

New England Travel



Red Quill cabin (front) and Little Lyford Lodge (rear) in Maine's North Woods.

WHERE MOOSE AND HARE WANDER THE FOREST

BRIAN IRWIN
FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

BY BRIAN IRWIN | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT



REENVILLE, Maine — The terminal stretch of the Appalachian Trail in northern Maine is a wild tract of land. Known as the 100-mile Wilderness, this stretch of verdant forest traverses a chunk of territory with no towns, stores, or paved roads. It's a place where animals wander the forest, gin-clear mountain streams thread the valley floors, and the snow piles deep. In the middle of this wilderness rest the Little Lyford Lodge and Cabins.

Established in 1874 as an outpost for loggers working this faraway forest, the camps have since become more of a sporting retreat for those seeking fishing in the summer, cross-country skiing in the winter, and relaxation year round. The camps have changed hands about 10 times over the years, eventually being procured by the Appalachian Mountain Club in 2003. The AMC has systematically secured more than 66,000 acres of wilderness in the 100-mile section of land in an effort to conserve it for future generations, a project known as the Maine Woods Initiative. The group also established a system of more than 80 miles of ski and hiking trails that laces through a series of ponds and alongside roiling rivers.

LYFORD, Page M9

Viewfinder

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Look at the cattle barn, the white birches, the black pond, and the oxen, walking with a stately gait across a snowy landscape, to the ice house and back. It is easy to feel the sharp, cold air of a different century. Then kids dressed in neon pink or purple, with peace signs or princesses on their fleeces, come tumbling by, reminding you that you're at the Remick Country Doctor Museum & Farm in Tamworth, N.H.,

and that today is the annual ice harvesting day.

The children help saw and chop blocks of ice from the pond, shovel the sawdust, and walk in the deepest snow. Country doctors Edwin Remick, and his son, Edwin Crafts Remick, between them cared for Tamworth's residents for 99 years. When the younger Remick died in 1993 at 89, he left their homes and the working farm to the public.

BY MICHELE MCDONALD | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT



When winter turns you blue...

By Diane Bair
and Pamela Wright
GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

Gray days, historic blizzards, and polar vortexes: Winter in New England is way too long. Stop your wallowing, and do something about it. These feel-good places serve up the perfect elixir to chase your blues away.



P. WRIGHT FOR THE GLOBE

LAUGHTER IS MEDICINE

There's no arguing it's good for you; studies show that a good belly laugh relaxes muscles, relieves tensions, and boosts your immune system. While HBO specials are fine, there's nothing like a live stand-up performance to get your giggles going. We like the intimate, high-energy vibe at **COMIX at Foxwoods** (350 Trolley Line Blvd., Mashantucket, Conn., 860-312-5050, www.comixatfoxwoods.com, prices vary), where the tables are tight and the talent is loose. The premier club, located in the Grand Pequot Tower, draws some Comedy Central headliners, along with a slew of side-splitting, unfiltered amateurs, who feed off the energy of the packed audience. Stand-up shows are featured most Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings, including the Saturday late night Nasty Show, not recommended for the easily offended or quick to blush. A double-the-price VIP ticket will get you a front-row seat on a cushy leather couch, but no matter where you're perched, the stage is mere steps



WELLESLEY COLLEGE



SPA AT STOWFLAKE

No blues at (top) L. A. Burdick chocolates, Comix at Foxwoods, Wellesley College's Greenhouse, or the Spa at Stowflake.

WINTER, Page M9

To redo your color in the cold

► WINTER

Continued from Page M8

away, and an attentive staff is on hand to take your food (think: chips and dip and cheeseburger sliders) and drink orders (there's a two-drink minimum). Upcoming shows will feature Tom Cotter, a second-place winner on "America's Got Talent"; Lil Rel, a semifinalist on NBC's "Last Comic Standing"; and Donnell Rawlings, a TV and film star and Comedy Central regular.

LET THE LIGHT SHINE IN

Lusting for warm temperatures and lush scenery? Stop pining and head to the **Tropical Forest** at the **Franklin Park Zoo** (1 Franklin Park, 617-541-5466, www.zoonewengland.org, adult \$17.95, children ages 2-12 \$11.95), a balmy, 72-degree oasis filled with leafy plants and gushing waterfalls. You won't be alone in this warm, verdant venue; the forest is home to western lowland gorillas, ring-tailed lemurs, ocelots, Baird's tapirs, a giant anteater, and lots of colorful birds. Nothing says summer like your first butterfly sighting. No need to wait; a stop at **The Butterfly Place** (120 Tyngsboro Road, Westford, 978-392-0955, butterflyplace-ma.com, adults \$12.50, ages 3-12 \$8.50) will surely put you in that summer state of mind. The brightly lighted indoor garden reopened

on Valentine's Day, showcasing hundreds, and up to 50 different species, of fluttering, brightly-hued butterflies. The sun-splashed conservatories at **Margaret C. Ferguson Greenhouses at Wellesley College** (106 Central St., Wellesley, 781-283-3094, www.wellesley.edu, free) will transport you to warmer climes — no plane ticket required. The 16 steamy, plant-filled houses showcase more than 1,000 plant specimens from the dry deserts of Mexico to the misty rain forests of Africa, Malaysia, and Brazil. Step into the dry Desert House to see an array of cacti and succulents getting ready for their spring bloom. The Tropic House is a jungle of vines, aerial roots and soaring palms.

CHEW ON YOUR MISERIES

You know the saying: When the going gets tough, the tough eat chocolate. There's scientific evidence that eating chocolate can boost serotonin levels and stimulate the hypothalamus (the part of the brain responsible for pleasing sensations). Forget the science, we know from experience that eating chocolate is a sure-fire blues buster. No wonder we love the chocolate-infused, happy stupor induced on a guided tour of Back Bay's finest chocolate shops and bakeries, offered by **Boston Chocolate Tours** (617-971-8436, www.bostonchocolatetours.com, \$48). "Rule number one: There will be no chocolate left behind," our guide, Victoria Kichuk, announced at the beginning of the tour. Fat chance of that, we thought. The 2½-hour tour included seven stops. We started with chocolate cookies from

award-winning **Flour**, made with high-quality Chuao chocolate. From there we went on to eat impossibly cute, handmade white chocolate mice at **L. A. Burdick**, creamy cookie ice cream at **Ben & Jerry's**, Swiss champagne truffles at **Teuscher**, and double chocolate cupcakes at **Sweet Cupcakes**. The wind was whipping and temps were in the single digits, but we soldiered from one place to the next in bliss. By the time we reached our last stop, the **Gourmet Boutique**, filled with high-quality chocolates from around the world, we were almost nearing our saturation point. Almost.

PUT IT IN PERSPECTIVE

The still-wild scenery of northern Maine is sure to dwarf and dwindle your problems in a hurry. Check into the **Lodge at Moosehead Lake** (368 Lily Bay Road, Greenville, Maine, 800-825-6977, www.lodgeatmooseheadlake.com, \$259-\$399 for 1- or 2-person occupancy including gourmet breakfast), in sight of Maine's largest lake and in the shadows of Mount Katahdin. At your doorstep are hundreds of icy lakes and ponds, miles of shoreline, and acres of dense, snow-covered forest. The Lodge offers a slew of guided activities to get your endorphins rushing, including cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, ice fishing, and dogsledding, all of which will get your heart pumping, blood flowing, and adrenaline pumping. Best part is you won't have the energy or inclination to worry about a thing after playing in Maine's North Woods.

PAMPER YOURSELF

The snow-capped Green Mountains of Vermont are gorgeous, especially if you're gazing at them while soaking in the warm Hungarian mineral bath at the **Spa at Stowe** (1746 Mountain Road, Stowe, Vt., 802-760-1083, www.stowe-flake.com). The award-winning spa is an oasis of warmth, with cozy lounges, steam baths, saunas, hot waterfalls, and a roster of balmy, relaxing, and hydrating treatments. We almost feel sorry for those poor folks in Miami or Oahu. While a hot stone massage feels good anytime, it really hits the mark when the mercury drops. You can't go wrong here, but the spa is especially known for its Ayurvedic treatments. One of the best is the Abhyanga massage, an intensely warming, rhythmic massage, using three different hot herbal oils for your scalp, body, and feet. You'll be wet-noodle relaxed. Continue your pampering with dinner at the nearby **Bistro at Ten Acres** (14 Barrows Road, 802-253-6838, www.tenacreslodge.com/bistro.php), where you can dine fire-side on classy comfort food, like the slow-braised pork shank served with mashed sweet potatoes, a rich and complex seafood stew, or the herb-crusted lamb chops. End the evening back at the Stowe, underneath lush linens and a soft, cozy comforter (standard rooms start at \$159, townhouses at \$389, full-size homes at \$579), appreciating snowy mountain views from the comfort of your bed.

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Ski, eat, camp like loggers

► LYFORD

Continued from Page M8

My wife, Lori, and I visited Little Lyford Lodge and Cabins in early January. From a winter parking lot 30 minutes from Greenville, we skied 6.2 miles along old logging roads and serpentine trails. The AMC has put a great deal of energy into providing a comfortable approach. A fleet of snowmachines grooms about 50 miles of the trail system, providing a forgiving surface of corduroy on which to slide. It also offers a service where your luggage is shuttled in by snowmachine, allowing you to ski light and enjoy the day, shouldering only your extra layers, water, and snacks.

The final glide into the camps brought us to an idyllic hamlet of tiny cabins clustered around a central lodge where home-cooked meals are served. Our cabin, Red Quill,

was situated between the main lodge and the bathhouse, which has hot showers and a wood-fired sauna. Grey smoke escaped from the chimney of our cabin, where AMC staff had started a fire in anticipation of our arrival. Two hewn-log framed beds flanked the cabin's interior with a table, sink, and woodstove included in the classic, turn-of-the-century structure. Plaid curtains screened the setting sun's reflection off the snow.

We headed to the lodge for a hot meal and the chance to get to know the other guests. By a crackling fire, we sat around the expansive tables, sipped hot coffee and red wine, and read books about the sporting life in Maine. An antique fly rod hung over the breezeway. The smell of fresh bread filled the lodge.

In keeping with AMC hut tradition, the evening meal was an elaborate Thanksgiving dinner, complete with stuffing and gravy and capped off with a slice of fresh pumpkin pie. Lyford is staffed by eight employees in the winter, when the only access is on ski, snowshoe, or snowmobile. Cooks and naturalists cater to guests'

needs, providing every comfort from trail lunches to tutorials on animal tracks.

Noah Kleiner, 27, is one of those naturalists. A native of Union, Maine, he is Lyford's assistant manager and environmental guide.

"This is a really unique place," Kleiner said. "There's not much like it in the Northeast. It's genuine. Real."

He's right. Visiting Lyford is like stepping back in time. One can almost picture trappers and loggers socializing on the porches of the shelters in their weathered chaps and wool pants. And while the AMC has preserved the old-Maine atmosphere at Lyford, the trail system has crept north and south and connected with two other sporting camps.

The AMC Gorman Chair-back Lodge and Cabins is nearly 7 miles south of Lyford. Originally built as a private camp in 1867, the facility now offers a modern central lodge where meals and relaxation are offered. To the north, the AMC has teamed up with the privately owned West Branch Pond Camps, yet another classic Maine sporting camp.

On the second day of our

visit we explored the surrounding terrain. Short loops circumnavigated the nearby Lyford Ponds, their backdrop framed in snow-cloaked mountains such as Baker, a broad peak striped with a few prominent landslide paths. While Lori rested after a loop of her own, I struck out along the Pleasant River Trail, coursing through marshes and stands of hardwood forest.

The night before our departure was crisp and clear. We'd just finished a huge meal of lasagna and beet salad, and I stood outside staring up at nature's display. Bands of stars shimmered over the camps and the wind settled to a silent absence. In the distant dark woods the crunch of snow gave way to the hooves of a large animal. As I adjusted my tripod and prepared to capture the inspiration of the evening, a shooting star fell, dragging an iridescent trail of light from the sky's apex all the way to the tips of the trees that rim the property of one of the most magical destinations in the Great North Woods.

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