

Ways to Keep Cool

By KIM J. GIFFORD

I couldn't help but notice an interesting response to the first hot day this spring, a day that shot from 30 degrees at night to 80 degrees by noon. No sooner had the temperatures risen, pockets of people appeared along the river or on the street, damp in shorts and tanks from taking a dip or outright swimming. It seems when the weather gets warm we get wet.

After all, water is elemental. When my father married my mother and transplanted her from her beloved home on a bay in Baldwin, Long Island, to landlocked Bethel, Vt., she insisted on one thing — a swimming pool. She got her way. For years, summer meant moonlight swims with rock-n-roll blasting from our poolside boom box.

What good would these short, sweet days of New England summer be without a way to keep us cool? We are not a bunch to embrace heat and humidity for long. We're just not used to it. Instead we delight, as these writers do, with a place to take a dip; sit back and reflect; and simply enjoy one of the season's splendid treats.

Serenity Beckons at Hoyt's Landing

By SHARON-ANN OSZAJCA

Hoyt's Landing, managed by Vermont Fish and Wildlife, is a well-worth-it destination on the right bank of the Connecticut River for boaters of all kinds, anglers, birders, picnickers, sightseers, families, readers, sunbathers and Scrabble players.



With plenty of parking — both paved and graveled — the site is a well-maintained area just 0.2 miles below the Cheshire Bridge, which connects Charlestown, N.H., with Springfield, Vt.

Quietest in the morning hours, Hoyt's offers a pleasant place to relax, especially during the dog days of summer when cooling breezes frequently blow in off the river. The only requirements for a thoroughly enjoyable experience are a lawn chair, bottled water, a bag of knitting, the latest mystery novel, binoculars

to possibly catch a glimpse of nesting eagles, some snacks, an iPod and time.


Lacking a designated beach area, the site does offer swimming access to those brave enough to tackle the cold waters, fisher people and boats. Though there are no camping facilities on the site, day trippers will definitely enjoy the tranquility.

My late husband and I spent many glorious hours over the last 20 years at Hoyt's, first boating and fishing and then, when illness intruded, observing others, especially children, catching their first fish. I have returned often since his passing, and marvel at the effect the river continues to hold over me. The beauty of the windy, lazy Connecticut River beckons; it offers serenity and comfort to stabilize my mood and re-energize my spirit. Join me!

DIRECTIONS: Hoyt's Landing is located on the Springfield, Vt., side of the Connecticut River, at the junction of VT Route 11 and US Route 5, just west of the Cheshire Bridge.

Sharon-Ann Oszajca frequents Hoyt's Landing all year round to read, write and commune with the river spirits. A special educator by profession and a river lover by nature, she resides in Cornish, N.H.

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The Rosary Pond at La Salette Shrine

By GIOIA GRASSO
CATTABRIGA

One of the Upper Valley's hidden gems is a secluded pool dedicated to prayer and personal reflection. The Rosary Pond at La Salette Shrine in Enfield, N.H., provides a quiet and calming retreat from the cares of the day. Although within sight of busy Mascoma Lake, the only sounds to be heard here are the sighing of the sheltering pines and the song of the swallows that frequent the shrine's scenic grounds.

The tiny pond, set among trees, is encircled by an ornamental chain bearing painted roses — a larger-than-life-size rosary — and is ringed by a paved walkway along which are placed Stations of the Cross. A statue of Mary, mother of Jesus, stands in repose at the center of the pool.

This hushed and hallowed place, however, is not restricted to devout Catholics. Anyone may come here to seek and find a sense of tranquility that restores mind and body, as well as spirit. I — a Protestant whose ancestry includes Native Americans, Jews and Catholics — come often to the Rosary Pond to indulge my desire for peace and beauty.

The pond, which is not conspicuous from the road, is located among the trees at the western edge of the grounds, on a rise above the shrine's Peace Chapel and beyond the pavilion used for outdoor masses and concerts. Benches from which visitors may enjoy the panorama of Mascoma Lake are located near the pond.

DIRECTIONS: From I-89 north or south, take Exit 17 and turn right onto Route 4 toward Enfield. At the junction of Route



4A (about a mile), bear right and follow Route 4A to La Salette Shrine.

Gioia Grasso Cattabriga lives in West Lebanon, N.H., with her husband, Dick, and their cosseted cats. She is an Army veteran, and since 1988 has been the editor of Mail Call!, a newsletter for women veterans and has published several book reviews and inspirational essays.

Adventure at Sinclair's

By ROSELLA CHAP

The White River originates at Skylight Pond in Warren, Vt., and curls through green valley after green valley until it empties itself into the Connecticut River at White River Junction, Vt. Along its path the river offers many fishing holes, beaches — both rocky and sandy — bubbling white rapids, mysterious little islands and some of Vermont's greatest swimming holes. With no lack of hometown pride, I declare South Royalton, Vt.'s Sinclair's among the best.

No summer is complete without a jump off the rock at Sinclair's. Park your car on the tiny dirt pull-off on the southbound side of Route 14. Your next obstacle will be the poison ivy-clad embankment, complete with washed out

crevices and rocks galore. Not to worry; if you stick to the paths you can avoid the poison ivy and, as you come to the river's edge, you will see it's worth the trek. The giant rock is noticeable from the road in any season. Up close it seems even larger. The rock juts out into the White River, pushing waters off their original course and creating a natural water park worthy of an admission fee.

Daredevils usually grab an inner tube and drop in at the first bubbling rapids. The water chute tosses you, water flies in your face, and your stomach drops as your tube cascades over smooth rocks and whirls you into the next part of the river. Jump out immediately to take the ride again or be sucked downstream to a calmer rapid; one that gently rocks you to a smoother venue and quieter river song. Calm, flat waters stretch across the river from the end of Sinclair's rock to a peaceful little protrusion that looks like an enlarged bonsai arrangement — Sinclair's most beautiful view.

On the far end of Sinclair's the rock cuts vertically down into deep waters while simultaneously stretching skyward making it a prime jumping rock. The top rock might be for the brave, but for folks like me, the one closer to the water is just as fun. When your fingers are pruned and your eyes waterlogged, dry out and rest in the sun on the giant rock. In or out of the water, it is hard to tire of this place.

DIRECTIONS: Take I-89 to exit 3, turn south on Route 14, and Sinclair's is one mile out of Royalton, Vt. It is a popular "pull off" spot along the river; look for the parked cars.

Rosella Chap lives in South Royalton, Vt., where on a warm summer's day she is likely to be found having a river adventure.

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Journey the Ottauquechee

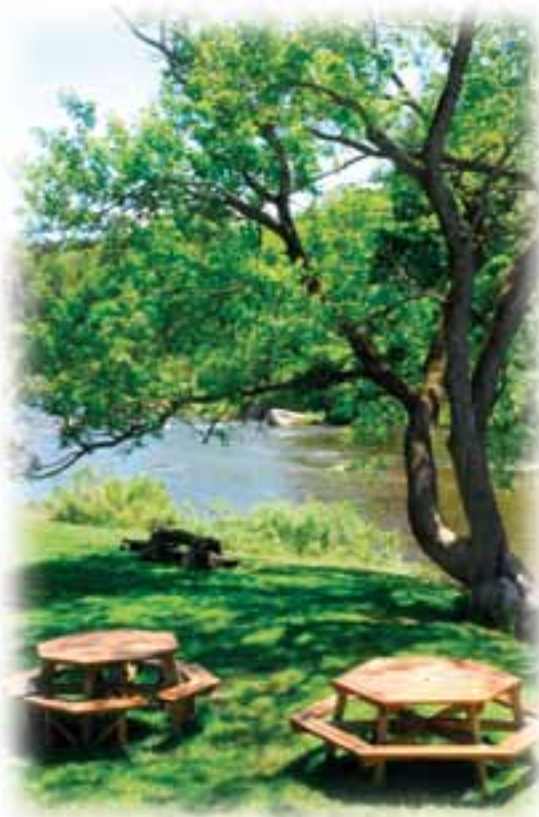
By PAT COOK

Meander with me on a river adventure — the Ottauquechee River. Pack the kids in the car and the dog, if you like. Travel Route 4 toward Woodstock, Vt.

Back in 1908, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names settled on labeling the 40-mile-long waterway the Ottauquechee. Losing out were Queechy River, Waterchuici River and Waterqueechy River.

We'll start our journey of the waterway not at the infamous feeding frenzy of Quechee Gorge, where the Ottauquechee enralls tourists with the natural wonder of carving its way through the depths below. No, we'll leave Route 4 at the blinking lights in Quechee village, turning right and going across the covered bridge spanning the river. Open the windows to hear the screams and banter of teens taking the plunge from the rocks to the right as you come off the bridge.

Turn left on Quechee's Main Street and stop for an outing at the Quechee Village Green, which abuts the meandering stream. Give the dog a walk around the green or let the kids play on the playground maintained by the Town of Hartford. Consider the gazebo for a wedding if you haven't already tied the knot. Arrangements for its use can be made through the Rec Department.



Back in the car, travel west on the River Road out of Quechee, less busy than Route 4 and more scenic. Keep your windows down for the gurgling of the stream. Don't be tempted to go over the Taftsville Bridge to rejoin Route 4. Remember this is a lazy, hazy day of summer. You'll see pull-offs of parked cars where locals have found treasured spots to enjoy the river.

When the road comes out by Billings Farm & Museum, make your way through Woodstock going the back way, joining up with Route 4 just after the newly constructed bridge.

Meander Route 4 to our final destination — White Cottage Snack Bar, just beyond Woodstock High School. Order up at the window, but expect a line. This is a popular spot. Picnic tables are provided for snackers to enjoy their food — be it ice cream cones, soft serve or hard pack, or a full meal. Better yet, sit down close to the river's edge. It tends to run shallow during the hot days of summer, but can swell after a rainfall. Listen to the rushing gurgle as it slips over the rocky bed.

And if you thought to pack your water shoes, take a walk in the river. Kids don't seem to mind braving the water, no matter the temperature. Catch those photo-ops with your camera. They can be a welcome reminder in the midst of winter that this too shall pass and we will move onwards to yet another glorious summer in Vermont.

DIRECTIONS: Start your journey along the Ottauquechee by getting off I-89 at Exit 1. Then follow Route 4 as outlined above.

Pat Cook is known to stroll in the streams of Vermont. In the summer, you can find her often down by the White River after taking her dog, Bo, for a romp. He refreshes afterwards with a swim in the river and she scuttles the shoreline looking for interesting rocks. UVL