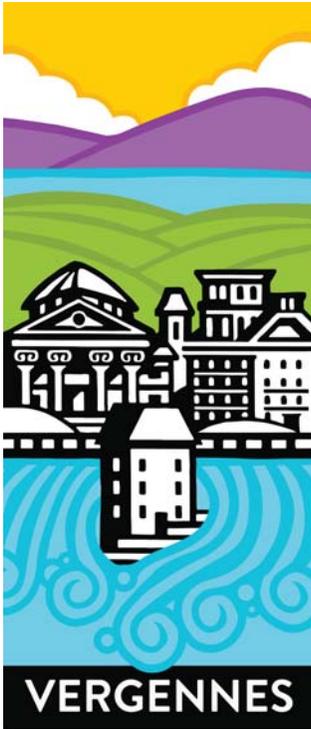


# My Vergennes ~ in 36 Hours



The first thing people usually ask me about Vergennes is how to pronounce it. Answer: vur-JENS; the town I once left behind and now, proudly call home.

At first glance Vergennes looks like one of Vermont's quintessential small towns. It's not a town, however, but rather the smallest and oldest city in Vermont. The "Little City" has gone through a revival not many can match. No longer a shy wallflower, Vergennes is dancing. Her evolving steps are swinging to the right beat, and she's dreaming up more.

I noticed a significant shift when I moved back in the early 2000s. A new spark had taken hold. I found an eclectic mix of people from all walks of life who were fashioning a delectable small-city concoction.

Nestled between Burlington and Middlebury (a convenient stop off Route 7), it's a perfect place that promises new flavors every time you visit. Here's my advice:

## Friday

### 2PM: Settle Inn

Stay local! There are great lodging options right in or near town. To experience one of the grand Victorian homes on Main Street, make reservations at [Emerson House](#), full breakfast included. Less than one mile south, the historic [Strong House Inn](#) offers themed rooms and modern amenities. Looking for something a little more connected to nature? Check out [Basin Harbor](#) along Lake Champlain. With its fairy-tale small cabins dotted along woody paths, their offerings include golf, boating, swimming and more.

### 3PM: Tour the Main Strip

First stop on historic Main Street is [Raintree](#), hand-crafted fine jewelry. Five years have gone by since husband and wife team Michael Tope and Shannon Mahoney relocated to Vergennes to live and set up their shop and studio. Open and bright with steampunk accents, the mood fits their custom designs made with high quality stones, gems and trademark black coral.

When your appetite for fine bling has been satiated, move on down to [Linda's Apparel](#) and [Men's Corner](#) on the intersection of Main and Green Street. Both shops carry a variety of fashion apparel and clothing for men, women and children with names like Carhart, Darn Tough socks, and their fun and elegant shoe-line, L'artiste.

Round the corner, and pop into [Hollyhocks Flower & Design](#). The immediate smell of fresh flowers and greenery overcomes the senses along with handmade candles, magical potted plants and other treasures to cherish.

To continue lavishing the olfactory sense, drop down into [Daily Chocolate](#). The shop's exotic earthy décor fits the bill for its decadent offerings. Submit yourself to heady aromas and try one of everything. "We make the freshest confections," quips owner Jen Roberts from behind the counter. No corn syrup here! All chocolates are made on site with local and/or organic ingredients.

If your sweet tooth isn't gratified, [lu·lu](#) ice cream will definitely conquer that craving. Winner of best ice cream in Vermont, each unique flavor is handcrafted in small artisan batches using local ingredients (a prevalent theme in the Green Mountain State).

Next stop is [Everywear for Everybody](#), catering to glamorous or casual fashion needs and desires - from evening gowns to leggings, great jewelry and a men's section too.

[Malabar](#) is right next door. Crisp Scandinavian colors set the scene for eclectic pieces for lifestyle and home. My favorites include dishes decorated with Klaus Haapaniemi's fantastical creatures, Kankan bags, and FIFI slippers. "It's a swanky store," owner Julie Jones says. I completely agree, as I admire a caterpillar-green bench, one more cool nuance coloring Julie's realm.

For your vintage cravings, visit [Sweet Charity](#); chock full of artistic and antique pre-loved goods. The shop is the public face of Women of Wisdom, a giving circle of ladies from the five-town area. All of the merchandise is donated and profits from the shop benefit a number of local charitable organizations. Last time I was in, I discovered a velveteen sofa fitting the taste of Marie Antoinette and fun vintage dishes from my grandmother's day.

### 6PM: Park Yourself at the Squeeze

My tip - ask for seating upstairs. Between the gothic bar, exposed brick walls, and the sculpted Rhinoceros art installation, you'll find a nook to nestle in this surprisingly intimate uptown space. Opened by the late Michel Mahe, who propelled the food movement in Vergennes with his first-born, [Black Sheep Bistro](#); the fare at the Squeeze is tasty with favorites like the Otter Creek Heritage Farm pork burger and their ginger mojito. I savor the spicy beverage while talking with Dicki Austin, [Park Squeeze](#) manager (and fellow Vergennesian.) on his take of the little city. "To some, the concept of city is tall buildings and terrible things," he says. We both agree that our city exudes that "cradled ease" one experiences in a small town.





## Saturday

### 9AM: Experience the Movement

Start your day by stretching it out and opening those chakras at [Vergennes Movement](#), the local yoga studio. Depending on which direction your downward dog takes you, tall second-story windows provide a view of grand maple trees or the rolling Green Mountains.

Next, learn a bit about Vergennes history by visiting the memorials in City Park. Down the street, visit the Falls Park overlook, on the north side of the Otter Creek Bridge and spanning the waterfall that powered Vergennes' early industries.

### 11AM Coffee & Exploration

Now is the time to visit [Vergennes Laundry by CK](#) for a late breakfast/early lunch. This French-style bakery offers exceptional pastries made in a large wood-burning oven. New owner and chef extraordinaire, Christian Kruse, has upped the ante of offerings from the Laundry's previous life, to sandwiches, and a charming multi-course dinner.

Across the street, slip into Vergennes' must-see library. William Bixby opened the [Bixby Memorial Free Library](#) to the public in 1912. Its grandeur includes a marble interior and grand staircase crowned by a large stained-glass dome topping the rotunda.

### 2:30 Have a Sip

At [Hired Hand Brewing Co.](#), a farm-to-table tap room, Ian Huizenga (mastermind behind the business) sources his goods locally and brews beers that have you wanting more than just the flight.

Another local libation making its claim is [Shacksbury Cider](#). "This area is home to some of the country's finest orchards," says co-founder, Colin Davis. I concur. *Lost and Found*, one of their most popular hard ciders, is a favorite of mine too!



### 4:30PM Art, Food & Music: The Holy Trinity

On Main Street, step into [Northern Daughters](#), a contemporary art gallery that maintains grass roots traditions with local artists and style. I'd imagine that if art in Manhattan and Vermont had a love child, it would be showcased in this gallery.

Afterwards, be assured of a delicious meal and a musical note at the [Bar Antidote](#) (Hired Hand's older sibling restaurant who gets to stay up past the former's 8:30PM curfew.) You'll find live music on most Saturday nights, along with great Vermont beers on tap and elaborate cocktails. Their awesome edible "cures" feature locally sourced ingredients.

## Sunday

### 9 AM How to Say Au Revoir

Shake the languor of sleep with hot coffee and great food at [3 Squares Café](#). Sunday is the best time to get their creative Eggs Benedict with anything from smoked salmon to pork belly. Owner Matt Birong can be found working behind the line or hanging out with the customers. "It's a community spot," he says. Matt has been one of the driving forces behind the evolution of Vergennes. When discussing this article, I mention I grew up here. Matt responds matter-of-factly, "You can speak to the evolution then." Yes - I can.

Vergennes is filled with pioneers. No longer is it the city people drive through to get somewhere else. People come here to set down their roots. When writing this article, I realized that when I came back, I had every intention to re-group and leave again; this was just a pit-stop before my next adventure. Instead, I bought a home and am now part of the thriving city I experience every day.

"Vergennes is a weird little city in the best way possible - encouraging in a non-exclusive way," Dicki Austin said, hopefully.

And the dance goes on. Whether you come to taste and experience, or to settle down, Vergennes will be dancing. Grab a partner and join in!



### About the Author, Christina Caniyo

Raised and now living in Vermont, Christina divides her time as a chocolatier and apothecarist, while moonlighting as a writer. Her stories are inspired by the small New England city of Vergennes. Old homes, gothic churches and cemeteries feed her imagination. Her debut novel, *Death and the Underhouse*, was published in 2017, the first in a trilogy.

To learn more about Vergennes, visit: [www.VergennesDowntown.org](http://www.VergennesDowntown.org)