

Newfound Lake:
Exploring Around its Crystal Clear Waters

Ask any resident around **Newfound Lake** [1] about its water and you'll get an earful. This glacial lake — a beauty in the middle of the Granite State, west of its more famous neighbor, Lake Winnepesaukee—is 2.5 miles wide and 7 miles long, reaching depths of up to 180 feet, with 22 miles of shoreline. You'll hear that the water, fed by eight springs, is considered the most pristine in the state.

You'll also hear that that's not by chance: The Newfound Lake Region Association remains diligent in monitoring the lake, keeping milfoil at bay, and ensuring that it stays that way. From Paradise Point, you may observe that this is no small challenge. Newfound isn't a wilderness lake. Motorboats crease its surface all summer; cottages line the distant shore.

A small lake provides a series of small adventures, not a single large one. That's certainly the case here. You could spend a week making small forays on the water and into the forest.

Drop your suitcases at **The Inn on Newfound Lake** on Route 3A (also known as Mayhew Turnpike) in **Bridgewater** on the southeastern shore, an establishment that in some form has been welcoming guests since 1840. With its floral wallpaper, it still has the feel of a New England boardinghouse, with creaky stairs and smallish rooms. (Some still have their bathrooms across the hall.) The inn is just across the road from the lake and looks out toward Mount Cardigan beyond the western shore. A refreshing dip in those cleansing waters from the inn's sandy beach is a good way to start an adventure here. (Of course, other lodging options abound, including **Six Chimneys & a Dream**, [2] a B&B in East Hebron, and the **Henry Whipple House B&B**, [3] which sits on a hill just above downtown **Bristol** [4]. Check www.newfoundchamber.com for a full list of options.)

From the inn, driving north and making a left (west) on North Shore Road (we're heading counterclockwise around the lake), it's 4.2 miles to **Paradise Point Nature Center**, [5] the New Hampshire Audubon preserve up at the head of the lake. The preserve consists of just 43 acres, but encompasses 3,500 feet of untouched shorefront. Bring a picnic. Take a hike. Rent a kayak or canoe from the nature center or launch your own craft and see how the shoreline looks when viewed from the outside in.

Keep driving counterclockwise around the lake and 1.3 miles later you'll soon come to the timeless village of **Hebron**. [6] There's a grassy, irregular square with a small gazebo, a church, and a country store, all awash in white clapboard.

Pause if you'd like, but then push on 2.8 miles past Hebron and Groton to **Sculptured Rocks Natural Area**. [7] (Follow the signs from town.) The Cockermouth River flows through a cleft in the granite here, but that simple description doesn't do it justice. The river was once the outflow of a great glacier, and the currents tossed car-sized boulders around like cherry pits in a sink drain. The force carved all sorts of fantastical, cloudlike shapes into the rock. Older kids with a strong crawl, both aquatic and terrestrial, love to start at the bottom of the gorge and, salmon-like, swim and scramble their way as far upstream as they can go. Next, retrace your steps back to Hebron and head south toward Bristol via West Shore Road. Along the way,

there are a few things you won't want to miss. **Sugarloaf Ledges**, [8] located 3 miles past Hebron, is high on the list. A 1912 postcard showcases the ledges as a local bit of worthy natural drama. And this 200-foot static cascade of gray rock, plunging down the hill and into the lake, still has the power to impress as you drive by, slowly, mindful of oncoming cars and the rock wall between you and the lake.

Just 1.1 miles past there you'll find **Wellington State Park**, [9] a handsome crescent of sand capping the end of a cove. Bustling on weekends and quieter on weekdays, this park, carved out by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, is a fine destination. You can expand your view nicely by crossing the road and hiking up Elwell Trail, which will take you to the top of those ledges you recently passed.

Back on your route and heading south again, you'll come to the intersection of West Shore and Alexandria roads. You can either take a left (continuing on West Shore) and push on to **Bristol**, [11] the area's biggest town, or turn right (on Alexandria) for a nice diversion in and around the village of the same name. Just about 1 mile from here, on Fowler River Road (and about 1 mile before the center of Alexandria), for instance, there sits **Divine Inspirations**, [10] home to vintage clothing, boutique gems, and custom clothing.

There are other roads around here that demand meandering and exploration, but you might want to turn around here and head back; it'll be 3.7 miles now to Bristol. Head past the intersection to pick up the next leg of West Shore Road, and head southeast along the lake. At the intersection with Route 3A, take a right onto that road and head south into downtown Bristol. Like the lake, Bristol packs a lot into a little. The town was once known for the high quality of its glacial sand and the bricks that were made from it.

There's more to Bristol than that. The compact brick downtown offers a prime excuse to park the car and do a little walking. One worthy stop is **Sidewalk Café**, [12] a bright lunch and breakfast spot operated by long-time restaurant owner Joe Collito. Here, the menu includes all-day breakfast options and sandwich choices such as reubens and tuna melts on homemade bread. If you've got the appetite for it, try the "Sidewalk Burger," a delicious mess of bacon, cheese, lettuce, onions, and mushrooms on eight ounces of beef.

This being a tourist spot, of course, there are still other eateries to consider as well. Just around the corner from the Sidewalk, there's **Pat's Seafood and Pizzeria** [13] and **Ivy's Spice of Life**, [14] a Tex-Mex and American restaurant. Got a sweet tooth? Don't miss **The Mill Ice Cream Café and Fudge Factory** [15]. And if you've got room in your car, you may just find a vintage treasure at **Tin Shoppe Antiques and Collectibles**, [16] located just a couple doors down from Ivy's.

To complete the loop around Newfound and back to the inn, you'll head north on Route 3A (also known here as Lake Street). On your way out of Bristol, about 0.5 mile up the road past the downtown, stop at **Iron Horse Metal Works**, [17] where co-owner Victor MacAdam makes his handsome, sometimes whimsical, and generally affordable garden sculptures. They're for sale at **Earthly Treasures** [18] (run by Victor's wife, Elaine), the adjacent gift shop that carries "nature-inspired, American-made" goods, including jewelry, lamps, furniture, and other crafts, many of which are made in New Hampshire, and all from small producers.

As you'll have come to know by now, this smaller neighbor to New Hampshire's more popular Lake Winnepesaukee is a great destination all on its own.