

MIXOLOGY

20+

Reasons to Taste Vermont in the Fall

Pairing the Sights and Spirits
of the Green Mountain State

Written by Bill Burke



CHANGE CAN BE GOOD — ESPECIALLY WHEN IT MEANS THE ANNUAL TRANSFORMATION OF VERMONT'S STUNNING VISTAS IS UNDERWAY.

The autumn colors that paint the landscape this time of year can be breathtaking, even for lifelong Vermonters. With thick forests covering nearly three-quarters of the entire state and the highest percentage of maple trees in the country, the state's fall colors are renowned. And the time to plan for your foliage tour is now. Vermont's peak foliage can start in the northernmost reaches of the state by mid-September and depending on soil conditions, rainfall and temperature, among other elements, and work its way southward into the valleys by mid to late October.

There's plenty to see and do, of course, but add a tour of the state's distilleries and Vermont becomes a must-do destination. Visitors touring the state can add a number of such stops to their itinerary, getting a close-up look (and taste) of some of the locally produced whiskey, gin and liqueurs.

NORTHERN VERMONT

From the mountains and islands across to Stowe and into the Northeast Kingdom, a ride through the uppermost reaches of the state will give visitors the earliest start on the most colorful time of year. A loop around this region will take you from Hardwick to St. Johnsbury, around the Willoughby State Forest to Derby and then across Route 105 to Jay. Among the distilleries along the way:

Caledonia Spirits

116 Gin Lane, Montpelier • caledoniaspirits.com

This producer of the well-loved Barr Hill Gins opened the doors to its new multi-million dollar distillery this past summer, quintupling the size of its former location in Hardwick. Leaf-peepers can stop in at the visitor's center to get an in-depth look at how these honey-based spirits come to life.

Wild Hart Distillery

26 Sage Court, Shelburne • wildhartdistillery.com

Adhering to an 'aggressively Vermont' ethos, Wild Hart produces a range of spirits that could only come from the Green Mountain State. Wild Hart's Vermont Classic Gin fuses the bright, floral spirit with Runamok's Makrut Lime-Leaf Maple Syrup, and its Burn-

ing Embers is a festive spirit and a contemporary take on a traditional Swedish beverage to be enjoyed after skiing, show shoeing or coming in from a winter's walk.

Smugglers' Notch Distillery

276 South Vermont 108, Cambridge
smugglersnotchdistillery.com

Producing a variety of spirits ranging from gins and whiskeys to rums and bourbons, Smugglers' Notch has been providing guests with top-notch sippers for years. But recently, its vodka caught the eye of a few experts and enthusiasts. Smugglers' Notch Vodka was chosen as one of the top ten vodka distilleries in the country in USA Today's Best Readers' Choice Awards.

Also worth a stop along your route:

Boyden Valley Winery and Spirits

64 Vt-104, Cambridge • boydenvalley.com

Green Mountain Distillers

171 Whiskey Run, Morristown • greendistillers.com

Hooker Mountain Farm Distillery

1193 Lovely Road, Cabot • hookermountainfarm.com
Tasting at Marshfield Village Store, 1425 US-2

St. Johnsbury Distillery

1350 Main St., St. Johnsbury • stjdistillery.com

CENTRAL

Plunge into the Green Mountain National Forest for an immersive, vivid look at the season's colors while touring sites in Hubbardton, Poultney, Dorset and Manchester. Among the roadways that provide an ideal touring itinerary, the Stone Valley Byway gives travelers an unspoiled look at the central portion of the state, where they'll find historic villages, rolling pastures and thick forests. Of course, there are some top-notch distilleries to visit in this portion of the state.

WhistlePig Distillery

11 Cabin Lane (just off Route 100), Waterbury
whistlepigwhiskey.com

The tasting room in Waterbury is conveniently (and perfectly) located between the Ben & Jerry's factory and Vermont Artisan Coffee & Tea Co. — creating a trio of attractions that make any stop-off productive and rewarding. It's there you can take in a vista of rolling

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Tasting Tour

Here's a list of the Vermont Distilled Spirits Council's Tasting Tour members. Call to confirm tour hours and availability.

1 Appalachian Gap Distillery

88 Mainelli Rd., Middlebury
appalachiangap.com
(802) 989-7362

2 Boyden Valley Spirits

A) 64 VT Rte. 104, Cambridge
B) At Cold Hollow Cider Mill
Waterbury Center
boydenvalley.com
(802) 644-8151

3 Caledonia Spirits

116 Gin Lane, Montpelier
caledoniaspirits.com
(802) 472-8000

4 St. Johnsbury Distillery

1350 Main St., St. Johnsbury
stjdistillery.com
(802) 748-8868

5 Flag Hill Farm

135 Ewing Rd., Vershire
flaghillfarm.com
(802) 685-7724

6 Green Mountain Distillers

171 Whiskey Run, Morrisville
greenmountaindistillers.com
(802) 253-0064

7 Hell's Gate Distillery

6293 Ethan Allen Hwy., Georgia
hellsgatedistillery.com
(802) 922-4047

8 Hooker Mountain Farm Distillery

Tasting room located in Marshfield Village Store, 1425 US-2, Marshfield
hookermountainfarm.com
(802) 426-2052

9 Mad River Distillers

A) 137 St. Paul St., Burlington
B) 89 Mad River Green, Waitsfield
madriverdistillers.com
(802) 496-6973

10 Putney Mountain Winery

8 Bellows Falls Rd., Putney
putneywine.com
(802) 387-5925

11 Saxtons Distillery

485 West River Rd., Brattleboro
saxtonsdistillery.com
(802) 246-1128

12 Shelburne Orchards Distillery

216 Orchard Rd., Shelburne
shelburneorchards.com
(802) 985-2753

13 SILO Distillery

3 Artisans Way, Windsor
silodistillery.com
(802) 674-4220

14 Smugglers' Notch Distillery

A) 276 Main St., Jeffersonville
B) 2657 Waterbury Stowe Rd., Waterbury Center
C) 28 Church St., Burlington
smugglersnotchdistillery.com
(802) 309-3077

15 Stonecutter Spirits

1197 Exchange St., Middlebury
stonecutterspirits.com
(802) 388-3000

16 Vermont Distillers

A) 7627 Vermont Rte. 9, West Marlboro
B) 28 Church St, Burlington
vermontdistillers.com
(802) 464-2003

17 Vermont Spirits

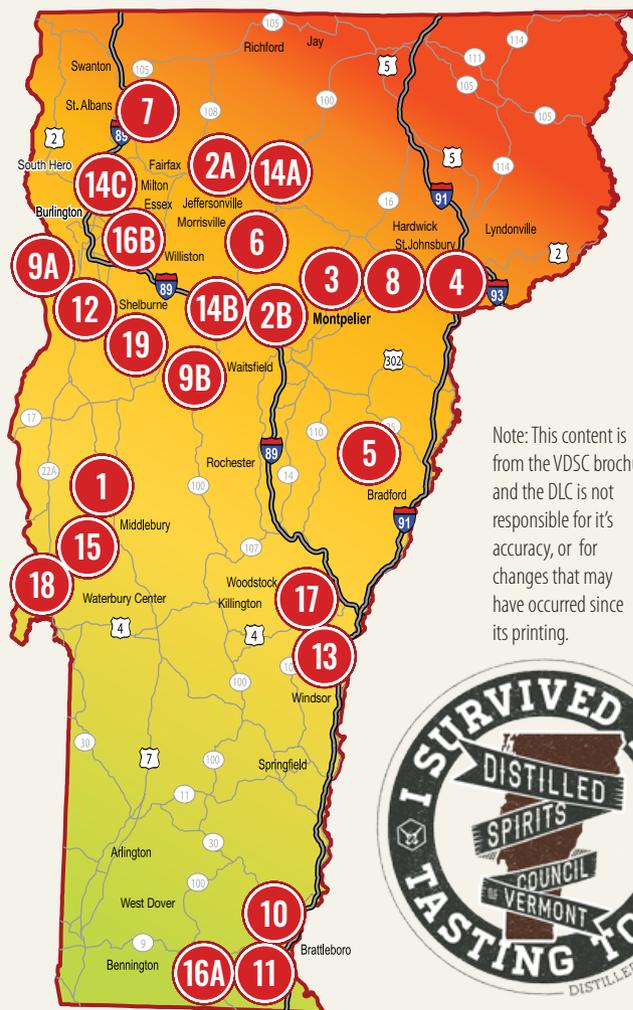
5573 Woodstock Rd., Quechee
vermontspirits.com
(802) 281-6398

18 WhistlePig Farm

11 Cabin Lane, off Route 100
Waterbury Center
whistlepigrye.com
(802) 897-7700

19 Wild Hart Distillery

26 Sage Court, Shelburne
wildhartdistillery.com
(802) 489-5067



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TAKE THE TOUR, SCORE THE T-SHIRT

The Vermont Distilled Spirits Council, a non profit association made up of 20 of the state's spirits producers, was created in 2011 to help develop and promote the state's rapidly growing craft spirits industry. Its first successful initiative was working together to change state laws to increase sales of spirits at individual distilleries. Now, the group wants visitors to taste what each distillery has to offer: spirits of every kind for every palate. Visitors can pick up a Tasting Tour passport at any member distillery (or download one from distilledvermont.org). The passport serves as a guide to distilleries across the state and is stamped at each stop. A completed passport earns its stalwart owner an "I conquered the Tasting Tour" t-shirt.

fields and forests that surround the long, red, barn-like facility, and sample one of the most esteemed rye whiskeys in the country. Bottled at 100 proof, it famously offers flavors of vanilla, caramel and, of course, rye spice, with an allspice and cardamom finish.

Mad River Distillers

89 Mad River Green, Waitsfield • madriverdistillers.com

A variety of craft spirits are born at Mad River's Cold Spring Farm in Warren, but you'll want to stop in at the Mad River Tasting Place, located right on the bustling Mad River Green. The team produced its first-ever offering, Mad River First Run Rum in 2013, and followed it up with more than a half dozen different spirits since then, including its flagship Mad Apple Brandy.

Vermont Spirits Distilling Co.

5573 Woodstock Road, Quechee

Get a look at the stills and the production area and spend some time in the comfortable retail shop where you can taste the wide variety of spirits available — including the ideal Vermont autumn sipper: No. 14 Bourbon. This whiskey unites a pair of American classics — bourbon and pure Vermont maple syrup.

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1800

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Also worth a stop along your route:

SILO Distillery

3 Artisans Way, Windsor • silodistillery.com

Appalachian Gap Distillery

88 Mainelli Road, Suite 1, Middlebury
appalachiangap.com

Stonecutter Spirits

1197 Exchange St., Unit A, Middlebury
stonecutterspirits.com

SOUTHERN

Wind your way south later in the season to visit classic New England villages from Manchester to Bennington to Brattleboro, and make some time to visit Mount Snow where you can take the Bluebird Express chair lift for a bird's eye view of the seasonal changes. Of course, it will all culminate perfectly with a sip or two of some local spirits.

Putney Mountain Winery

8 Bellows Falls Road, Putney
putneymountainwinery.com

Stop-in for a true taste of southern Vermont. Try the Simply Maple - apple brandy mixed with maple syrup, or the Vermont Cassis — a richly flavorful and aromatic spirit that's both tart and sweet. Created from a blend of locally-grown fruit, it features an intense, complex flavor and a blackcurrant finish.

Vermont Distillers

7755 Route 9, West Marlboro • vermontdistillers.com

Located in southern Vermont's Deerfield Valley, a visit to Vermont Distillers will put you in the home of the Metcalfe's family of liqueurs. The Maple Cream Liqueur, made with 100% pure Vermont maple syrup and fresh cream, has become a homing beacon for visitors to the Green Mountain State. Just set your inner GPS for the former Hogback Ski Area base lodge (look off to the side of the Molly Stark Trail for an amazing view into the valley), and you've found it.

Saxtons Distillery

485 West River Road, Brattleboro • saxtonsdistillery.com

Brattleboro is a quintessential New England destination with a traditional and sometimes quirky vibe. In other words: a perfect autumn destination. Take a colorful hike through the nine-mile Retreat Trail and then reward yourself with a visit to Saxton's Distillery, where you'll find a tempting array of liqueurs — from the Maple Bourbon and Maple Liqueur, to the Snowdrop American Dry Gin, Perc Coffee Liqueur and Sapling Maple Rye. All of it, of course, captures the terroir of this southern Vermont distiller.

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DEPARTMENT OF LIQUOR AND LOTTERY
DIVISION OF LIQUOR CONTROL

 **DRIVE SOBER OR
GET PULLED OVER**



For a comprehensive foliage tour map, visit visit-vermont.com and vermontvacation.com

MORE HAPPY TRAILS AWAIT...

DigIn VT

Ever since two guys named Ben and Jerry opened an ice cream shop in an old gas station on St. Paul Street in downtown Burlington, Vermont has been recognized as a "foodie" destination. Visitors can now connect to the state's agriculture and culinary tourism experiences with a single click, thanks to DigIn VT.

A project of the Vermont Agriculture and Culinary Tourism Council, DigIn VT is an interactive website connecting visitors and Vermonters to Vermont distilleries, wineries and breweries as well as farmers' markets, food markets, food stands and more.

Visit diginvt.com for more information.

The Middlebury Tasting Trail

The idyllic town of Middlebury, nestled in the Champlain Valley, is a cultural and intellectual hub, a recreational playground, and home to world-famous Middlebury College. It's also home to a vibrant distilling, brewing and wine industry — and, now, the Middlebury Tasting Trail, which includes a number of distilleries and brewers. Visit online at middtastingtrail.com for more information.

ON THE COVER

Pear Gin & Tonic *Makes 2 servings*

- ½ ripe pear, cut into small chunks
- ¼ cup elderflower liqueur
- ½ cup Barr Hill Gin or Smugglers' Notch Gin
- Ice
- Tonic water
- 2 mint sprigs, for garnish
- 2 slices of pear, for garnish

In the bottom of a cocktail shaker, place the pear, elderflower liqueur and gin. Muddle to get some of the pear to break up and release some of its juice. Add ice and shake vigorously. Strain into two rocks glasses and top with tonic water. Garnish with mint sprig and pear. Serve immediately. ☹

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