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Don't ski, don't care: New England ski towns that even a non-skier can love

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A two-fer: Waitsfield and Warren, Vt.

The twin towns of Waitsfield and Warren in the Mad River Valley offer a cool counterculture vibe and a thriving arts scene, just a snowball's-throw away from ski resorts Sugarbush and Mad River Glen. You could spend an entire weekend prowling the myriad galleries and studios here and not hit them all. Fuel up with a breakfast sandwich and coffee at the “almost world-famous” Warren Store (www.warrenstore.com), a general store that lives up to the name, and then make it a two-town gallery hop. Start with the Bundy Modern (www.bundymodern.com), and meander to Artisans' Gallery (www.vtartisansgallery.com), Waitsfield Pottery (www.waitsfieldpottery.com), Moosewalk Studios & Gallery (www.moosewalkstudios.com), and any others that draw you in. Pop into All Things Bright and Beautiful (www.allthingsbright.com) on Waitsfield's Bridge Street, to shop the owner's handmade ornaments and well-curated gift items. This being Vermont, there's a business devoted to small-batch beer or spirits — here, it's Mad River Distillers, makers of handcrafted rum, whisky, and brandy. For lunch, the Mad Taco is proof that you can find good Mexican food in Vermont. (Book in advance for dinner at the wildly popular American Flatbread.) If you've still got some juice, and there's white stuff on the ground, get your outdoorsy on at Ole's Cross-Country Center (www.olesxc.com), with a workout on their 30-mile network of groomed Nordic ski and snowshoe trails.

Where to stay: The Inn at Round Barn Farm (www.theroundbarn.com, from \$179) in Waitsfield is one of the finest places to stay in all of New England. Twelve simple but perfect rooms are set within a 19th century dairy farm. They also have a more modern annex, the 18-room Mad River Barn (from \$155), and a good on-site pub. www.madrivervalley.com.