

Longed-for Long Weekends: Naugatuck Valley



Spring has *finally* sprung after a long winter and long year of COVID-19 challenges. The air of optimism is undeniable. At press time, Connecticut ranked fourth nationally in vaccine rollout. Furthermore, the state has lifted travel restrictions, allowing restaurants and businesses to operate at full capacity. With these factors in mind, the time is perfect to plan for a longed-for weekend away in your own backyard!

Close to home, but far enough away, the Naugatuck Valley Region, part of the Western Connecticut Tourism District (WCTD), offers weekenders a variety of “Vitamin R” options: rest, recreation, relaxation and rejuvenation. Woodbury is one “bury” good place to start.

Woodbury

Amid the pandemic, while numerous businesses fought to stay open in 2020, Michael Bates-Walsh acquired the former Curtis House. He renovated the inn and relaunched it as the 1754 House, 506 Main Street South, Woodbury Conn. Set in western Connecticut’s Berkshires, the house, built circa 1736, first welcomed guests as an inn in, yes, 1754.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, whether or not it holds title to the state's oldest operating inn spurs further discussion. It has, however, been designated as "the state's most haunted place" by *Thrillest*, an online media lifestyle website.

Weekenders will appreciate how the owner preserved the inn's sense of intrigue, character and charm. Retreat into the lap of Colonial sophistication with a finger on the pulse of comfort and style. Reserve one of the 11 guestrooms in the inn or carriage house where yesteryear reigns alongside modern amenities.



One of the seven guest rooms at 1754 House Inn. — Photo courtesy of 1754 House
What can be more felicitous than spending the entire weekend under the roof that an acclaimed executive chef owns? Chef Michael's focus on contemporary American cuisine exudes a wonderment of fresh, innovative combinations and infuses the restaurant and

tavern with a modern vibe. Sample a variety of mouth-watering dishes, including the 1754 burger, pan-seared scallops on a bed of roasted carrots as well as “Artisanal Charcuterie Regional Cheese” offerings.

After a memorable meal, consider a walk in the one-mile radius of state parks, scenic hiking trails, and views as inspiring as the landscape and seascape watercolor collection by artist Brian Walsh, the proprietor’s father.



Dining area at 1754 House Restaurant — Photo courtesy of 1754 House



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Less than half a mile away, Hollow Park offers a flat, one-mile loop trail that meanders along the scenic Pomperaug River. About a mile from the inn, the trail behind the Woodbury Public library leads to Orenaug Park. It features, among other things, a 1.1 mile moderate hiking trail, a 67-foot, four-inch observation deck and Mesozoic Era dinosaur stories galore. Interestingly, at the Park Road entrance the two pillars are

constructed from stones from every state in the United States.

Beeline back to the library to browse the indoor treasures that include a section of local maps and day trip information. Leaving the premises, Main Street itself is a historic district stretch of landmarks and world-famous antique shops. Don't miss the Civil War memorial that salutes the Union Army locals who fought in the war.

Tour the gardens and savor a taste of 18th-Century life by stepping into one of the earliest historic house museums in the nation, the Glebe House Museum and Gertrude Jekyll Garden. Built in 1740, this Georgian colonial is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. For a study in architectural comparison, check out the Jabez Bacon House, built in 1760, a stone's throw away, another Georgian colonial listed on the register.

“Soothe the perturbed, wearied and overworked mind.”

Woodbury resident and historian William Cothren wrote these words to describe Orenaug Park over 150 years ago. The passage echoes a timeless truth that is also relevant to weekenders today who visit Woodbury—and end up longing to stay so much longer.

For weekend getaway ideas, including lodging, dining, attractions and so much more, check out WCTD's website at

<https://www.ctvisit.com/listings/western-regional-tourism-district>.

“Longed-for Long Weekends: Naugatuck Valley” is co-written by Michelle Falcone of Easton, new secretary on the Executive Committee for the Western Connecticut Tourism District (WCTD) and Stacy Lytwyn, Easton resident and CT guidebook author. It is the first article in a six-part series that examines some of the best weekend jaunts offered in each of the three regions in the WCTD.

Note: The hospitality industry, as well as other businesses in the state, to all appearances, have implemented Covid-19 precautions, such as mask requirements, safe cleaning, installing physical barriers and social distancing practices.