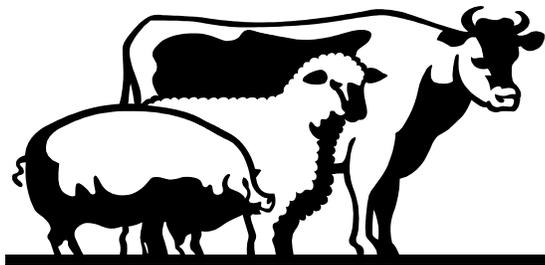


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Farm Stays - Northern New England. Your Guide to an Unforgettable Farm Vacation

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Farm Stays—Northern New England
Your Guide to an Unforgettable Family Vacation

By Marcia Passos Duffy

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Why Stay at a Farm?

As you plan your next vacation, do you get sticker shock from the cost of staying at a resort? Are you tired of the usual resorts or theme-parks where you are passively entertained (and constantly opening your wallet)? Are you searching for a vacation that will be relaxing for you and an unforgettable experience for the kids? Do you want to be at a place that is *real* and not manufactured?

What you need is a good old fashioned farm vacation.

Staying at a farm – even if you just stay a weekend – is an experience your family will never forget. If you have kids, it is a chance for them to experience firsthand where food comes from and even help with farm chores, such as feeding baby lambs and collecting eggs. It is a way out of the hustle and bustle of modern life – a retreat that brings you and your family back to America’s farm roots and a calmer, simpler way of life.

Farm vacations are not new. In fact, 50 years ago city dwellers who needed a break would call their country cousins for a respite from urban life. However, today, with less than 2% of the U.S. population now living on working farms, having a relative with a farm is unlikely for most people. But now more than ever – with the frenetic pace of suburban & urban life at full tilt – we all desperately need a vacation “away from it all.”

Luckily there still many farmers who, in addition to farming, love to play host to their urban “cousins.” These farmers are part of an ever-growing trend of agri-tourism. According to a recent article in the

Your Guide to an Unforgettable Family Vacation

Boston Globe, the farm vacation is increasingly becoming a popular getaway among suburban families; this trend is being fueled by a surging interest in environmentally conscious tourism and the increased enthusiasm for local organic food among suburbanites and urban dwellers – who rightly believe that children ought to know and understand where food comes from.

What's it like to stay on a farm?

Imagine for a moment waking to the sound of the rooster crowing and chickens clucking. How about rolling out of bed and collecting fresh eggs for breakfast with your kids? You can then stroll around the farm, go fishing, milk a cow, sip lemonade on the rocking chair on the porch, feed a baby lamb out of a bottle or go for a hayride.

The pace and pressures of everyday life slip away. This is a place you can really “let go” on vacation, participate in some real down-to-earth activities, eat wholesome home-grown & cooked meals, and probably have the best sleep you've had in years.

Now this is what you can call a *vacation*.

Many parents who have taken a farm vacation report it is more relaxing than a Club Med or Disney vacation – and it promotes simpler values they want to instill in their children – like hard work and respect for nature.

A farm vacation is not only relaxing, but it is a true bargain. The average middle income American family spends hundreds of dollars annually in its two weeks' pursuit of pleasure and relaxation. You

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probably lay out even more money on camping equipment, special vehicles, boats, motorcycles, gasoline, motels, restaurants, camping fees, portable TVs, movies, liquor, repair bills and more. Sometimes you need a *vacation after your vacation* to recover from the stress of spending all that money and not really having a relaxing time.

Your farm vacation helps not only your family, but small family farms.

It is no secret that family farms and their way of life are at risk of being lost to large factory farms and development. But being resourceful people, farmers today are looking for new income streams. Hosting farm stays is one of those ways.

For farmers the influx of guests who are willing to pay for lodging and the “farm experience” is becoming vital to their economic survival and preserving the rural landscape. In fact, farms that include some kind of “agri-tourism” (such as farm stays) are managing to stay afloat and even thrive.

With many independent farms on the verge of extinction, cash-strapped farmers are finding a good stream of income hosting urban/suburban guests — who actually *want* to milk their cows and gather eggs.

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