

There is an “ahhh” moment that people talk about when they cross the border into Vermont. The billboards disappear (they are not legal in the state), weathered barns shoulder the winter snowpack, dirt roads meander up the hillsides into hidden hollows.

It doesn't take long for the gentleness of the rural landscape to sink into your soul. Just a 25-mile drive from the Massachusetts border on I-91, the Deerfield Valley is classic Vermont. It's also a place that has seen many upgrades in the past few years.

In 2019, Vail Resorts bought the ski resort Mount Snow and made it part of its Epic Pass offerings. Then Covid hit, and many establishments closed up shop. But since then, the Deerfield Valley has had a resurgence: Dozens of new restaurants, hotels, and breweries have blossomed up and down Route 100 in the eight or so miles that link the historic town of Wilmington with West Dover and Mount Snow.

Thankfully, careful stewardship has ensured that many of the new

establishments have built on the valley's heritage. Barnboard and white clapboard, family-owned restaurants, and proud innkeepers still prevail. And thanks to a legacy of skiing, you'll also find a touch of the Alps on the menus and in the decor.

EAT & DRINK

1. Go for gourmet fondue ... in a gondola. If your vision of a perfect après-ski moment is sitting on a leather banquette in a refurbished private gondola car and noshing on fondue and venison meatballs while perusing an award-winning wine list, the Hermitage Inn has you covered. Work up an appetite by cross-country skiing on one of the trails that wind through the inn's 112 acres, and then retire to

one of the elegant historic rooms, completely renovated in 2021.

thehermitageinnvermont.com

2. Dine Alpine-style. Sheepskin throws and candles lend a cozy ambience to the Alpenglow Bistro, where the menu starts with Bavarian pretzels and oysters before letting you move on to such Alpine favorites as savory crepes, fondues, and bratwurst. alpenglowbistrovt.com

3. Go beer-tasting. Home to one of the biggest and oldest beer festivals (held in both fall and winter at Mount Snow), the Deerfield Valley has experienced an explosion of microbreweries. Wilmington's Valley Craft Ales opened in 2022 and now has a brewpub in the Old Red Mill Inn, with reasonably priced rooms upstairs for those who don't want to drive. At Snow Republic Brewery, located in the largest log cabin in Vermont, order a Hop Avalanche and let the kids enjoy the shufflepuck and other games. Set atop Hogback Mountain in nearby Marlboro, Beer Naked not only boasts some of the best views in the state but also serves tasty wood-fired pizzas from Pizzapalooza (try the Honey Pear Pie with gorgonzola and maple bacon). valleybeer.io; snowrepublicbrewery.com; beernakedbrewery.com

4. Visit one of Vermont's most treasured diners. Betsey's Dot's of Dover has been one of Vermont's best-loved places for eggs and pancakes for nearly 40 years—so much so that the town helped rebuild the place after it burned in a fire in 2019. dotsofdover.com



Patrons are greeted by Alpine elegance at Wilmington's Alpenglow Bistro. OPPOSITE: Another Wilmington highlight is the White House Inn, a 1915 summer estate that now welcomes luxury-minded travelers.