

## **Daily Mail** 24 HOURS A DAY

### **Beaches, resorts, golf courses and spectacular scenery all on your doorstep**

#### **New England: it's always in season**

By Robert Liebman

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Skiers, sailors and sunbathers are spoiled for choice, but if your passion is for autumn foliage, the only place to be is New England.

With four distinct seasons, a long coast, and beaches as well as ski resorts, this vast, diverse region is also an excellent location for a second home.

Maine, the most northerly of the six New England states, is the first to benefit from the annual color-change spectacular as colder weather sweeps in from the north in September. The foliage festival gradually moves south and usually peters out toward the end of October.

And once the autumn has passed, the winter snows make the area spectacular in a whole new way.

Maine is the largest of the six states and is roughly equal in size to the other five combined. They are New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island on the Atlantic Ocean, Connecticut on Long Island Sound, and landlocked Vermont, with its first-rate ski resorts.

The hilly terrain is reminiscent of rural Ireland, and the region's main city, Boston, has strong Irish roots. New England is approximately twice the size of Ireland.

If all you care about is golf, and you aren't concerned about international airports and fancy restaurants, you can buy a large house with land in a remote area for less than £70,000 (prices are particularly competitive now the euro is so strong). Golf courses are ubiquitous throughout New England, which also has many rivers and lakes.

Wise buyers, concerned about rising values and exit strategies, are more likely to opt for one of the region's many upmarket areas. Newport, Rhode Island, is renowned for selling, and Cape Cod, Nantucket, and Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts, and Bar Harbor in Maine, are famous coastal resorts. For skiers, Stowe and Killington are among the major brand names.

The 140-kilometre long Lake Champlain is one of many inland locations between the coast and the mountains that caters for sailors, swimmers, and skiers alike.

In the more elite resorts, McMansions can go for millions, even tens of millions of dollars, but even in popular resort areas, houses on an acre plot sell for less than £210,000.

Dublin-born corporate staff commercial real-estate attorney Aidan F. Browne works in Boston, lives in a suburb, and visits his holiday home in Quechee Lakes in Vermont with wife Jill and their three children as often as he can. He also makes frequent trips to Ireland.

A partner in the law firm of Sullivan and Worcester, Browne is an IRS representative partner of A&L, Goodbody, and of Ireland's largest law firms, and is on the board of his alma mata, University College Dublin.

"My firm represents many Irish companies, we have an office in Ireland, and I go back on business every month," he explains. "My son, Sam, and I are avid golfers and we play every year in the World Invitational Father and Son Tournament in Waterville in Kerry".

Autumn in Quechee Lakes is idyllic; "Our house overlooks several mountain ranges and in autumn, sitting on my deck. It becomes a blaze of color, yellows and reds interspersed with evergreen. It looks like flames."

Browne's home is part of Quechee Lakes Development, a planned private community with more than 400 single-family houses on nearly 5,500 acres in the Ottauquechee River Valley. It is located in central Vermont, just across the New Hampshire border, and about a two-hour drive from Boston. Most homes are on plots large enough to provide privacy but the development is commercial, with two 18-hole golf courses, ski area, tennis and squash courts, shops and restaurants. Browne's home is actually a farm on 12 acres, surrounded by 150 acres protected from development. "We had come on holidays to Quechee for many years and finally, about five years ago, bought a house here. The landscape is similar to Ireland. Rolling hills, mountain ranges, a lot of greenery – I could easily be in east Cork. Vermonters have a real affinity with nature, and their attitudes and mindset are liberal."

"We are walkers and hikers, and the Appalachian Trail is nearby. Jill is a cross-country and downhill skier, and our children started skiing when they were four years old. Maple syrup season in spring, with the streaming sugar branches, is also very attractive. Growing up on the poor side of north Dublin, I never thought I would find myself here."

Browne is familiar with the global property market professionally as well as personally, and he has confidence in this particular market niche: "American real estate will represent excellent value at least for the next 15 to 20 years. The reason is baby boomers. Look at our family, for example. Our two eldest children have left abroad, and our daughter will live on campus.

Our inlaws house will be too big, so we will buy a small flat in Boston, and retain our house as a family retreat. The value proposition of a destination resort like this is very high, the No. 1 asset class. Buying residential and commercial property in America is almost a no-brainer for Irish buyers.

Approximate starting prices are £60,000 for empty lots, £150,000 for a townhouse, and £250,000 for a detached house on an acre plot. Big plots do not necessarily entail big bucks. A 14-room mansion on an acre is currently asking £3m.



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