Although Vermont is known for skiing, it is also a wonderful place where non-skiers can experience a quintessential New England winter.

Vermont comes alive at this time of year, when the tall-reaching pines add color to the mountains and ice-glazed ponds beg for the dance of skaters. It's the perfect destination for families, couples or individuals.
Where to Stay

Depending on your destination and who is traveling with you, there is no shortage of delightful options throughout the state, from country inns and one-of-a-kind B&Bs to full-service hotels.

In Southern Vermont, the Four Columns Inn in Newfane, about 15 miles from Brattleboro, is an outstanding choice.

Staying at the Four Columns is like visiting your long-lost family; you feel welcome the moment you walk through the door. If you’ve come to relax and unwind, this is the place to do it. Many rooms feature fireplaces and soaker tubs with views of the woods, which are ripe for hiking.

The inn’s farm-to-table Artisan Restaurant & Tavern is a must for sampling local fresh foods expertly prepared. Each morning, come down for a complimentary continental breakfast that includes farm-fresh scrambled eggs, homemade bread and muffins, fresh fruit and local Vermont-made yogurt.

If you’ve come to Vermont via Interstate 89, consider a stay at the unique Firehouse Inn, a B&B located in Barre’s historic downtown in Central Vermont. The Queen Anne-style building was built in 1904 as a firehouse, but it was renovated into four luxury suites in 2013. Its nostalgic charm is intact — starting with the red double doors in front and the wall of framed portraits of Barre fire chiefs. The main floor hosts the Ladder 1 Grill and Pub, which offers a casual menu from burgers to steaks.

Burlington, located in Northwest Vermont, is worthy of its own weekend. As quaint and traditional as Vermont can be, it is also quite progressive. Vermonters make a conscious effort to support local farmers and artisans, and the Hotel Vermont is a testament to that philosophy. All of its sleek, minimalist-designed guestrooms feature accessories by local artisans and boast local art.

As you might expect, its restaurants — Hen of the Wood, Juniper and Bleu — follow suit, incorporating locally produced ingredients into its menus.

What to Do

The list of what to do in Vermont is a long one, but here are a few seasonal ideas, as well as some pure Vermont suggestions to get you started.

If you like the snow but are not a skier, take advantage of other activities. How long has it been since you went sledding? Hop on a toboggan with your kids and head down the hill or go tubing. There’s also ice skating — most Vermont towns have community rinks or can recommend local ponds.
If you're staying at a traditional inn, it may offer horse-drawn sleigh rides. Snowmobiling is another possibility. Many ski resorts, including Smugglers' Notch and Stratton Mountain can hook you up, give you instructions and even lead you on a snowmobiling tour.

If that isn't enough, you might go dogsledding, give ice fishing a try or put on a pair of snowshoes for a snowy trek.

After a day in the snow, come in and sit by the fire at your inn — or maybe consider getting a spa treatment. The Four Columns has a Wellness Center offering spa treatments, a private steam bath, shower and small gym. Another to consider is The Spa at the Woodstock Inn & Resort. The 10,000-square-foot facility uses organic products and features a Signature Experience for each season.
When you feel like exploring, head to a distillery, microbrewery or winery. Saxtons River Distillery in Brattleboro takes one of Vermont’s greatest exports, maple syrup, and turns it into flavorful liqueur and spirits. If you’re in Burlington, check out a Pub Crawl Brew Tour that introduces you to award-winning beers and takes in the local nightlife. Fresh Tracks Farm Vineyard & Winery in Berlin is another example of Vermonters’ commitment to sustainability; they produce a variety of wines using geothermal and solar energy. Tasting rooms are open throughout the year, but during the winter holidays they’re adorned with beautiful lights.
If you like the idea of tasting before buying, find some cheese to go with the wine you just sampled. Cabot Cheese has retail stores (with free samples, of course) in Cabot, Quechee and Waterbury Center. Grafton Village Cheese in Brattleboro is another choice for free samples and a lesson on cheese making. You can shop there for cheese, jams, wine and kitchen accessories.

Don’t forget about dessert. Vermont produces 40 percent of the country’s maple syrup, and your visit must include a stop at one of the state’s many sugarhouses featuring a variety of maple products you will absolutely want to take home. Make sure to stock up on syrup, but you might also want to buy maple sugar, maple pepper, maple taffy, maple scones and more.

With all the mention of shopping, you must visit a Vermont country store, a long-time tradition. Shop for souvenirs, old-fashioned toys and much more. There are dozens of them located throughout the state.

So get out of town for a long winter weekend — or more — and enjoy Vermont, reminiscent of bygone days but with a 21st-century attitude.

Source URL: http://www.bostonmagazine.com/sponsor-content/the-non-skiers-guide-to-vermont/