

Cons

Although Warren is a straight shot from Boston (three and a half highway hours), it's a haul from New York. "Five solid hours on a good day," Mr. Hayes said. Throw in snow and congestion, and it can take up to eight hours."

Remoteness has its own disadvantages. "I miss some of the conveniences of the big-box stores," Mrs. Vannozzi said. And given the severe weather and the mountainous topography, she said, she "should have anticipated the power outages." Like any proper country girl, though, she has learned to deal with it. "I just build a lot of fires," she said.

The Real Estate Market

It takes some luck to find an affordable home in Warren. Alison and Brian Nathan, Bostonians in their 30's who are avid skiers, are looking for a single-family condo in the \$200,000 price range and have been outbid twice since fall 2004; both times, the properties sold for about 10 percent more than the asking price. "At the moment, there's nothing on the market we're interested in," Mrs. Nathan said.

"There's virtually nothing you'd consider habitable under \$200,000," said Bill Elliott, an agent for Sugarbush Real Estate, which has no affiliation with Sugarbush Resort. The median listing price of a home is \$325,000. The condo market has risen fast; the median listing price for a condo has risen from \$94,500 to \$165,000 in two years.

"The quintessential Vermont farmhouse exists only in memory," Mr. Elliott said. In addition to capes and condos, he said, people are reconsidering the previously shunned ski chalets. One three-bedroom chalet on the Mad River sold for \$270,000 last summer after a week on the market.

Land is in short supply. Eight-five percent of Warren is covered in forest, most of it United States Forest Service land. The steep topography of the remaining private land keeps it from being developed. "In California, you can hang your house on a hill, but they won't let us do that here, and for good reason," Mr. Elliott said.

Still, driving around you'll see plenty of new construction. Sugarbush is investing \$45 million in the first phase of the multi-year residential project that will include Clay Brook, a 61-unit complex a few steps



from the lifts.

Architects, laborers and people in the crafts are in abundance. According to the 2000 census, 13.5 percent of the town's labor force is self-employed (the ski resort is the largest employer for other residents).

And as more weekenders discover they can work remotely from Warren, they are moving there full-time, trading their ski condos for year-round homes. "After 9/11," Mrs. Vannozzi said, "we realized how important it was to do what you love now and not wait."

LAY OF THE LAND

POPULATION 1,681.

SIZE 42 square miles.

LOCATION Central Vermont

WHO'S BUYING Couples from Boston and New York who want to ski on the weekends without maddening crowds.

GETTING THERE Burlington International Airport is about a 45-minute drive from Warren. By car from the New York area, take Interstate 87 north to Exit 20 and then follow Route 149 east to Route 4. Turn left on Route 100 and continue north to Warren. From Boston, take Interstate 93 North to Interstate 89 North and get off at Exit 10 (Waterbury). Then head about 20 miles south on Route 100.

WHILE YOU'RE LOOKING A cross between a deer camp and Aunt Millie's farmhouse, the Hyde Away Inn (Route 17, Waitsfield; 800-777-4833; www.hydeawayinn.com) has a restaurant, a tavern and pool room and 10 small but comfortable rooms for \$69 to \$189 including breakfast. Dogs are permitted for an additional \$10 a day. The Pitcher Inn (275 Main Street, Warren; 802-496-6350; www.pitcherrinn.com), a Relais & Châteaux property, is more upscale. Its 11 rooms and suites have jetted tubs, Wi-Fi access and CD players; some have steam showers and wood-burning fireplaces. Rates start at \$350 and include breakfast and afternoon tea.

COMPARABLES

The Mad River Valley: Mountains and a Sense of Serenity



WHAT 2-bedroom house
HOW MUCH \$325,000

This 1790's house has a shingle roof, hand-hewn beams, wide-plank floors, a gas fireplace and one bathroom. The property is three acres. Agent: Anna Whiteside, VARE Real Estate, (802) 496-2506; www.varealestate.com.

Information on properties was supplied by the listing companies.



WHAT 3-bedroom house
HOW MUCH \$485,000

This 2,545-square-foot contemporary-style house has birch radiant-floor heating, a deck, a gas fireplace, two and a half bathrooms and a heated two-car garage. The property, between Sugarbush and Mount Ellen, is 2.3 acres with views of the Green Mountains. Agent: Brooke Cunningham, Sugarbush Real Estate, (802) 496-3500; www.sugarbushrealstate.com.



WHAT 4-bedroom house
HOW MUCH \$932,000

This house, which was built in 1987, is on 35 acres of woodlands and pastures in East Warren. The property includes two spring-fed ponds, one stocked with bass, the other with trout. The house has a fire-place, four bathrooms and views of the Northfield Range. Broker: Cindy Carr, Sugarbush Real Estate, (802) 496-3500; www.sugarbushrealstate.com.