

SENIOR TIMES

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FEATURING

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ABOUT THE COVER

Hot air balloonist Tim Hampton (r.- in red hat) takes people up, up and away in an out of this world adventure. The arrival of his colorful, magical balloon is greeted with smiles and makes strangers into neighbors.

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WIDE-EYED WONDER

Life is a breeze for local balloonist

by Pam Spence

Hot air balloon pilot Tim Hampton is a modern day Pied Piper. Whenever he lands his colorful balloon in the middle of a neighborhood, children tumble out of houses, laughing gleefully as neighbors come out to see what the ruckus is all about. For Hampton, this moment is the best thing about hot air ballooning. "I am a people person," he says, "and to

view, he sees that the arrival of a hot air balloon creates a magic moment when strangers who live next door to one another become neighbors. "They come out of their houses to see what is going on – you see them talking to each other – shaking hands. A lot of times they have been living next to each other for years and never spoken."

The experience of the balloon landing in their midst changes all of that. "I en-

"I always have a large crew," he says. "I invite everybody who is interested to come out and crew. We eat together and have a great time. I have had crewmembers of all ages – from 6 through 84 years old – there is something to do for every one who wants to help. It is a great way to get involved and meet new people."

Many of Hampton's crewmembers are past and present Ohio State University students who have taken the Introduction to Hot Air Ballooning class that he teaches through the College of Human Ecology, Department of Physical Education at OSU. "It is the only college course in hot air ballooning in the country," he says, "possi-

a societal shift. "I am an old war horse as far as the outdoor industry goes. I began in the 60s and have been involved my whole life. This shift arguably started in the 50s – 60s with TV. But people were still doing 'active' things well into the 70s. There was a major shift in the 80s when the video industry hit and VCRs and video became available.

"I also teach white water rafting at OSU and even in 1996, had 178 students in one class. By 2006, I had 17 students in that class. There has been an immense shift."

Riding in a hot air balloon is still on the "bucket list" for many seniors, says Hampton, even as younger people eschew the activity



see the excitement on people's faces, that wide eyed look from the kids, that's the best part of ballooning, right there."

"When we land in a neighborhood, we take the opportunity to talk to people, educate them about hot air ballooning – so they won't call 911 every time they see a balloon landing. Hot air balloons are legally allowed to launch or land anywhere: so we are not crashing or heading for power lines – honest!

"We give the kids cards, trinkets and some temporary tattoos. And the kids always want to help so we give them a job to do. In one neighborhood, there must have been 40 kids, between the ages of 5-9 who came out, so we gave them the job of holding the crown line – 40 kids hanging onto a rope – they loved it."

From where Hampton sits, with his birds' eye

courage balloonists to wave at people - interact with them. Even grumpy people will wave at a balloon," he says. At a recent landing in Genoa township, the crowd of onlookers swelled to 300, earning the landing a spot on the local news.

"I really enjoy public contact: I see a lot of what I do as entertaining people."

Hot air balloons cannot fly without a crew. "Hot air balloons, unlike other craft have no brakes, no steering wheel," says Hampton. "The ground crew helps to set up the balloon and get ready to launch as well as track the flight, follow in the chase car, then pack it back up and transport the pilot and passengers."

Many balloon pilots became pilots after being part of a balloon crew and Hampton is no exception. He crewed for a friend for 10 years before studying to become a pilot himself.



bly in the world. I only teach it twice a year as hot air ballooning is highly weather dependent."

He has taught the class for over a decade and has seen a gradual decline of interest in the class as well as an overall "graying" of the ballooning industry. "When I first offered the class, every course was filled, but numbers have declined to the point that it is sometimes difficult to get enough enrollees to run it."

And Hampton says the graying trend in ballooning in general has less to do with the economy and finances and more to do with

because it is not flashy or electronic or rock and roll. "Ballooning is quiet and peaceful," says Hampton. "People are astounded by what they see on a balloon ride: they are still in contact with the ground, they see it, hear it, smell it. They can see people on the ground; hear dogs barking, cars honking. This summer, we spooked an eagle and it was something to see it fly with us."

Because the industry is so highly regulated and pilots required to undergo rigorous training to become licensed – it typically takes

See **BALLOONING**, page 9

New Hampshire and Maine: Quintessential New England

By Aaron Leventhal

Green mountain ranges, rocky coastlines, charming historic villages and picturesque seaports await the visitor to rural New Hampshire and Coastal Maine. Far from urbanization, congested highways and big box commercialism, these New England states will delight your senses and nourish your soul. Hike, sail, fish, whale watch, kayak, canoe, gallery hop and sightsee. Or just lay back and relax.

This past June, my wife Beth and I traveled through rural New Hampshire's White Mountain region and Coastal Maine. We stayed in hospitable bed and breakfast inns, explored the mountains and seacoast, visited a vast array of quality attractions and returned to Columbus energized by a truly memorable tour.

The White Mountain Region, New Hampshire is New England's most mountainous region with Mt. Washington its highest peak at 6,288 ft.

Where to Stay: Franconia Inn (800-473-5299), features 35 cozy guest rooms, fine dining and the Rathskeller Lounge in a quiet, country setting just minutes away from all major natural attractions.

Dining: The Littleton Diner serves up comfort food near the landmark 1798 Littleton Grist Mill; Polly's Pancake Parlor in Sugar Hill is noted for its pancakes, waffles and French toast topped with pure maple sugar; and the Woodstock Inn Station and Brewery offers casual dining on its outside patio.

What to do: The Flume Gorge in Franconia Notch is famous for its 90-ft. granite walls and wooden stairways leading to waterfalls and wooded trails; Lost River Gorge in Kinsman Notch offers guided interpretive tours along glacial gorges; the Mt. Washington Auto Road takes visitors to the summit, or ride the 80-passenger Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway. Frost Place, the 1859 farmhouse of poet Robert Frost, offers tours and a nature walk featuring his poems.

Acadia National Park, Maine, on Mount Desert Island, is a day's drive through hilly countryside. Rooster's Roadhouse in the beautiful mountain



Travel writer Aaron Leventhal at Beal's Lobster Pier

village of Bethel, Maine, is an excellent stop for lunch. Stroll through its vibrant downtown with its collection of shops and galleries.

Acadia covers one-third of the island and is the only national park in the northeast. You'll find 130 miles of hiking trails, 45 miles of carriage roads open to bicyclists, sand and cobblestone beaches, lakes, glacier-carved mountains and numerous quaint villages.

Where to Stay: Lindenwood Inn (800-307-5335), on the quiet side of the island in Southwest Harbor, was formerly a sea captain's house. Owned and managed by Jim and Fred, it has 15 guest rooms, gourmet breakfasts, outdoor pool, hot tub, and views of the harbor and Atlantic Ocean.

Dining: New England specialties abound, including boiled lobster, crab cakes, steamed clams, sea scallops, fresh fish, baked beans and blueberry pie. Our favorite was The Captain's Gallery on Beal's Lobster Pier, just a short walk from the inn, where lobsters right off the boat are served on picnic tables overlooking the harbor. Caf Drydock serves delicious, fresh seafood in Southwest Harbor's Village Center and Galyn's in Bar Harbor is popular for homemade soups, salads and a myriad of seafood dishes. In Acadia National Park, Jordan Pond House is noted for its formal afternoon teas and baked popovers served in the garden.

What to do: Begin with an hour-long narrated island tour on Oli's Trolleys through Bar Harbor, once the summer playground of the rich and famous, and up to the summit of Cadillac Mountain; the Whale Watch Co. has daily cruises aboard a jet-powered catamaran with naturalists pointing out whales, seals, osprey, porpoises and seabirds; a Lulu Lobster boat ride offers a glimpse into the life and work of the Maine lobster fisherman.

Other attractions include Acadia Air Tours for scenic flights in vintage biplanes and gliders; Bar Harbor Brewing Co.'s daily beer and wine tastings; and Historic Harbor Walking Tours, for a two-hour, guided tour of Bar Harbor with tales of life during its glorious Victorian heyday. Bar Harbor's thriving downtown has dozens of galleries, shops, pubs and cafes.

Maine's Midcoast, with its jagged cliffs meeting the Atlantic Ocean's rocky coastline, is the state's most popular resort destination. Camden, a picturesque seaside village on



Camden, Maine Harbor



Hartstone Inn, Camden, Maine

Penobscot Bay, has attracted artists, writers and vacationers for centuries with its luxurious mansions, vibrant downtown and busy harbor. To its south is Rockland, claimed to be the "Lobster Capital of the World" and home of Farnsworth Art Museum. Freeport, home of L.L. Bean, boasts more than 100 factory outlets.

Where to stay: Hartstone Inn and Hideaway (800-788-4823) is steps away from Camden Harbor. Built in 1835, the inn features 21 guest rooms, English-style gardens and meals prepared by award-winning chef and innkeeper Michael Salmon, who has cooked for the Beard House and Julia Child. Sumptuous breakfasts are included in the room fee, as well as complimentary hors d'oeuvres in the late afternoon. The chef prepares a different five-course dinner nightly.

Dining: The Lobster Pound in nearby Lincolnville Beach is open daily for lunch and dinner, with a large menu; Mariner's Grill overlooking the falls, serves breakfast all day and lunches of homemade soups, sandwiches and seafood platters. Around the corner from the Farnsworth Museum in Rockland is Caf Miranda, open daily for dinner with an internationally inspired menu.

What to do: Begin your visit with a delightful two-hour windjammer sail aboard The Surprise. Captains Jack and Barbara Moore will entertain you with seafaring tales as you cruise past islands, lighthouses and wildlife in Penobscot Bay. Ride to the summit of Mount Battie in Camden Hills State Park for a spectacular view of the bay. There are dozens of quality art galleries and specialty shops in downtown Camden. Celandoor Vineyards, in the rolling hillside near Lincolnville Beach, has free wine tastings and a retail shop. The Farnsworth Art Museum in nearby Rockland has a nationally renowned collection of 19th and 20th century American art, along with the Wyeth Center, with a permanent exhibit of works by three generations of Wyeths, N.C., Andrew and Jamie.

If you go: I suggest flying into Manchester, N.H. This will save you four days of driving, lodging and other expenses. Rent a car at the airport and begin your trip with a visit downtown to the Currier Museum of Art, noted for its fine American and European collections.

Leventhaltravel.com

Travel writer Aaron Leventhal has organized and will lead two trips in 2013. The first to South Beach (Miami Beach), Florida in January and the second to New England in June. For more information, go to www.leventhaltravel.com or call Aaron at 614-506-9666.

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