

MOG TRAVELS

CLASSIC ROAD TRIP HEADING FOR A FALL IN NEW ENGLAND



It's quite an epic undertaking, organising a tour and shipping vehicles to another continent, but it's all in a day's work for Sarah Dowling, director of Classic Travelling. Planning for the New England Fall Colours Tour started over two years ago, and included a full reconnaissance trip driving the routes on the same days of the year as the actual tour. Sarah shares her fantastic New England autumnal adventure with MOG.



We spent three weeks touring New England, starting and finishing in New York, and covering 1850 miles through Long Island, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Cape Cod, Boston, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. Along with my 1981 Morgan 4/4 we had a 1935 Ford V8, Jaguar E-types and XKs, an Aston Martin, a Mercedes – and two other US Morgans for a couple of days.

We started the tour in New Jersey and our first proper driving day, dawned bright and sunny. There was much excitement and anticipation as we were about to drive across Manhattan. New Yorkers cheered, commented and smiled at our cars. The Ford V8 broke down on the Brooklyn Bridge (faulty coil) but the owner was most chuffed with this new claim to fame – and no other cars hooted, yet waited patiently! Surely unheard of in NYC?

We drove along Long Island to the very smart town of East Hampton, where we stayed in a most delightful and charming inn. Monday morning was a drive across to Sag Harbor and Shelter Island to the North Fork, where we took the ferry to Connecticut. Quite a few people visited Mystic Seaport before heading on to Newport, Rhode Island, where we stayed two nights. We chose to visit 'The Breakers' and Marble House, both Vanderbilt summer 'cottages'. We combined this with the Cliff Walk and a stroll around town, followed by an idyllic sunset cruise for the group aboard an 80 year old, 80ft schooner.

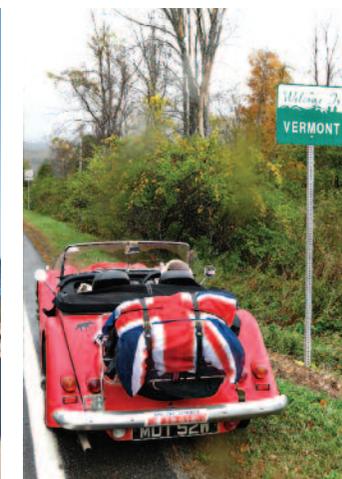
On Wednesday we headed over to Cape Cod, for an overnight stay in Chatham, a charming village and many of us headed to the beach to see a large colony of seals playing on the sand. The following day saw us exploring the Cape, driving up to Provincetown, and then along the north shore. From the Cape we drove north to Boston, where we stayed for two nights, giving us a day off to explore this lovely city – sadly in the rain.



Leaving Boston we headed north, travelling through New Hampshire and along the coast into Maine. Our Inn was situated right on the shore with lovely views across the water, and dinner was a really fun lobster bake, with TWO lobsters per person, along with clams, steamed/baked wrapped in seaweed over an open fire.



We left Maine and travelled across country into New Hampshire to Lake Winnepesaukee. This is Mitt Romney homeland and in the run up to the election the area is literally littered with election posters. It was a super drive, and it stayed dry and sunny, with our first real taste of the glorious fall colours. We stayed the night in Meredith at a stunning hotel – pretty much everyone's favourite so far – with stunning Adirondack-style decor, situated right on the lake edge.



We left Meredith, again in sunshine, driving north to the White Mountains and Mount Washington. The Auto Road to the top is famed, and it's free for 'antique vehicles', but sadly only 5 of our cars actually made it to the top. The gradient is steep and the authorities recommend that cars only drive at 20mph or less. This means climbing in 1st or 2nd gear and going too slowly, causing a few cars to boil over. Naturally, my trusty little Morgan made it (as did the 1935 Ford, 2 Jaguars and a Mercedes) and we were rewarded with great views, which must be really spectacular on a gin-clear day. This was our halfway point of the tour, so we had a fabulous four-course dinner and overnight stay at The Mount Washington Hotel.

The colours were incredible as we were at about 90% 'peak colour' and even in the rain and low cloud that we occasionally experienced, the oranges, reds, golds and yellows were vibrant and glowing. Driving the Kancamagus Highway is a real highlight – a beautiful road and swathed with sensational fall colours, a river and sweeping views makes for a very enjoyable 35 miles. From there we crossed the Franconia Notch, into Vermont and to Stowe, our destination for the next two nights. ➔





The journey from Stowe was a beautiful sunny day and it was hoods/tops down all day. Temptation Alley (AKA route 100) beckoned with visits to Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream Factory, before a large dose of culture at the excellent and unmissable Shelburne Museum.

Next day we made the short journey south to Dorset, VT – just 70 miles. It was a lovely drive pootling along the lanes and past all the fall colours, through little villages, and well off the beaten track. We stopped in Weston to enjoy the old-time feel of the stores and some of their museum-piece artefacts. Dorset, just north of Manchester, VT, is a charming little town. It was famed for its marble quarry (now disused and a lovely natural swimming lake) and therefore the pavements and chimney stacks are made from the local material. It feels very decadent walking on the smooth grey-white slabs, many of which are huge (1m x 2m). The Dorset Inn is a most delectable place to stay. The enticing fire, hot apple cider and fresh home-made donuts ensured we were all soon filling the enchanting sitting room with plenty of chatter.

The following day saw folk heading off in different directions: a tour of the surroundings hills and dales, shopping in the outlet stores of Manchester, driving the Equinox Skyline Drive, fly-fishing on the Battenkill with Orvis, or visiting Hildene, the former home of the Lincolns.

We left Vermont for Massachusetts and the Berkshires. We visited the offices and store of Hemmings Motor News, America's collector car 'bible', in Bennington, drove over the mountains and joined the Mohawk Trail to Shelburne Falls. The route and colours were fabulous.



Our penultimate day was a simple circle of just 30 miles, but jam-packed with things to do and visit. We started with the Hancock Shaker Village, once the third largest Shaker community in the USA. It was extremely interesting to see many examples of Shaker ingenuity, from tools and architecture to the social structure and ways of working. We then pressed on to Stockbridge and the Norman Rockwell Museum. The eponymous illustrator was a superb artist and had over 300 Saturday Evening Post covers to his name – one of the reasons he is known as 'America's best-loved artist'. It truly exceptional museum-gallery and well worth a visit.

The final day was a long one – 170 miles and a time limit to get to the docks at Newark by 3.30pm. Easily done, but it ensured we all left early for what is a gorgeous drive through the villages and by-ways of the Berkshires and into the Lichfield Hills of Connecticut, passing scenery was bucolic and enchanting.

Our final hotel, in Hoboken, on the shores of the Hudson River, had the most outstanding views of Manhattan – incredibly striking and so iconic. The sunrise was glistening on the buildings and the Hudson River - very beautiful and a total contrast to the wonderful countryside and rural areas we visited elsewhere on the tour. It was a fabulous tour with wonderfully varied scenery, and plenty to do and see. And my wonderful Morgan didn't miss a beat – excellent as ever. **MOG**

