

# SundayTravel

WITH: NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

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## Ready to start exploring? Here’s where to go in 2025.

BY CHRISTOPHER MUTHER  
GLOBE STAFF



Perhaps you’ve already started and promptly broken your New Year’s resolutions. I broke my “work out four times a week” resolution on Jan. 5, and I suspect the “no alcohol” pledge will be history by the weekend;

however, one resolution I’ve (mostly) been able to adhere to for several years is to travel off the beaten path.

There’s comfort in returning to the places we’ve vacationed every year or ticking a box of getting to a bucket-list destination (for the record, I think the concept of bucket-list travel needs to be put in the garbage disposal), but take it from someone who knows: The best part of travel is the unexpected. Some of my favorite moments are the ones I never saw coming, such as flying in a hot air balloon over the capital of Lithuania, cycling around a bucolic lake that has shores in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, or eating fried crickets at a market in rural Mexi-

co. None of these experiences were on some cliché bucket list or concocted to make friends envious on social media. They were inspired by a simple desire to see the world.

That’s a wordy preamble to a few suggestions of where to go in 2025. In putting this list together, I tried to collect destinations that aren’t obvious or prone to over-tourism. I’m already bracing myself for the “These are doltish suggestions” or “You’ve got the intellect of an addlepated raccoon” emails, so bring on your worst! I’ve heard it all before. But if you’re looking for something different and have an open mind, read away.

### ST. ANDREWS, CANADA

Although it’s bordered by two tourist favorites, Maine and Quebec, New Brunswick tends to be forgotten by New England holidaymakers. Sure, you may say, “I’ve been to

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Left: Stunning scenery on the tiny island of Nevis. Below left: The bathhouse on Minister’s Island in St. Andrews, Canada. Below: A festival on the streets of Morelia, Mexico.



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## The best state parks in N.E. for cross-country skiing

By Diane Bair  
and Pamela Wright  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

There are big Nordic ski centers in New England, well-known for their first-rate conditions, with maintained trails, on-site facilities, and sometimes plush amenities, like lodges and warming huts with refreshments, rentals, and lessons (think: Trapp Family Lodge, Jackson Ski Touring, Bretton Woods Cross Country Center,

and more). But there are also plenty of less crowded, cheaper opportunities for cross-country skiing at state parks throughout New England, where you’ll find quiet, ungroomed trails weaving through natural landscapes. Wish for snow and more snow, wax your skis, don your down, and head to one of these New England state parks for some skinny skiing this winter.

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## Inside THE VIP LOUNGE ART TO THE MAX Max Pinson in ‘Simon & Garfunkel Story’ N14

## HERE, THERE, EVERYWHERE TRAVEL NEWS YOU CAN USE A deal for the slopes, and a smart chess set N14

## Quebec gets creative for winter with ice canoeing, high-speed sledding

By Kari Bodnarchuk  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

QUEBEC CITY, Quebec — Head to Quebec and you’ll soon realize that our northern neighbors have gotten creative in their wintertime fun. Forget ice skating and snowboarding — you can do those when you get home. How about ice canoeing and skishoeing, or screaming down a mountain on a wooden sled with no brakes?

Cosmopolitan Quebec City makes the perfect base for outdoor winter adventures that take you from the ice floes of the St. Lawrence River to the snowy landscapes of a nearby national park and a

local ski area. Read on to learn about a few of these adventures.

### ‘Scooter’ across the St. Lawrence River

Inhabitants of southern Quebec — including French settlers from the early 1600s and Indigenous people dating long before that — used sturdy canoes in the wintertime to access islands on the St. Lawrence River and to connect communities on both sides of the river, paddling across open water and then jumping out to push those canoes over floating ice mounds when needed. Well into

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# Best state parks for cross-country skiing in N.E.

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## Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park

*Uxbridge*  
As you glide along picturesque trails, skiing in the footsteps of the Nipmuc Native Americans, it might be hard to imagine that this was the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution in America, once filled with water-powered mills. The 1,000-acre park is now part of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, crisscrossed with scenic trails meandering through forests and old stone-lined fields and along the Blackstone River and Blackstone Canal.

Start at the River Bend Farm Visitor Center to pick up maps and learn about the history and flora and fauna of the park. Check the schedule, too, as the park offers a variety of year-round programming. The popular Towpath Trail is a flat jaunt along the historic canal, once used for trade in the 1800s. You'll pass historical sites and have nice water views along the way. If you're up for something more, the Goat Hill trail is a one-mile, moderate out-and-back trek to Goat Hill Lock, with fine views of the valley. The grounds are open from dawn to dusk. The Visitor Center is open daily 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. 508-278-7604, [www.mass.gov/locations/blackstone-river-and-canal-heri](http://www.mass.gov/locations/blackstone-river-and-canal-heri)

tage-state-park

## Great Brook Farm State Park

*Carlisle*  
You'll find some 10 miles of machine-groomed trails at this picturesque, 1,000-acre park, home to a working dairy farm, less than 30 miles from Boston. Check in at the Great Brook Farm Ski Touring Center, for updated snow conditions and trail descriptions. Trails of varying difficulty meander through forests and farmlands, and along streams and ponds.

The one-mile Lantern Loop is an easy jaunt past the dairy farm; on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, the trail is lit for night skiing. The two-mile or so Pine Point Loop meanders around Meadow Pond. Up for more of a challenge? Try the hilly Woodchuck Trail through the woods. The touring center is open Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., and Tuesday and Thursday 9 a.m.-9 p.m., and offers rentals, maps, and guidance. 978-369-7486, [www.greatbrookski.com](http://www.greatbrookski.com)

## Odiorne Point State Park

*Rye, N.H.*  
Want to have ocean views while you ski? Head to this 135-acre park along the seacoast of New Hampshire, where Nordic skiers can make their way along the park's coastline, with far-away views of the Isle of Shoals. Kick off your skis to rock hop



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and explore the teeming tide pools, or enjoy a hot beverage (you packed a thermos, right?) on a rock outcropping.

Head inland to glide the ungroomed trails through forests and fields, past World War II artifacts, military bunkers, and historic monuments. Deeper inland, you'll past salt and freshwater ponds, wetlands, and salt marshes. Look for deer, fox, and rabbit tracks along the way. If you have time, stop in the Seacoast Science Center, with exhibits and touch tanks showcasing the area's plant and sea life. The grounds are open from dawn to dusk. Seacoast Science Center is open Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. 603-436-7406, [www.nhstateparks.org/find-parks-trails/odiorne-point-state-park](http://www.nhstateparks.org/find-parks-trails/odiorne-point-state-park)

## Bear Brook State Park

*Allenstown, N.H.*

This 10,000-acre park, with

**Many state parks throughout New England offer less crowded and cheaper opportunities to cross-country ski on quiet trails that weave through natural landscapes.**

museums, archery ranges, boat rentals, and a campground, is the largest developed state park in New Hampshire, and wildly popular with summer overnight and day visitors. Come winter, it quiets down, and when the snow is decent, its dense forests turn into hushed, white fairylands.

On the next fresh snow day, get up early, pack your skis, and head to this park located in southern New Hampshire, about 65 miles from Boston. There are about 40 miles of trails, crisscrossing through dense forests, up mountains, and along streams and ponds. Technically, they're all open to cross-country skiers, and most connect to oth-

ers to provide a longer option or a loop. You'll have plenty of choices from the Podunk Road skiers' parking lot. The Little Bear-Big Bear Loop is an easy 2.8-mile trek through the woods. The Bear Brook Trail is an easy out-and-back trip along the stream, with options to make it short or long by turning back or connecting with other trails. There are other trails that climb hills, skirt marshes, and circle ponds; take your pick. Grounds are open from dawn to dusk. 603-485-9869, [www.nhstateparks.org/find-parks-trails/bear-brook-state-park](http://www.nhstateparks.org/find-parks-trails/bear-brook-state-park)

## Smugglers' Notch State Park

*Stowe, Vt.*  
Winter is a special time in this famous pass through the Green Mountains of Vermont, when the serpentine road is closed to cars. The narrow mountain gorge, once used by fugitive slaves to escape to Cana-

da and bootleggers to smuggle liquor, turns into a wintry wonderland. Its 1,000-foot-high cliffs are covered in ice, and challenging trails, including the Long Trail, lead to frozen ponds, snow-capped mountain peaks, and stunning views.

But you can stick to the main road and be equally wowed by the scenery: soaring cliffs on both sides, mammoth boulders, and nearly hidden caves to be discovered along the way. The park is bookended by the town of Stowe at its southern end and Smugglers' Notch Resort at its northern end, making it convenient to access, and a great winter vacation destination. The park is open from dawn to dusk. 802-253-4014, [www.vt-stateparks.com/smugglers.html](http://www.vt-stateparks.com/smugglers.html)

## Sebago Lake State Park

*Casco & Naples, Maine*  
Into winter camping? You'll find it here but be prepared; it's rustic. Park officials recommend that you have winter camping experience and are self-sufficient to stay overnight. There are a few walk-in campsites, and others are accessed only by snowshoeing or cross-country skiing.

Whether you're a camper or day visitor at this popular 1,400-acre park, you'll find a network of ski trails, some skirting the Songo River and shoreline of Sebago Lake, others through scenic fields and forests. If you prefer groomed trails, head to the Casco side of the park where there are 5.5 miles of track and skate skiing trails. There are also 6 miles of ungroomed trails on the Naples side of the park. 207-693-6231, [www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/about/state\\_parks.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/about/state_parks.shtml)

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# Quebec winters get adventurous with ice canoeing, sledding

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the 1800s, hundreds of ice canoe businesses transported goods, medicine, mail, and people along these routes.

What started as a purely practical way to cross the semi-frozen St. Lawrence River eventually turned into a passionate local sport, complete with repurposed ice hockey pads, oars retrofitted with aluminum spikes, carbon fiber or fiberglass canoes with steel reinforcements, and homemade crampons. The first ice canoe race took place in 1894 at the Quebec Winter Carnival and now more than 500 athletes compete in this race each year (coming up on Feb. 9) and take part in the province's annual ice canoe race series.

One of these athletes, Julien Harvey who spent 12 years racing the ice canoe circuit, launched a tour company six years ago, called Canot à Glace, so more people could experience this niche sport.

"You don't have to be an athlete to do the activity," says Harvey, 38, a third-generation ice canoeer who grew up on an island on the St. Lawrence River. "We're really focused on the experience — appreciating the light on the water and the sound of drifting ice [floes] crunching against each other," plus the views of the nearby city, from the citadel and the Hotel Frontenac to the historic Plains of Abraham [a battleground site that's now an urban park] and bridges spanning the river.

Add to that the peacefulness of the setting. You'll see few other boats on the water come wintertime, except for the occasional ice breaker or freighter passing by.

Participants can do anything from a 2- to 3-hour introduction to the ice canoeing experience or half- to full-day adventure for the initiated. Just show up wearing clothes "as if you're going cross-country skiing or for a winter run," says Harvey, and he and guides will supply the rest of the needed gear: Neoprene socks, waterproof boots, hockey pads to protect knees and shins, a life-jacket, and homemade crampons.

Harvey uses canoes made with layers of carbon fiber and fiberglass (often reinforced with Kevlar) and oars from a Vermont-based company that are reinforced with steel and have aluminum spikes on the end to help grip the ice.

Each canoe carries five people — four rowers and a captain. You'll learn how to row together and then, when your boat ap-



JEANE PHOTOGRAPHIE

proaches an ice sheet, how to pop out of the canoe and "scooter" across the ice — with one leg inside the canoe on a knee rest and the other outside pushing off the ice to help move the boat along. It doesn't take long to get the hang of it, says Harvey, just "a 10-minute practice on land with the guides."

The group will stop for hot chocolate, a delicious pastry from Le Croquebouché bakery, and a few photos on the ice, and then it's back to the launch point in Anse-au-Foulon, a small cove where visitors can warm up in a new barrel sauna on the riverbank — a perfect ending to a unique adventure. As far as Harvey knows, Quebec is the only place in the world where you can go ice canoeing for fun.

## High-speed sledding in Charlevoix

At Le Massif de Charlevoix, a ski area about an hour northeast of Quebec City, you can go zipping down Mount Liguori on an old-school wooden sled with views of the expansive St. Lawrence River below. The river measures about 14 miles wide here (as far as the eye can see), making it look like a giant lake dotted with ice floes and occasional ships passing by — absolutely stunning.

The ski area started in the early 1980s, when school buses whisked skiers from the base area to the summit. Two lifts



KARI BODNARCHUK

opened in 1992 and then Daniel Gauthier, coounder of Cirque du Soleil, purchased the ski area in 2002 and built the property into a four-season resort. Sledding — also called "recreational luge" — was added in 2011.

During the two-hour sledding adventure, participants 10 and older use a wooden sled that has a woven bed, plastic runners, and no steering or brakes. No need to panic, though. Sledders (wearing mandatory helmets and winter boots with good grip) first get a quick lesson at the base area on how to turn and stop with one's feet — by simply placing feet flat on the ground and then pressing down with one or both feet to create drag (leaning one's body helps on corners, too). Riders and their assigned sleds then get driven by snowcat to the

top of Mount Liguori and begin their 4.6-mile descent.

It's not just a nonstop high-octane run. The group stops at a warming hut about halfway down the mountain for hot chocolate and vegetable broth. Farther down the trail, riders must dismount and walk their sleds across a bridge and up a small hill to get over the Little St. Francois River.

The rest of the time, however, it is — or can be — a wild ride (you can adjust the thrill level by adjusting your speed) down a wide groomed path that has hairpin turns (netting along the sides will catch you if you get out of control) and offers views of the river and boreal forest.

The resort has 53 ski trails and nine lifts for skiers and snowboarders, but you won't see

**Ice canoers (above) take a break on an ice floe in the middle of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec City. Le Massif de Charlevoix offers a downhill sledding adventure on a wooden sled that has a woven bed, plastic runners, and no steering or brakes. Sledders later, dismount and walk their sleds across a bridge (left) and up a small hill to get over the Little St. Francois River.**

the alpine trails until the final stretch of the sledding route (a rope keeps sledders and skiers separate). The resort also offers "nocturnal sledding" through April 6 for those who want to experience this adventure at night, guided by headlamp.

## Winter sports in nearby national park

For another perfect day-tripping adventure, head 30 miles north of Quebec City to Jacques-Cartier National Park, which has plenty of terrain to explore by fat bike, snowshoes, or "skishoes" (wide cross-country skis with bindings that work with regular winter boots or waterproof hiking shoes) — all available for rent at the visitor's center.

The area, named after a French explorer, overlaps a wildlife reserve that's home to moose, caribou, and Canadian lynx (you may have to come back in warmer months to spot those)

and contains a beautiful, glaciated valley, pristine rivers, and forests of black spruce, yellow birch, and maple trees.

In winter months, the park offers more than 6 miles of easy-to-intermediate fat-biking trails (the wider tires provide good traction on firmer snow), nearly 60 miles of snowshoe trails, and a 35-mile Nordic ski loop that takes two to three days to complete.

For a unique experience, rent a pair of skishoes or "hoks" for exploring. These versatile free-heel skis let you glide along packed snow, stomp through deep powder on untracked paths, and move a lot faster than traveling by snowshoes. They have a short skin on the bottom to help with traction. (The name "hok" comes from Siberia's Altai Mountains where the word, in the local Tuvan language, means "ski.")

On a visit last winter, a friend and I skied alongside the river up to a warming hut just over a mile from the visitor's center, then over a bridge and along a rugged path for a while before retracing our steps. We only saw one family out snowshoeing and one fat biker in several hours.

There's plenty to keep you entertained in and around Quebec City come wintertime, whether you're heading into the wilderness or getting out on the city's icy river.

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