

Moving to New Hampshire

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Introduction

So, you're thinking of moving to New Hampshire. Perhaps you've been lured by visions of fiery autumn landscapes, quaint colonial towns, and the siren song of no sales or income tax. Or maybe you just really, really like granite. Whatever your reasons, you've picked up this guide, which means you're either seriously contemplating the move or you're lost in a bookstore and this was the closest thing to grab while you reorient yourself. In either case, welcome. Let's get you sorted.

First, a crucial disclaimer. This book is a guide, not a gospel. Laws, regulations, tax codes, and the general mood of the populace can shift more quickly than a New England weather forecast. While we've done our best to provide accurate, up-to-date information, the world keeps spinning. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that you treat this book as a starting point. Before you rent that moving truck or sell your prized collection of commemorative spoons, please check the appropriate government sources and official websites for the latest, most accurate information. Think of us as the friend who gives you the lay of the land, but you should still consult an actual map before you go hiking. The official website for the State of New Hampshire is a great place to begin your own research.

Now, let's set some ground rules. This guide assumes a few things about you. It assumes you're already living in the United States and have a basic understanding of how things work here. We're not going to waste your time explaining what a DMV is or how to forward your mail. There are countless generic moving guides for that. This book is for the person who wants to know the *specifics* of New Hampshire. We're diving deep into the Granite State's unique personality, its delightful quirks, and its occasional frustrations. We're here to tell you things you won't find in a tourism brochure, like how to survive mud season, why your neighbors might seem a bit frosty at first, and what a "Masshole" is (and how to avoid being labeled one).

You've chosen a state with a motto that gets right to the point: "Live Free or Die." This isn't just a catchy phrase you'll see on license plates; it's an ethos woven into the very fabric of the state. Penned in a toast by Revolutionary War General John Stark, it reflects a fierce independence and a deep-seated belief in personal liberty that influences everything from state politics to local town meetings. This philosophy

manifests in some truly unique ways. For example, New Hampshire is the only state in the nation that does not have a mandatory seatbelt law for adults. It's also one of a handful of states with no general sales tax or personal income tax. This independent streak is something you'll encounter again and again, and understanding it is key to understanding your new home.

This spirit of self-reliance and minimal government intervention shapes daily life in ways both big and small. It's why the state doesn't sell liquor in grocery stores but runs its own highly efficient (and strategically located) liquor and wine outlets, often right on the highway. It's a place where you can buy fireworks that are illegal in neighboring states and where the right to bear arms is robustly protected. This fierce individualism is a major draw for many, but it also comes with its own set of responsibilities and trade-offs, which we'll explore in the chapters to come.

New Hampshire is often called the "Granite State," a nod to its extensive granite formations and quarries. But the nickname also suits the character of its people: solid, resilient, and sometimes a little rugged around the edges. Don't mistake a reserved demeanor for unfriendliness. Granite Staters are known for their practicality and a "get-it-done" attitude. They are industrious, self-reliant, and possess a dry wit that can take some getting used to. They value community but also cherish their privacy. They're the kind of neighbors who will help you pull your car out of a snowbank at midnight but might not ask for a cup of sugar for the first six months. We'll give you a crash course on how to navigate these social subtleties and make friends with your famously reserved neighbors.

The state is a place of beautiful contradictions. It's a state with one of the lowest crime rates in the country, yet it boasts a deeply ingrained gun culture. It has no income tax, but property taxes are among the highest in the nation. It's a place of stunning natural beauty, with the majestic White Mountains and a sliver of picturesque coastline, yet it also has its share of gritty former mill towns that are finding new life. This is not a homogenous state, and your experience will vary wildly depending on where you choose to put down roots. That's why we've dedicated a chapter to the nine distinct regions of New Hampshire, each with its own personality, from the bustling Seacoast to the remote Great North Woods.

One of the first things you'll need to understand is the state's unique political landscape. New Hampshire is home to the largest state legislature in the United States, with 400 members in the House of Representatives. This means there's roughly one representative for every 3,500 people. Your state rep could literally be your mail carrier, your kid's soccer coach, or the person ahead of you in line at the grocery store. This creates a form of government that is incredibly accessible and hyper-local. On the flip side, it can also lead to some spirited and sometimes chaotic political debates. And let's not forget the New Hampshire Primary, the first-in-the-nation presidential primary that turns the state into the center of the political universe

every four years. Get ready for a front-row seat to the political circus.

Let's talk about the weather, because in New Hampshire, the weather isn't just small talk; it's a way of life. The state experiences four distinct and dramatic seasons. The fall foliage is so breathtaking it causes traffic jams. The winters are long, cold, and snowy, requiring a good set of snow tires and a healthy appreciation for flannel. Summers are gloriously warm and humid, perfect for enjoying the state's many lakes and hiking trails. And then there are the unofficial seasons: the glorious, all-too-brief spring we call "three weeks of glorious fall" in reverse, and the infamous "mud season," a slushy, messy affair that will test the suspension of your car and the depths of your soul. We'll give you the unvarnished truth about what to expect from each season and how to prepare for it.

Of course, moving to a new state involves a lot of practicalities, and we've got you covered there too. We'll walk you through the process of getting your car registered, a task that can feel like a bureaucratic labyrinth if you don't know the proper steps. We'll delve into the housing market, which can be as competitive as a black fly in a crowded tent. For those moving from more urban areas, we'll even introduce you to the wonderful world of well water and septic systems, essential knowledge for anyone considering a more rural lifestyle. And because we want you to be fully prepared, we'll also introduce you to your new non-human neighbors: moose, black bears, ticks, and the dreaded black flies.

This book is designed to be your trusted companion as you embark on this exciting new chapter. We'll share the inside jokes, the local lingo, and the unwritten rules of the road. We'll tell you where to find the best apple cider donuts and why you should be wary of driving at dusk during moose mating season. Our goal is to give you a realistic, humorous, and practical guide to what it's really like to live in the Granite State. We won't sugarcoat the challenges, but we'll also celebrate the incredible quality of life that awaits you.

So, whether you're drawn by the promise of liberty, the allure of the mountains, or simply the desire for a change of pace, you're on the verge of joining a community of independent, resilient, and fiercely proud individuals. New Hampshire is a state that rewards self-sufficiency and a good sense of humor. It's a place where you can build a life that is truly your own. We're just here to help you get started. Now, let's dive in and figure out which New Hampshire is the right one for you.

CHAPTER ONE: Which New Hampshire Are You? A Guide to the Nine Regions (and Their Nine

Personalities)

Welcome to the a la carte state. Choosing to move to New Hampshire is one thing; choosing *where* in New Hampshire to move is another kettle of fish entirely. And friend, it's a big kettle, full of very different, very opinionated fish. The Granite State is not a monolith. It's a patchwork of distinct regions, each with a fiercely guarded identity, a unique culture, and a specific flavor of resident. Your daily life, your commute, your neighbors, and your definition of "traffic" will be wildly different depending on whether you land on the Seacoast or in the Great North Woods. Picking the right region is the single most important decision you'll make.

To help you find your tribe, we're going to break the state down. Officially, New Hampshire's Division of Travel and Tourism divides the state into seven regions. Unofficially, and in the spirit of a state with 400 representatives, things get a little more granular. Locals will argue endlessly about hyper-specific sub-regions and where the lines are drawn. For the sake of your sanity and ours, we're going to introduce you to the seven main players, but we'll also zoom in on a couple of extra "personalities" within the most populous area, bringing our grand total to nine. Think of it as a personality quiz, but instead of finding out which breakfast cereal you are, you're figuring out where you'll be happiest shoveling snow for five months a year.

The Great North Woods: For the Aspiring Hermit

If your primary motivation for moving is to get away from other humans, congratulations, you've found your homeland. The Great North Woods is the northernmost tip of the state, a vast, remote wilderness that bumps up against the Canadian border. This is New Hampshire in its most undiluted, rugged form. The population is sparse, the forests are dense, and the moose outnumber the people by a margin that would be alarming anywhere else. Towns like Pittsburg and Colebrook are outposts of civilization in a landscape dominated by towering pines and pristine lakes.

Life here is lived outdoors, and not in a "weekend warrior" kind of way. Hunting, fishing, and snowmobiling (or "sledding," as it's more commonly known) aren't just hobbies; they are fundamental pillars of the culture and economy. The region is home to "Ride the Wilds," an interconnected ATV trail system with over 1,000 miles to explore. This is a place for people who measure distance in hours, not miles, and who consider a trip to a big-box store a major expedition. Don't move here looking for a bustling nightlife or a plethora of artisanal cheese shops. Do move here if your idea of a perfect evening is the sound of loons on a lake and the freedom to walk a mile without seeing another soul. Just be prepared: services are few and far between, cell signal is a precious commodity, and your social life might revolve around the local general store.

The White Mountains: For the Scenery-Obsessed Adventurer

This is the New Hampshire you've seen on postcards. The White Mountains region is home to the highest peak in the Northeast, Mount Washington, and a breathtaking national forest that covers a huge swath of the state. It's a four-season playground that draws millions of tourists each year, and for good reason. The scenery is legitimately jaw-dropping, with dramatic peaks, cascading waterfalls, and scenic drives like the famous Kancamagus Highway. Towns such as North Conway, Lincoln, and Littleton are hubs of activity, catering to hikers, skiers, climbers, and the formidable "leaf peepers" who descend every autumn.

Living here means sharing your backyard with a constant stream of visitors. The economy is almost entirely driven by tourism, so if you're in the hospitality or service industry, you'll find opportunities. You'll also find traffic, particularly on fall weekends and holiday ski weeks. The vibe is a mix of die-hard locals who have been here for generations and a transient population of seasonal workers. It's a place for those whose lives revolve around outdoor recreation. If the first thing you do in the morning is check the ski report or the trail conditions, you'll fit right in. If you hate waiting in line for brunch behind a family in matching flannel, you might want to look elsewhere.

The Lakes Region: For the Captain of Your Own Ship

Centered around the sprawling Lake Winnepesaukee, the Lakes Region is New England's summer vacationland. Life here revolves around the water. From Memorial Day to Labor Day, the population swells as second-home owners and tourists flock to the region's 250-plus lakes and ponds. Towns like Meredith, Wolfeboro, and Laconia hum with the energy of boaters, water-skiers, and families enjoying a classic summer getaway. The vibe is decidedly relaxed, a bit nostalgic, and, in the summer, very, very busy.

Come winter, the region takes a deep breath. The fair-weather crowds depart, and a quiet calm settles over the frozen lakes, now dotted with ice fishing huts. This seasonal boom-and-bust cycle defines the area's rhythm. Living here full-time means embracing both the summer chaos—including the legendary Laconia Motorcycle Week—and the profound stillness of the off-season. It's an ideal spot for retirees, those who work remotely, or anyone who believes that happiness is a pontoon boat and a well-stocked cooler. Be warned, however: that dream of a waterfront cottage comes with a hefty price tag.

The Dartmouth-Lake Sunapee Region: For the Cultured Country Dweller

Straddling the Connecticut River on the state's western border, this region offers a unique blend of Ivy League intellect and rural New England charm. It's anchored by Hanover, home to Dartmouth College and the renowned Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, and the beautiful Lake Sunapee, a popular spot for recreation. This

combination creates a "brains and beauty" atmosphere that sets it apart from other rural areas. The presence of the college and medical center fuels a robust economy in healthcare, tech, and education and infuses the area with a vibrant arts and culture scene.

The lifestyle here is a bit more polished than in other parts of the state. You're more likely to find a farm-to-table bistro than a greasy spoon diner. The landscape is one of rolling hills, historic covered bridges, and quaint town centers. It's a magnet for academics, doctors, and professionals who want a high quality of life without the intensity of a major metropolitan area. The region offers four-season outdoor activities, from hiking the Appalachian Trail to skiing at Mount Sunapee, but it's all done with a slightly more refined, Patagonia-clad sensibility. It's the perfect place for those who want to discuss Kant on a kayak.

The Monadnock Region: For the Fiercely Independent Artist

Nestled in the state's southwestern corner, the Monadnock Region is often called New Hampshire's "cultural corner." Named for the iconic Mount Monadnock, one of the most-climbed mountains in the world, this area is a haven for artists, writers, artisans, and independent thinkers. Towns like Peterborough and Keene have a distinctly bohemian, self-reliant vibe. The region is characterized by its rolling farmland, historic villages, and a deep-seated "buy local" ethos that supports a thriving network of farmers' markets, craft galleries, and small, independent businesses.

The Monadnock region has a long history of attracting creative types, thanks in part to institutions like the MacDowell Colony, an acclaimed artists' residency program in Peterborough. This fosters a community that is both intellectually stimulating and deeply connected to the land. The politics here can be a bit more varied than in other rural areas, with a strong libertarian streak coexisting with progressive values. It's the kind of place where you can buy organic goat cheese from a guy who also happens to be a world-renowned sculptor. If you're looking for a strong sense of community, a vibrant arts scene, and a place that marches to the beat of its own drummer, you've found your home.

The Seacoast: For the Foodie Who Can Afford It

Yes, New Hampshire has a coastline. It's only 18 miles long, but the state makes every inch count. The Seacoast is the most densely populated and, by a wide margin, the most expensive region in the state. Its hub is Portsmouth, a historic port city with a hip, sophisticated vibe, cobblestone streets, and a nationally recognized restaurant scene. Due to its proximity to Boston, the Seacoast often feels more like a northern suburb of that city than a part of New Hampshire, with a faster pace and a higher cost of living to match.

The lifestyle here is a blend of historic New England charm and modern, urban energy. You're never far from a great meal, a craft brewery, a live music venue, or the beach. Towns like Exeter and Dover offer their own unique appeal, with historic architecture and growing downtowns. In the summer, the area buzzes with tourists heading to Hampton Beach for the classic boardwalk experience. This is the place for young professionals, foodies, and anyone who wants the amenities of a small city with easy access to both the ocean and the mountains. Just be prepared for the sticker shock when you start looking at real estate.

The Merrimack Valley: The State's Economic Engine (with Three Distinct Personalities)

The Merrimack Valley is the demographic and economic heart of New Hampshire. Following the path of the Merrimack River, this south-central region contains the state's three largest cities—Manchester, Nashua, and the capital, Concord—and about a third of its total population. It's the hub for jobs in tech, healthcare, and finance. But calling it one region is a bit of a misnomer. The Merrimack Valley is really a collection of distinct sub-regions, each with its own personality. We'll break it down into three.

Manchester and Nashua: The Urban Core

If you're looking for something resembling city life in New Hampshire, you'll find it here. Manchester, the state's largest city, and Nashua, the second largest, are former mill towns that have reinvented themselves as economic hubs. They offer the most diversity, the most job opportunities, the most restaurants, and the most traffic you'll find in the state. The lifestyle is a mix of dense suburban and urban, with access to an airport (Manchester-Boston Regional Airport), sports arenas, and a more bustling social scene. This corridor is popular with young professionals and families seeking convenience and employment.

Concord: The Government Town

As the state capital, Concord has a unique personality. It's smaller and generally quieter than Manchester or Nashua, with a tidy, walkable downtown and a professional atmosphere dominated by state government, law, and related industries. It offers a good balance of amenities—restaurants, coffee shops, and a great independent cinema—without the hustle of the bigger cities. Concord provides a dense suburban feel and is often cited for its high quality of life, making it a popular choice for families and those who want to be in the center of the state's political universe without being overwhelmed by it.

The Souhegan Valley and Border Towns: The Boston Commuter Zone

The southernmost tier of the Merrimack Valley, encompassing towns like Hollis, Amherst, and Milford, is defined by one major factor: its proximity to Massachusetts.

This is prime commuter country, a collection of affluent suburbs and charming small towns that serve as bedroom communities for people working in and around Boston. These towns often have excellent schools, a high quality of life, and a classic New England feel. The trade-off, of course, is a higher cost of living and the daily reality of commuting on Route 3. This area is for those who want the New Hampshire lifestyle—no income tax, more space—but need or want the economic opportunities of the Greater Boston area.

This is a sample preview. Purchase the book to read the full content.

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