



# Nibbling Along the Vermont Cheese Trail

By Josephine Matyas

For people who love food, travel in an RV can be a lot of fun. It's a fantastic way to explore different food cultures, discover tastes and try your hand in your RV kitchen with new ingredients. The onboard ability to refrigerate, melt, chop, sauté, boil and combine fixings in your own kitchen is also travel budget friendly. Planned right, meal costs while travelling can be much the same as at your bricks-and-sticks residence. We love to combine food and RV travel and it's why Vermont and its Cheese Trail were high on our list of must-do destinations.

The Vermont Cheese Trail is a design-your-own route of more than 45 farms, creameries and cheesemakers who craft more than 150 varieties of small-batch, specialty cheeses from the milk of goats, sheep and

cows. The Cheese Trail is not a specific roadway etched in granite rather, the members are scattered across the hills and valleys of the Green Mountain state. Spread out a map, look for the stops that appeal and trace a route that suits you best. It's a buffet of cheese – pick what you want, taste what you want, then take some to nibble (or cook with) back to your RV home-on-wheels.

What you'll find is that Vermont's cheese industry is a true blending of past and present: recipes from their forefathers are still used on a daily basis by today's cadre of artisan cheesemakers who have bucked the trappings of the mainstream. Here are some suggestions for cheese-filled stops, along with RV parks nearby and other spots to explore while you are in the area.





[www.billingsfarm.org](http://www.billingsfarm.org)

### BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM

We started our cheese tour with a little history lesson at the family-friendly Billings Farm just outside pretty Woodstock. The working farm is combined with an excellent outdoor museum on the state's rural history and heritage. There's an operating dairy farm, draft horses, a flock of sheep, plus samples of Billings Farm cheddar and homemade ice cream (both made from their own Jersey milk). There's a large parking lot across the street that can easily accommodate RVs.

While you're in the neighbourhood:

- Do a walking tour of Woodstock's main street shops, village green and covered bridge. Historic Woodstock has been described as the "quintessential New England village".
- Across the street from the Billings Farm is the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park, the only national park dedicated to telling the story of America's conservation history and land stewardship.

Nearby RV stays:

One of our favourite overnight spots is small Silver Lake State Park (39 sites in wooded areas), 15 km north of Woodstock near the hamlet of Barnard. Restrooms have coin-operated hot showers. There is a dump station but no campsite hook-ups. There's a lovely, small lake with beach, boat and canoe rentals. It's a short walk to the Barnard General Store to sit on the wraparound porch, connect to free wifi and indulge in an ice cream cone.

### CABOT CREAMERY

Cabot Creamery is the big name on the state cheese map, a national brand cooperative with more than 1,200 Vermont farm-family members and dozens of types of cheese. We always stop by their two retail stores – one in Quechee and the other just north of Waterbury – to graze at the massive sampling buffet (pro tip: skip lunch). The sampling station is very popular and you'll overhear lots of reviews and debates over personal favourites. We love the sharp legacy cheddars with zing, like Alpine and Farmhouse Reserve (perfect for cooking up homemade mac and cheese in our Roadtrek). Cabot also has excellent info on cheese and food pairings, helpful for creating on-the-road snacks and meals.



[www.cabotcheese.coop](http://www.cabotcheese.coop)

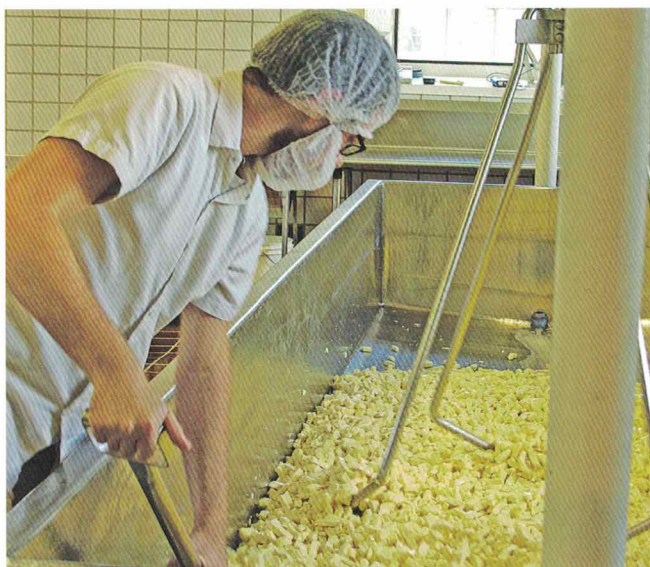
While you're in the neighbourhood:

- Ben & Jerry's factory/store is just down the road in Waterbury. We took the 30-minute factory tour to learn everything about ice cream.
- There are great views over the scenic Quechee Gorge, the deepest gorge in Vermont.

Nearby RV stays:

Quechee State Park has 45 tent/RV sites, none with hook-ups, although many can accommodate large RVs. Sanitary dump station, restrooms with flush toilets and coin-operated hot showers are available.





[www.shelburnefarms.org](http://www.shelburnefarms.org)

### SHELBURNE FARMS

Shelburne Farms, just south of Burlington, is a hub for cheesemaking action beginning with milk from the herd of *Brown Swiss* milkers. The expansive farm follows a sustainability ethos, including hiking trails along the Lake Champlain shoreline, a children's farmyard where visitors milk the livestock and a working cheese factory.

We watched the cheesemaking process (operating seven days a week), starting with fresh milk from that morning's

milking. Shelburne Farms makes a traditional cheddar recipe, ageing blocks of fresh cheese from a mild version to the sharper three-year-old cheddar. The cheesemaker guides the developing cheese from start to finish: watching the progress of the culture, monitoring the taste and the texture, knowing the time the cooked blocks of cheese need to age to the characteristic cheddar flavour.

#### While you're in the neighbourhood:

- Downtown Burlington has a walkable pedestrian main street with artisan shops, small restaurants and creative food carts.
- Take a scenic cruise on Lake Champlain on the Spirit of Ethan Allan or hop one of the small ferries crossing the lake between Vermont and New York State.

#### Nearby RV stays:

North Beach Campground (operated by Burlington Parks and Recreation) is on the Lake Champlain shoreline, just north of Burlington. There are 39 water/electric sites and 29 with full hook-ups. Free wifi is included.

### PLYMOUTH ARTISAN CHEESE

Plymouth Artisan Cheese is the second-oldest cheese factory in the nation, started by President Calvin Coolidge's father in 1890 – a stone's throw away from the historic family homestead. The farmhouse, cheese factory, community church, general store, and barns are designated as the President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site.

In the late 1800s, the little valley's four dairy farms produced more milk than they could use, so the farmers decided to make cheese with the excess. Today, the cheesemaker still makes the same small batch, handmade recipe from 1890, based on British cheesemaking traditions and techniques that date back to the 1600s. We watched the traditional Plymouth cheese being made and visited the small upstairs museum, filled with antique cheesemaking equipment like scales, presses and the long hot water-heated vats used to bring the milk to temperature.



[www.plymouthartisancheese.com](http://www.plymouthartisancheese.com)

#### While you're in the neighbourhood:

- In mid-September, plan for the annual Plymouth Cheese and Harvest Festival, named one of the state's Top Ten Fall Events.
- Long Trail Brewing Company is one of the state's craft breweries where visitors can taste a variety of samplers.

#### Nearby RV stays:

Coolidge State Park has more of a rustic feel with wooded hiking trails, 26 tent/RV sites, restrooms with flush toilets and coin-operated hot showers. There is a sanitary dump station but no hook-ups.





[www.vermontcreamery.com](http://www.vermontcreamery.com)

## VERMONT CREAMERY

The Vermont Creamery is made up of 30 small family farms supplying vitamin-rich goats' milk that is turned into the creamery's fresh and aged goat cheese.

One of the creamery's most popular specialty goat cheeses – Bonne Bouche – is an award winner. The hand-ladled round of goat cheese is ash-ripened: sprinkled with poplar wood ash and salt before being aged just long enough to develop a rind.

Visitors can follow a short self-guided tour, sample the creamery's products and stock up on cheese at the shop, including fresh goat cheese and aged goat cheese products. The creamery also produces crème fraîche, quark and cultured butter made from high-quality cows' milk from a co-op of local dairy farmers.

While you're in the neighbourhood:

- Visit the gold domed State House in Montpelier, the smallest state capital in the U.S. (population: 8,000).
- Stop at The Rock of Ages Visitors Center for a tour of the large granite quarry (late May to mid-October), a peek at the work of the artisans in the factory and to bowl on the outdoor granite lane.

Nearby RV stays:

Stillwater State Park is one of seven parks in the Groton State Forest (one entry provides a day pass to all). The campground includes 59 tent/RV sites (no hook-ups), restrooms with flush toilets, coin-operated hot showers and a sanitary dump station. There is a wonderful swimming beach and miles of hiking trails nearby. 🍁

*Writer Josephine Matyas and writer/musician Craig Jones travel with their dog, Eleanor Rigby, in a Class B Roadtrek 210 Popular. Learn more at [www.travelswithrigby.com](http://www.travelswithrigby.com).*

### For more information

[www.vermontvacation.com](http://www.vermontvacation.com)  
[www.vtstateparks.com](http://www.vtstateparks.com)  
[www.vtcheese.com](http://www.vtcheese.com)

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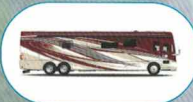
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