



CONNECTICUT

Western Connecticut

COS COB INN, COS COB

Make this comfy bed-and-breakfast your headquarters and you'll be well poised for the boutique shopping, haute dining, and highbrow everything (museums, galleries, theater) of the area. Antiques fill the 14 guest rooms and suites, no two of which are alike (ask for one facing the Mianus River). Wireless Internet access and other high-tech touches keep the inn firmly rooted in the present. *Rates: from \$99, including continental breakfast. 50 River Rd. 877-549-4063, 203-661-5845; coscobinn.com*

PASTORALE BISTRO & BAR, LAKEVILLE

The former home of a prosperous Colonial-era ironmaster is now a relaxed yet upscale country bistro. It's a favorite haunt of prep-school parents, urban émigrés, and local gastronomes who like to brunch on the back porch or dress up for dinner. French-trained chef-owner Frederic Faveau turns out French and new American dishes using local and organic ingredients. Starters such as sweet pea and mint ravioli are followed by equally enticing entrées. The list offers grilled beef tenderloin, steamed mussels, and penne with homemade fennel sausage, to name a few. For a sweet finale, try the orange-lavender crème brûlée. *Entrées: from \$16. 223 Main St. 860-435-1011; pastoralebistro.com*



LAUREL RIDGE GRASS FED BEEF, LITCHFIELD

Here, the herd of Black Angus grazes on 150 acres surrounding the family farm's stone windmill turned retail shop, where health-conscious locals buy naturally raised burgers, steaks, short ribs, brisket, and roasts. *66 Wigwam Rd. 860-567-8122; lrgfb.com*

THE BICYCLE TOUR COMPANY, KENT

Western Connecticut puts the *scene* in scenic roads, and this friendly outfit will steer you toward lightly traveled byways where cars are few and postcard views are plenty. The terrain is challenging but doable: If a five-mile ride is your limit, explore the roads hugging the Housatonic River. Whatever you do, be sure to make time après ride for Kent's galleries,

eateries, and shops. *9 Bridge St. 888-711-5368, 860-927-1742; bicycletours.com*

GREENWOOD GLASS, RIVERTON

Riverton's iconic Union Church is now occupied by glassblower Peter Greenwood's studio and gallery. From a balcony, visitors can see the former church's main floor, where superheated molten glass is molded into contemporary works of art and function. The artist's colorful vases, bowls, chandeliers, furnishings, wall sculptures, and more are for sale in the light-filled gallery. *3 Robertsville Rd. 860-738-9464; petergreenwood.com*

THE CORNUCOPIA AT OLDFIELD BED & BREAKFAST, SOUTHBURY

Those who love old New England will like this smartly restored 19th-century



HARKNESS MEMORIAL STATE PARK, WATERFORD

Sure, the 230 seaside acres are magnificent, as is Eolia, the former summer mansion of philanthropists Edward and Mary Harkness. But the perennial borders, designed by famed landscape architect Beatrix Farrand (who was, by the way, the niece of novelist Edith Wharton) are what pull green thumbs away from their own beloved patches of earth. The lovely 1920s-era layout is one of just four Farrand gardens still in existence. Note the curving shapes of the flower beds and the soul-soothing colors, as well as the plants we think of as old-fashioned: creamy yellow hollyhocks and spikes of blue veronica, rambling wisteria vines and sweet-scented heliotrope (Mrs. Harkness's favorite). 275 Great Neck Rd. 860-443-5725; ct.gov/dep

biannual jaunts to Bali for the handiwork of local artisans: clothing and housewares, plus lots of must-have accessories such as exotic jewelry, strappy sandals, and ultrafeminine handbags. 22 Magee Ave. 888-242-2254, 203-325-2274; agabhumi.com

Greater Hartford

THE MARK TWAIN HOUSE & MUSEUM, HARTFORD

Do you suppose Mark Twain took a leaf from Tom Sawyer's book and hired his scullery maids by convincing them that it was fun to scrub pots? The author's impressive Victorian home now offers a supplementary kitchen-wing tour (purchase ticket along with general admission). After you've seen Twain's library and drawing room and peeked into the baths, the tour of kitchen wing, which was enlarged in 1881 to specs developed by master designer Louis Comfort Tiffany, elaborates on the servants' view of upstairs/downstairs life—in the home of the man who coined the term "Gilded Age." 351 Farmington Ave. 860-247-0998; marktwainhouse.org

MARRIOTT HARTFORD DOWNTOWN, HARTFORD

The city's first full-service hotel in two decades: a 22-story high-rise overlooking the Connecticut River and connected to the new Connecticut Convention Center. The 409 guest rooms and suites are classic and modern. The on-site Vivo features a menu of stylish Mediterranean fare; Crush is the hip lounge across the hall where scene-

sters sip trendy cocktails. Rates: from \$149. Entrées: from \$11. 200 Columbus Blvd. 866-373-9806, 860-249-8000; hartfordmarriott.com

MOZZICATO CAFFÉ, HARTFORD

Sip espresso in surroundings more reminiscent of Rome than Connecticut's capital city. This neighborhood gathering spot is genuinely Italian, down to the imported confections and the homemade gelato for dessert. 329 Franklin Ave. 860-296-0426; mozzicatobakery.com

REAL ART WAYS, HARTFORD

One of Connecticut's most unique art spaces is also one of Hartford's best kept secrets. Real Art Ways—or RAW, as it's known—opened in 1975 as an alternative venue for artists and musicians. Now located in a former Underwood typewriter factory, it's a rare night that you can't catch a live performance, poetry reading, or indie flick here. The monthly cocktail soirees draw young creative types who mingle over martinis and check out brand-new installations. 56 Arbor St. 860-232-1006; realartways.org

NEW BRITAIN MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, NEW BRITAIN

Art lovers take note: The first museum in the nation (1903) to devote itself exclusively to American works is ready for its close-up after a \$26 million redo. The result? Twice the room to showcase its 5,000 watercolors, oils, sculptures, drawings, and graphics representing more than 250 years of homegrown American art. In the new main-floor galleries, Colonial-era works live side by side with Hudson River school landscapes

Georgian Federal tucked behind a picket fence in the historic district. Christine and Ed Edelson provide a sanctuary for guests to rest and realign their priorities. The garden-filled grounds invite wandering; you might end up at the lily pond or in the hammock beneath a grand sugar maple. In the keeping room one feels the depth of years, with vintage touches that extend to four nicely appointed guest rooms. If a working fireplace and whirlpool tub are criteria, opt for the Admiral Aston suite, whose private deck overlooks the swimming pool. Rates: from \$120, including full breakfast. 782 Main St. N. 203-267-6772; cornucopiabnb.com

AGABHUMI: THE BEST OF BALI, STAMFORD

Regina and Michael Kirshbaum take

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A SPECIAL ISSUE

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NEW ENGLAND'S MAGAZINE

302

(Go ahead, count 'em)

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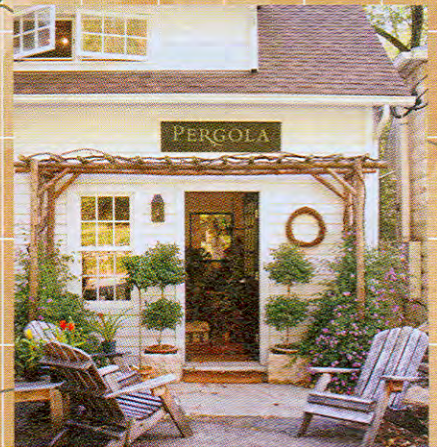


Litchfield County, Connecticut, delivers stone walls, waterfalls, and Cornwalls.



West Cornwall's 1824 covered bridge—one of just a few in the state—crosses the Housatonic River. Observe the local courtesy when crossing: Flash your lights to signal drivers on the other side to go ahead.

Cool off with a refreshing spritz from the waterfall at Kent Falls State Park, off Route 7. A short path from the parking lot crosses a small, gray covered bridge. Continue on for views of the falls' limestone and marble sluice. A steep, quarter-mile trail leads to the top.



In the village of New Preston, stop at Pergola for garden supplies, topiaries, and curiosities such as handsomely framed butterflies. 860-868-4769; pergolahome.com



NEW PRESTON

A PERFECT SUMMER DRIVE



Action Wildlife in Goshen offers a close-up look at animals of all sorts—from elk to ostriches. Miles of stone walls and boulders serve as shelters for the animals across the 116-acre former dairy farm.

BOITANO THE POITOU donkey was playing hard to get. Jim Mazzarrelli, owner of Action Wildlife in Goshen, Connecticut, told us an offering of fresh grass would coax his distinctive whinny. My friend waved greenery in front of Boitano's snout, rewarded only by indifferent silence.

We fared better, noise-wise, in the rare-animal farm's petting barn, where children shrieked as their hands were snuffled by bleating baby goats. And later, as we walked around the vast property, zebu and oryx, llamas and ostriches—300 animals in all—greeted us from their spacious pens with snorts and grunts.

This was our first stop on a tour of Litchfield County. Action Wildlife surprised us because these lush hills have earned much of their mystique from being home to the likes of Mia Farrow, Meryl Streep, Dustin Hoffman, and other Hollywood émigrés—not Persian red sheep and fainting goats.

From the farm, the road west to the Cornwalls (Route 4) is bounded by pastures rimmed with stone walls. There are walls of shale and fieldstone, stacks of massive granite boulders, and still other walls made from stones that look polished as if plucked from a riverbed.

From Route 4, follow Route 128. The road will dip sharply into the village of West Cornwall. At its heart is a prime photo opportunity: an 1864 red covered bridge spans the Housatonic River. Most days you can see fly-fishermen along the riverbanks, filament flashing in the sun as they tempt the trout.

You can't (and shouldn't) miss the rustic Wandering Moose Café right next to the bridge, where alfresco diners can listen to the



The Boulders inn, located in New Preston, boasts a panoramic view of Lake Waramaug. After taking in the scene from a comfortable lawn chair, head inside the inn to enjoy award-winning cuisine that always focuses on local and seasonal ingredients.

BY CAROL CAMBO
PHOTOGRAPHY JULIE BIDWELL

Housatonic hurrying south. Choose from standard deli fare for breakfast and lunch, plus creative salads. The dinner menu is fancier, featuring gourmet pizza, duck, and, fittingly, trout.

Don't overindulge, because next you must hike uphill to The Wish House, a gift shop/gallery filled with stylish women's clothing, kitchen accessories, children's gifts, artwork, and imported items. A few houses away, a former Masonic Hall houses a 45,000-volume collection of rare books and is open on Saturdays to browsers. Notable categories here include literature, diaries, letters, and children's books.

Also on Main Street is the Cornwall Bridge Pottery store, but if you're heading south on Route 7, stop at the outfit's workshop (in Cornwall Bridge), where you can shop for bargain seconds and often catch potters in action.

To get there from here, you've got to cross the one-lane West Cornwall Bridge. Observe the local courtesies: Flash your lights to signal drivers on the



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Opposite: Even if you're not in the market for fine Shaker reproduction furniture, Ian Ingersoll's showroom on Main Street in West Cornwall is worth a stop. The clean lines of his chairs, dressers, and beds, simply displayed, soothe the eye and spirit as much as the river does just beyond the door. 800-237-4926, 860-672-6334; ianingersoll.com

Left: Overlooking the waterfall in the village of New Preston, J. Seitz & Co. offers distinctive clothing, bedding, and furniture. 860-868-0119; jseitz.com

opposite side to cross. Once over, stay left on Route 7 south, a scenic beauty that passes by Kent Falls State Park, home to the highest multidrop waterfall (some 250 feet) in the state. (A short walk from the parking lot will bring you to the bottom of the falls.)

Continue south on Route 7 toward Kent, keeping your eyes peeled for Sculpturedale and The Dog Show on the left. The outdoor gallery features metal figures by sculptor Denis Curtiss, while his wife's barn shop carries canine-themed gifts. This stretch of road is fringed with (more) stone walls and pastures, as well as views of the Taconic mountain range to the west. The Appalachian Trail roughly follows this spine as it crosses the northwest corner of Connecticut.

A few miles farther south, the yellow sign at a railroad crossing signals The Sloane-Stanley Museum. Landscape painter Eric Sloane teamed up with Stanley Works and the state of Connecticut to open it in 1969, commemorating

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MORE LITCHFIELD FUN

TAKE A HIKE

Bull's Bridge: Just off Route 7 in South Kent, several trails offer lookouts and views of the waterfalls and the river. Trails leave from, and across from, the main parking area near the bridge (off Bull's Bridge Road). A bit farther away from the bridge, a dirt path leads to a bulletin board with hiking information; the Appalachian Trail is about a quarter mile up the path.

ENJOY A MEAL

Oliva: Chef Riad Aamar serves up Italian and Mediterranean fare in his restaurant, with dining on three levels and outside terrace seating in season. Rte. 45, New Preston. Entrées: from \$13.25. 860-868-1787.

JUMP IN THE LAKE

Lake Waramaug State Park: Swimming beach, 77 campsites, car-top boat access, and rental paddle boats. 30 Lake Waramaug Rd., New Preston. 860-868-0220; dep.state.ct.us/stateparks

REST EASY

The Inn at Kent Falls: This handsome Colonial bed-and-breakfast is a good HQ for exploring the western part of our driving loop. 107 Kent Cornwall Rd., Kent. Rates: from \$195, including full breakfast. 860-927-3197; innatkentfalls.com

The Boulders: The main lodge and dining room boast a panoramic view of the lake. E. Shore Rd., New Preston. Rates: from \$350, including full breakfast. 800-455-1565, 860-868-0541; bouldersinn.com



Down a slope from The Sloane-Stanley Museum is an 1800s stone chimney, the remains of the Kent Iron Furnace.

the tool company's 125th anniversary. The museum features Sloane's collection of early American tools, a re-creation of the artist's studio, and a pioneer cabin Sloane built in 1974.

As you view Sloane's works, you'll notice how he captured the mood of the countryside you've been driving through; he had a fascination with barns, and some of the ones he painted still stand in the area.

Down a slope from the museum stands a handsome stone chimney, the remains of the Kent Iron Furnace, one of numerous iron-ore furnaces that operated in the region in the 1800s, turning out pig iron for locomotives and fine machinery. Fittingly, the museum shares a driveway with the Connecticut Antique Machinery Association, a compound of buildings where early tractors, engines, and mining- and farm-related implements are on display.

The sooty skies of yore are far removed from modern-day Kent. This outpost of civilized life offers clear mountain air, gourmet dining, tasteful shops, and fine arts galleries. It's a magnet for New York City weekenders (it's about a two-hour drive away), and also a crossroads for Appalachian Trail thru-hikers. There aren't too many towns with fewer than 3,000 residents in which you can buy gourmet ice cream for a few bucks a cone (at Scoops), Belgian chocolate truffles by the pound (at Belgique), or waist-high, solid-bronze asparagus stalks for \$6,000 (at Morrison Sculpture Gallery).

As afternoon lengthened, we remembered our dinner reservations at The Hopkins Inn in New Preston and our plan to take a circuitous route to see one more covered bridge. Schaghticoke Road, just past the Kent School, hugs the west bank of the Housatonic. When it meets back up with Route 7, it crosses Bull's Bridge, a rustic covered span just below a hydro plant. Beneath, torrents of white water charge over smooth granite.

We took Route 7 back north and turned east on Route 341, then headed down to Lake Waramaug. We took our sweet time on West Shore Road, admiring the gracious old homes. A short hop from the southern tip of the five-mile-

long loch, the village of New Preston has a handful of upscale shops where sawmills and forges once made use of the zippy East Aspetuck River, which flows parallel to the main street. Poke around the Village Barn & Gallery for antiques for every budget (lamps a specialty) as well as local info (owner Craig Nelson told us one gated estate we noticed belonged to Joan Rivers).

When we arrived at The Hopkins Inn, the stone terrace overlooking Lake Waramaug beckoned. The scent of grapes ripening (part of Hopkins Vineyard is right behind the inn) was carried on the late-summer breeze. By the time we finished our escargots, wiener schnitzel, and pork tenderloin in a calvados sauce, we were relaxed to the core, washed clean by the rocky, riverine landscape. 🍷

WHEN YOU GO

Action Wildlife, 337 Torrington Rd., Goshen. 860-482-4465; actionwildlife.org

The Wandering Moose Café, 421 Sharon Goshen Tnpk., West Cornwall. Entrées: from \$14.95. 860-672-0178; thewanderingmoosecafe.com

The Wish House, 413 Main St., West Cornwall. 860-672-2969; wishhouse.com

Barbara Farnsworth, Bookseller, 407 Rte. 128, West Cornwall. 860-672-6571; farnsworthbooks.com

Cornwall Bridge Pottery, 415 Sharon Goshen Tnpk., West Cornwall. 800-501-6545, 860-672-6545; cbpots.com

The Sloane-Stanley Museum, Rte. 7, Kent. 860-927-3849; chc.state.ct.us/sloanestanleymuseum.htm

The Dog Show and Sculpturedale, 3 Carter Rd., Cornwall Bridge. 860-927-4599, 860-927-3420; thedogshow.biz, deniscurtisssculptor.com

The Hopkins Inn, 22 Hopkins Rd., New Preston. Rates: from \$105. Entrées: from \$20. 860-868-7295; thehopkinsinn.com

Village Barn & Gallery, 13 East Shore Rd., New Preston. 860-868-0501.



Web exclusive: a podcast of this tour, with a map and video.

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