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The Vermont Hills Are Alive With The Sound of Music at the Trapp Family Lodge

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Photos courtesy of the [Trapp Family Lodge](#)

In my family, one of our most cherished pandemic pastimes was re-watching classic films. There was one in particular that we'd play on repeat: *The Sound of Music*. Singing siblings and a rebellious nun became adopted members of our household as we isolated from friends. Virtual trips to Salzburg, Austria, provided momentary relief from the monotony of looking at the four walls of our living room. Nostalgia permeated our everyday lives, and sentimentality for a bygone era seemed to creep into the mundanity of daily rituals.

My adolescent daughter developed a fascination, if not obsession, with Maria von Trapp, the nurturing, sweet, habit-wearing figure with the lovely, singsong voice. I could understand that she found comfort in a maternal, two-dimensional character in a movie instead of her stressed-out, sleep-deprived, three-dimensional actual mother who was anxious that her teenager was isolated and hadn't been in a physical school for more than a year.

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When Christopher Plummer, who played the Baron, died during the pandemic, my daughter's grief was palatable. She lamented his non-COVID-related death at the age of 91, the day after she turned 16. I always

knew she was an old soul, but it worried me that she couldn't celebrate her Sweet 16 with friends while she mourned the passing of Captain von Trapp, who was long past his days as the handsome suitor to Maria.

After watching *The Sound of Music* for the thousandth time, I mentioned in passing that the von Trapps eventually moved to America, not Switzerland. Of course, my daughter didn't believe me. After all, I am her mother, so she asked a higher authority: Google Home. Upon further Googling, she discovered the von Trapps settled in New England and owned the Trapp Family Lodge in Stowe, Vermont. My daughter nearly jumped out of her skin, excited at the prospect that she might actually meet a von Trapp IRL (in real life).

Hence, the idea of a pilgrimage to meet the von Trapps began to germinate.

As we started to plan our trip to Stowe, where the Trapp Family Lodge is located, it became clear that this journey was more than a whimsical jaunt to movieland. At this point in the pandemic, the idea of reaching destinations, seeing the world, and "climbing every mountain" was beginning to slip away from our family, especially for my teenager, who should've been in the throes of starting an independent life. Instead, she was secretly making plans to graduate high school early so she could lounge around at home for several months. I would've empathized more if she told me that she wanted to backpack around Europe or Asia, like I did, ready to set off on an adventure, untethered by job or school.

I, myself, was less enthused about driving for several hours to the Trapp Family Lodge in pursuit of an idealized, fictional family. The cynical journalist in me had doubts about how laudable the von Trapps really were compared to the film version. But as it turns out, the von Trapp family was

even more admirable than what was depicted in *The Sound of Music*, as I learned during the resort's Von Trapp Family History Tour.

The family still lives on the premises. The youngest son of the Baron and Maria, Johannes, is the president, while his two children, Sam and Kristina, run the daily operations. Sam von Trapp was warm and down-to-earth, and he fed this thirst for travel, having lived in Chile, Brazil, and Mexico for a decade before returning to Vermont, where he grew up.

I arrived at the Trapp Family Lodge with a skeptic's eye and came away wishing we could stay longer, enamored by the magical ambiance, captivated by the idyllic surroundings. Sitting on 2,600 acres, the Trapp Family Lodge overlooks the sweeping mountain vistas of Vermont. Edelweiss even grows on their property.

The place was fascinating, and there was no shortage of things to do. There were two pools (indoor and outdoor), a large outdoor hot tub, tennis courts, disc golf, an indoor climbing wall, and yoga classes. The Austrian mountain chalet architecture oozed a sense of protectiveness and coziness that emboldened me to venture into the wilderness and then find solace in the welcoming fortress when I wanted to shelter from the elements.

Wandering through the halls of the vast hotel felt like a museum tour of the von Trapp family. There were archival family photos, along with memorabilia from various movie versions and musicals that paid homage to their family. When Maria von Trapp watched *The Sound of Music* for the first time, she “cried happy,” according to Sam von Trapp.

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If you're interested in planning a visit, these are a “few of my favorite things” to do at the Trapp Family Lodge:

1. Von Trapp Family History Tour

If you're going to trek to Stowe, this unique tour is not to be missed. I learned about how Hitler wanted the family to sing for his birthday and moved into their Salzburg home after they escaped. What the von Trapps did after they left Austria was even more fascinating – there could easily be a *The Sound of Music, Part 2* (ahem, calling Steven Spielberg). The von Trapps actually took a train to Italy rather than hike over the Alps. They eventually sailed to America, arriving on Ellis Island with \$4 for the family of nine and a pregnant Maria. The two older brothers joined the U.S. Army's mountaineering division and returned to Europe to fight the Nazis.

The von Trapps toured America in a small bus, singing for their supper, so to speak. They didn't receive any profits from the hugely successful film and Broadway musical, and Julie Andrews never visited the lodge. The tour ends with a visit to the family cemetery where the Baron, Maria, and many of their children are buried.

2. Von Trapp Brewery

The latest addition to the Trapp Family Lodge is the bierhaus, featuring specialty craft beer brewed in an Austrian style. The Golden Helles lager,

Oktoberfest, and the Bohemian Pilsner are a few of the offerings on tap. Austrian specialties like chicken schnitzel and Bavarian pretzels are scrumptious accompaniments to the libations.

3. Forest Hikes

Forest hikes among the sugar maples, white ash trees, and beech trees lead you to landmarks like Maria Plaza and a lone chapel high in the hills that Werner von Trapp built by hand. The von Trapps traditionally gather to tap the maple trees for delicious maple syrup sold in the gift shops.

4. Cross-Country Skiing

During the winter, the lodge is home to some of the best cross-country skiing in the U.S., boasting 124 miles of trails for all levels. In fact, the von Trapps opened the first cross-country skiing center in the U.S., back in 1968.

5. Mountain Biking

Sam von Trapp helped build the mountain biking course and trails for sustainable mountain biking in collaboration with the Stowe Mountain Bike Club. There are bikes you can rent as well as a course where you can test out tricks.

6. Highland Cows Tour

Though I lived in Scotland for eight years where the shaggy-haired Highland cows hail from, it's not often I come across these cute creatures in the U.S. A herd of 70 Highland cows roams the grounds and supports the lodge's sustainable farming practices.

When it was time to leave, I felt a little sad. So long, farewell. Until I return again.

[Check Availability at the Trapp Family Lodge](#)

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