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How to Spend a Fall Weekend in New England on a Budget

**PATTI WOODS**

Nov. 13, 2018



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Thanks to a late spring and a warm, dry summer, this year's apple harvest in New England was right on schedule. I live for the fall — apples, pumpkins, hayrides, corn mazes and leaf peeping.

But all that autumn fun can empty your wallet.

This year, we decided to do our annual fall celebration on a budget. Over Columbus Day weekend, we headed to southern Vermont to see how much bang we could get for our buck.

First stop: Breakfast

Our day began at the Grafton Firefighters Fall Foliage Festival, a community fundraising event that's in its 37th year. We loaded up on homemade cider donuts, apple cake and coffee — all available for a donation. We gave \$10, making for a relatively cheap breakfast stop. We spent some time looking for treasures before heading on.

Next up: Scott Farm Orchard

The next stop was Scott Farm Orchard in Dummerston, Vermont. Owned by The Landmark Trust USA, the farm is quintessentially New England. Colorful maples and craggy apple trees surround antique barns. Massive stone structures dot the landscape; they're constructed by students of The Stone Trust, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving the craft of dry stone walling that operates on the farm.

Four historic homes on or near the farm can be rented year-round for vacations, including Rudyard Kipling's home, Naulakha, that sleeps up to eight people. [Rates for each home vary](#) but come out to less than \$100 per person a night.

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On the Sunday of Columbus Day weekend, the farm hosts Heirloom Apple Day. As part of the free event, orchard manager Ezekiel Goodband tells fascinating stories and trivia about the different apple types while samples are passed around. My son liked the crisp tartness of the

Northern Spy while I enjoyed the Hubbardston Nonesuch as much for its name as its taste.

After the presentation, we headed to the orchard to pick our own apples, then visited the farmers market where we found cider and a wide array of jams and maple syrups. I bought several to have on hand for hostess gifts. At around \$5 a pop, they're more affordable than a bottle of wine.

Throughout the fall, there are other events scheduled at the farm. Some are free, such as cider tastings and orchard strolls, while others, like pie-baking classes and dinners, are available for a charge.

We sat on the hill and each enjoyed an apple before heading off to our next stop: the Dummerston Apple Pie Festival.

The Dummerston Apple Pie Festival

To get there, visitors might cross over the longest covered bridge entirely in the state of Vermont—the West Dummerston Covered Bridge. Free car parking is available on the outer edges of town; the one center parking lot is reserved for motorcyclists.

A line snaked outside the door of the town fire station where breakfast was available (\$10 for adults, \$5 for kids). It included apple pancakes, sausage, biscuits and gravy, applesauce and cider. But we came for the pie, of course.

A sign outside Dummerston Congregational Church announced that this year there were 1,281 pies — all apple — made by 85 volunteers over the course of two weeks. Under a massive tent, there were rows and rows of slices of pie

cent, there were rows and rows of slices of pie for \$5 each. You could have it a la mode with hand-cranked ice cream, or you could go full-on New England and have it with a slice of cheddar cheese on the side. We tried it both ways and also got a half dozen cider donuts (\$5) and some cups of cold cider (\$1 each).

Newfane Heritage Festival

We might have been almost ready for a nap, but we made one more stop at the Newfane Heritage Festival. Set on the picturesque town green, the event features [over 90 different exhibitors](#), a flea tent and, of course, food. There's more cider, more pie, and apple crisp, apple cake, apple jelly, apple muffins and so on. There are even apple-themed crafts to buy: glass apples, ceramic apples, apple birdhouses, apple jewelry.

It was a full day and we headed home with our apple bounty. In the car, I tallied up the receipts. For an entire day for my family of three, we spent less than \$100.

Apple adventure: success.

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