

NEW ENGLAND EXPERIENCE

Biased Expectations Make Way For Great Destinations

By Steve Stoyke

As a college kid in Minneapolis who simply could not afford a car, learning how to ride a motorcycle brought a world of discovery and freedom that I never thought possible.

However, for me, the utility of riding continued to dominate my time on two wheels. I've traveled extensively for my job, but all that time owning and riding a motorcycle for much of it. In recent years, however, I've tried to focus more on the pleasure of riding, and have tried to visit places that didn't involve work.

What I learn is that my assumptions were formed with prejudices based on what I read or heard. When I've taken the time to experience an area first-hand, I'm usually surprised at what I find.

For example, I could expound on the beauty of the West in Colorado, or the thousands of lakes throughout the northern Midwest, but for this seasoned biker, nothing can compare to the innocence, the variety and the culture of the southern Vermont's Green Mountain area and its roadways.

On North

As I pass through Hoosick, N.Y., I notice stores welcoming me to Vermont. I see the many chainsaw sculpture galleries along Route 7 leading into Bennington, with the Vermont logo of untouched or unmolested America.

Soon, the tourist in me makes way for the biker. The road becomes a smaller two-lane blacktop with mountain views on both sides. As you enter Vermont, the landscape's demeanor changes. There are clean, broad roads that smell of fresh air. Litter and signs disappear, and it is easy to navigate at any speed toward my destination: the Aerie Inn of Vermont.

As I continued riding, I bypass Bennington, Vt., on 279 and reconnect with Route 7 north. Within a few short miles the terrain changes from rolling hills to green mountains carved with perfectly banked roads.

Roughly 1 mile past the small gas station of East Dorset I barely see the sign on the right that tells me to take the next right onto Bowen Hill Road for the Aerie Inn.

Bowen Hill Road is an unassuming small lane off of Route 7 that glides up a tree-lined drive. It opens up to a vast 20-acre meadow. The inn is surrounded on all sides by the mountains, and there are no other structures within view. For a

traveler seeking security, privacy and ample parking, this is it.

I find out the owners are motorcyclists, and as fellow riders, they already know me before I put the kickstand down. After checking in, I'm recommended a variety of restaurants for dinner. I opt for a place in Manchester, have a great meal and stop by the local bookstore to pick up a motorcycle magazine.

The next morning, after a complementary continental breakfast, I take advantage of the owners' local knowledge. They suggest a ride north to Route 30 and a little area known as Pawlets. The ride itself is unbelievable. The forests are so dense they go straight up on both sides of the roads, crowned by massive mountains that are highlighted by the clarity of the surrounding skies.

At my day's destination, I discover something I have never seen after despite travels all over the United States and Canada: a hardware/dry goods

store built over a water fall with a floor open to the raging rapids below. I browse the establishment, but remain captivated by this small store with a waterfall running under it.

This area offers a number of great experiences and routes. Some roads reflect isolated Victorian villages where nothing appears to have changed since the American Revolution. Others lead to more modern experiences, such as the Dam Diner in Towshend—a must-try. Another great ride is Hogback Road. Just east of Jeffersonville and spanning Routes 109 and 15. Its destination is another colorful local establishment punctuated by views that span three states.

My days taking weeklong trips to a beach or on a cruise were nice, but for me they no longer provide enough life experience to matter. Superb is the road less traveled. I may work and compromise like everyone else, but thanks to my motorcycle, I enjoy a biker life of roaming.

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