY OF KEENE SWAMP BATS; IAN ALDRICH (KIMBALL FARM)



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A young biker finds the Cheshire Rail Trail is exactly her speed. BELOW: A hands-on play space at the Cheshire Children's Museum in Keene.

Winchester, where your budding Jeff Gordon can take in all the fast-paced excitement on the quarter-mile oval at this “mini Daytona.”

6 Play and learn at the Cheshire Children's Museum.

Hands-on exhibits and imaginative play spaces—including a kid-size grocery store, post office, and radio station—will delight young visitors while also giving them some prime bonding time with their parents, all right in the heart of Keene.

7 Chase a hole-in-one at Twinkle Town.

A go-to for old-fashioned family fun since 1961, Twinkle Town in Swanzey offers 19 holes of mini golf at less than 5 bucks per person (and just

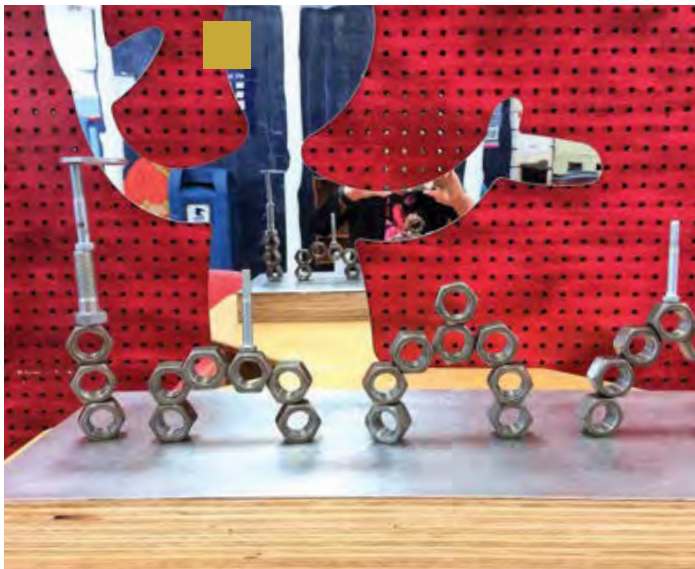
50 cents for replays). There's batting cages, too, and a snack stand that sells everything from pizza and hot dogs to Thai iced tea and homemade ice cream.

8 Explore the fields and forests at Stonewall Farm.

Known for its award-winning children's camps year-round, this 120-acre learning center and working farm in Keene invites visitors to hike and bike across its beautiful property, as well as visit the farm animals, picnic, and shop at the farm store.

9 Hit the slopes at Granite Gorge Mountain Park.

Recently reopened for the first time since 2020, Roxbury's classic ski area has downhill winter fun for all ages (its snow-tubing hill is a particular



hit with wee ones). Plus, look for a new lift-service bike park to debut this summer.

10 Hop a rail trail for kid-friendly biking.

Mostly level and often paved, rail trails are perfect for little

legs. Among the scenic but non-strenuous options are the Cheshire, Ashuelot, Fort Hill, Hillsborough, Greenville, and Monadnock Rail Trails. For links and a map, go to: nhstateparks.org/find-parks-trails/recreational-rail-trails ■

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OUT & ABOUT

From downtown festivals to farm tours and open studios, there's always something exciting to do in the Monadnock Region.



Northlands Music and Arts Festival, Swanzey

July 2023

22 Wilton Street Fair & Sidewalk Sales:

Shopping and dining deals for grownups and lots of fun for kids: face painting, a bouncy house, a magic show, crafts, and treats galore. *Wilton; wiltonchamber.com*

23 MacDowell Medal Day:

Join resident artists on MacDowell's verdant grounds for the awarding of the Edward MacDowell Medal to esteemed filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin, plus a picnic lunch and open studios. *Peterborough; macdowell.org*

26-30 Keene Wizzarding Week:

Back for its third year and bigger than ever, with magic-

themed sweets, treats, and events as downtown Keene transforms into Diagon Alley. *Keene; Facebook*

29 RiverFest: Enjoy a day of fun along the Contoocook River. Artisan fair, local food, entertainment, free hands-on activities for children, and a chance to win a kayak. *Jaffrey; teamjaffrey.org/riverfest.html*

30 Taste of Monadnock & Beyond: The Woodbound Inn hosts this food-and-wine fundraiser for Shelter From the Storm featuring live music, raffles, and tastings from local wineries, restaurants, and brewers. *Rindge; shelterfromthestormnh.org*

August 2023

3-6 Cheshire Fair: Classic family fun: carnival rides and midway, truck and tractor pulls, farm animal shows, a demolition derby, and live entertainment. *Swanzey; cheshirefair.org*

5 Wyman Tavern Brew Fest:

Sample some of the region's finest craft beers and spirits at Keene's historic Wyman Tavern; proceeds support the Historical Society of Cheshire County. *Keene; hscnh.org*

11 Night Market: A celebration of the energy and creativity of the Monadnock Region, with light displays, music, food, and art. *Peterborough; maxtmakerspace.org/night-market*

19 Monadnock Farm Tour & After Party:

Get a look at the day-to-day lives of farmers working to bring food to our tables at this "open farm" tour, followed by a get-together at the Outlaw Brewing Company in Winchester. *Various locations; mfcommunitycoalition.org*

September 2023

2 Keene Music Festival: One of the region's largest free music festivals, with 60-plus bands in a variety of genres playing on stages throughout downtown Keene. *Keene; Facebook*

2-3 Art in the Park: Ashuelot River Park comes alive with beautiful paintings,

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Pickle Festival, Winchester
Clarence DeMar. *Keene; clarenceanmar.com*

photographs, pottery, and other inspired creations as artists from around the Monadnock Region and beyond gather to display and sell their work. *Keene; monadnockartists.org*

8-10 Dublin Gas Engine Show: The largest event of its kind in New England celebrates antique tractors, vehicles, and working engines that were once tools of the trade from years gone by. *Dublin; dublinhgasenginemeet.com*

9-10 River Valley Artisans Wine & Art Tour: Poocham Hill Winery and Summit Winery are the destinations for oenophiles and art lovers this weekend as they host a wealth of local art and crafts, from painted canvas rugs to art photography to leatherwork. *Westmoreland; rivervalleyartisans.com*

9-17 Keene Pride Week: Now in its second year, this celebration of the region's LGBTQ+ community features live music, kids' activities, food trucks, and more, culminating in Pride Fest in Central Square on Sunday. *Keene; keenepride.org*

16 Oktoberfest: Head to



Night Market, Peterborough
Stonewall Farm for a taste of German food and beer, plus stein-hoisting contests, oompah music, hay rides, and all manner of family fun. *Keene; stonewallfarm.org/events/oktoberfest*

22-23 Antrim Home & Harvest Festival: A great fall festival filled with all the essentials: food, music, a parade, fireworks, an ice cream social, arts and crafts, and kids' games. *Antrim; Facebook*

23 Keene International Festival: Returning for its fifth year, this vibrant multicultural event offers international

performances, food, crafts, and activities at the Keene Recreation Center. *Keene; keeneinternationalfestival.org*

23 Winchester Pickle Festival: It's pickles, pickles, everywhere in Winchester's signature downtown event, complete with a pickle-eating contest and a pickle parade. *Winchester; winchesternhpicklefestival.org*

24 Clarence DeMar Marathon: Lace up your sneakers or get ready to cheer on the runners at the 45th anniversary of this race honoring Keene's seven-time Boston Marathon champ and Olympic medalist

Clarence DeMar. *Keene; clarenceanmar.com*

27-28 Radically Rural Summit: Overflowing with inspiration, ideas, connections, and tools to build sustainable, thriving rural communities. Sessions spread throughout downtown Keene. *Keene; radicallyrural.org*

29-1 Monadnock International Film Festival: Three days of the best independent regional, domestic, and international films; see website for venues and details. Online festival Oct. 3-12. *Keene; moniff.org*

October 2023

7-9 Monadnock Art Open Studios Tour: Get up close with 70-plus painters, sculptors, and other artists in the towns surrounding Mount Monadnock during New Hampshire's oldest and largest artist studio tour. *Various locations; monadnockart.org*

TBD Keene Pumpkin Festival: A community-based and family-friendly celebration of fall, with pumpkin-themed merriment throughout. The tower of lighted jack-o-lanterns is a highlight not to be missed. *Keene; pumpkinfestival.org*

November 2023

TBD Monadnock Region Natural History Conference: Backyard naturalists are welcome to join scientists, land managers, educators, and students in a full day devoted to local natural history topics. *Keene; harriscenter.org/conservation-research/monadnock-region-natural-history-conference*

TBD Kristallnacht Remembrance: Presented each year by the Cohen Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Keene State College and the Colonial Performing Arts Center, this annual event brings the community together to commemorate the events of

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November 9, 1938, also known as the “Night of Broken Glass.” *Keene; keene.edu/academics/cchgs/events/kristallnacht*

December 2023

9 Currier & Ives Cookie Tour: B&Bs and inns, restaurants, shops, and historical societies open their doors to the public to share homemade holiday cookies in this delicious charity fundraiser. *Various locations; currierandivescookie tour.com*

TBA Lantern Festival: Peterborough’s Putnam Park fills with lighted art installations, and residents join in a parade carrying colorful paper lanterns of all shapes and sizes. *Peterborough; childrenandthearts.org/annual-lantern-festival*

TBD Hannukah Menorah

Lighting: While towns across the Monadnock Region have long held annual Christmas tree lightings, last year marked the start of a new tradition in Keene: the lighting of a menorah on Central Square to celebrate Hanukkah. *Keene; keenesynagogue.org*

January 2024

TBD Winter Frolic: Planning is still under way for this community get-together on Norway Pond, but past highlights have included a snowman-building contest and a “snowball strikeout” game. *Hancock; hancocknh.org/recreation-committee*

February 2024

TBD Ice & Snow Festival: Ice carvers work their magic in downtown Keene alongside events and activities such as a scavenger hunt, snow sliding, sugar on snow, and hot cocoa and s’mores. *Keene; Facebook*

TBD Wilton Winter Festival: Wilton’s town green becomes a winter wonderland of ice



Keene Pride Week

sculptures and family activities. *Wilton; wiltonchamber.com*

April 2024

6-7 Keene Home Expo: Over 100 builders, roofers, and other pros will gather at Keene Ice, so bring your renovation ideas and come talk to the experts. *Keene; homebuildersassocwnh.com/keene-home-expo*

May 2024

TBD The Thing in the Spring: Musicians from across New England and beyond take the stage at Nova Arts for this three-day festival, which also offers readings and art installations around town. *Keene; novaarts.org/thething*

TBD Children and the Arts Festival: A beloved annual (and free) festival celebrating art by, for, and with children in the heart of Peterborough. *Peterborough; childrenandthearts.org*

June 2024

1-2 Monadnock Community & Business Expo: Large and small businesses and nonprofits from around the region set up shop at Keene Ice and invite the public to come explore their products and services. *Keene; monadnockbusinessexpo.com*

TBD Northlands Music and Arts Festival: Enjoy tunes from national touring acts and regional rising stars in a jam-packed weekend. Other highlights: installation art, performance art, food trucks, beer garden, local artisans. *Swanzey; northlandslive.com*



Gilsum Rock Swap and Mineral Show

TBD Taste of Keene: Local restaurants, food producers, breweries, and distilleries get their chance to shine as Central Square and part of Main Street turn into a pedestrian-only zone for strolling and sampling. *Keene; keeneypn.com*

TBD Keene ArtWalk: Take a self-guided tour around town as artists partner with local shops to set up “galleries” for their creations. *Keene; monadnockartsalive.org/keene-artwalk*

TBD Gilsum Rock Swap and Mineral Show: Over 60 dealers and swappers with gems, jewelry, and minerals for sale or trade. Plus: hands-on activities and a chicken BBQ. *Gilsum; gilsum.org/rockswap*

TBA Wilton Summerfest: The Lions Club rubber ducky drop is a joyful staple of this family event, along with a pancake breakfast, fireworks, street vendors, and more. *Wilton; visitwilton.com/summerfest* ■

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