

EQUESTRIAN DESTINATION:

Manchester,
Vermont

By Lindsay Brock

When Vermont Summer Festival exhibitors are asked what they love most about spending their summers in the mountains of Manchester, Vermont, their first response is almost always, "The views!" That's usually followed by a list of reasons — from shopping to dining and outdoor activities — why summers in southern Vermont are second to none.

Nestled just south of the Green Mountain National Forest, photo-worthy panoramic views surround the competition grounds at Harold Beebe Farm, home to the six-week Vermont Summer Festival each July and August. The circuit attracts riders from all corners of the United States for dynamic competition spanning the levels from crossrails to weekly grand prix events. While the competition is family-friendly, welcoming and just plain fun, the surrounding community provides significant entertainment for equestrians who choose to spend their summers in Vermont.

Ruth Lacey is a proud Vermont resident and the marketing director for the Vermont Summer Festival. Though she hails from a couple hours north of Manchester, she calls Harold Beebe Farm home for the summer.

"When I look out the window of my office that overlooks the grand prix schooling ring, I am constantly reminded why I love living in Vermont and why the riders enjoy coming here," she said. "It's a breathtaking place!"

When the show wraps each day, ample opportunities exist for entertainment. So many opportunities in fact, it often takes all six weeks to fit everything in. For Ruth, the dining in Manchester is exquisite and doesn't get much better than Chanteclair Restaurant. Located just over two miles from the show grounds, Chanteclair is host to the first of six popular exhibitor parties that take place throughout the Vermont Summer Festival. Set inside a remodeled dairy barn, Chanteclair is the perfect place for a special occasion, or just a great night out with a menu that features elegant, creative cuisine with a seafood focus and French inspiration.

The picturesque Vermont country side.
Photo by VisitManchesterVT.com

"If you do one thing while at the Vermont Summer Festival, it must be to order the parmesan crusted halibut at Chanteclair," said Ruth. "It's an attraction in itself!"

Perhaps one of Manchester's biggest claims to fame is the Manchester Designer Outlets, which are considered a shopping getaway for locals and visitors alike. Located in the heart of Manchester, the stores included within the Manchester Designer Outlets offer boutique shopping opportunities from more than 40 brands, including iconic names like Bass, Overland, Theory and Vineyard Vines.

Most notably, the Vermont Summer Festival is an ever-popular destination for families that horse show together. It's common to see grand prix riders like Jimmy and Danielle Torano finish a round in the grand prix ring before quickly hurrying over to the pony ring to watch their children compete. Manchester itself mirrors that all-inclusive vibe and is home to attractions that range from public swimming holes to mountain biking and much more.

According to Ruth, a must-visit for families is the Bromley Mountain Adventure Park. While the mountain doesn't have white peaks during the summer months, it's far from vacant once ski season concludes. Bromley Mountain

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is home to three adventure parks, including the Mountain Adventure Park, where children and even adults of all ages can experience attractions like the alpine slide, miniature golf, the big splash waterslide and more. The Aerial Adventure Park includes zip lines and ropes courses, while the Sun Mountain Flyer is New England's longest zip line chair — a 50-mile-per-hour thrill ride down the mountain.

In addition to dining and entertainment, Manchester area hotels and resorts embrace country luxury and provide an ideal home away from home for horse show goers. Ruth recommends the Kimpton Taconic Hotel, which embraces a quintessential Vermont feel with all the comforts of modern hospitality, as well as The Equinox, a luxury golf resort and spa serving as a heavenly retreat.

In addition to Ruth, another Vermont local

who's a regular competitor at the Vermont Summer Festival is Daphne Markcrow, who lives in a picturesque country home she designed herself just minutes from Harold Beebe Farm. While she has the luxury of sleeping in her own bed at night while showing, Daphne still soaks up what the Manchester area offers in the way of dining, entertainment and summer pleasures.

"My favorites girls' outing is definitely drinks by the fire pit at the Falcon Bar at The Equinox," she said.

When making plans to dine out, one of Daphne's first choices is always The Silver Fork. The menu at The Silver Fork is ever-changing and inspired by influences from all over the world, and one can usually hear riders discussing their previous evening's meal at the small but inviting restaurant throughout the horse show.

"It is absolutely sublime," said Daphne, noting that her favorite pick is the crab cake entrée.

Daphne hails from North Carolina but now calls Manchester home with her husband, Craig, a Vermont native, and their two children.

"I stopped riding for a time during college but when we moved to Manchester, I had a six-week horse show right in my backyard," said Daphne, who grew up on a Thoroughbred



Ireland's Cormac Hanley competing at the Vermont Summer Festival
Photo by Jump Media



horse farm. "Before I knew it, I was back in the saddle. I'm really lucky to have a show like the Vermont Summer Festival just down the road from my home. I love seeing my worlds come together for six weeks each summer and sharing the town I love with the horse show community."

Photos clockwise from top left:
Hildene, the historic summer home of Robert Todd Lincoln in Manchester.
Photo by VisitManchesterVT.com

A home away from home for horse show competitors is the Kimpton Taconic Hotel.
Photo courtesy of Kimpton Taconic Hotel

Horse show participants can enjoy a day on the lake when not showing.
Photo by VisitManchesterVT.com

Vermont Summer Festival exhibitors of all ages enjoy the Bramley Mountain Adventure Park.
Photo by David Mullinix Photography

