



### Places to go and great things to do along the lower of River Valley:

There is a saying in New England, "you can't get there from here." Yet, tucked away in scenic hills and dales paralleling the Connecticut River our small towns welcome you to their Farmers' Markets and Main Streets, too. While steeped in antiquity, our local neighborhoods provide great modern amenities to travelers. With this map in hand, chart your own custom two or three-day "market-stay-cation" and spend some time along the way learning local Connecticut history, enjoying some exceptional cuisine (whether by the road side or sit-down), or browsing in some of the best independent local boutiques, galleries and fun shops. Take a river cruise, plan a hike around a tidal marsh, visit an Inn or a Bed & Breakfast, do some antiquing and sightseeing. No matter where you want to go, much awaits the traveler along the Lower Connecticut River Valley, because every place you'll want to visit is just a short distance up the road, around the bend, or over the river. Come for the farm fresh foods, but stay for the back roads and towns along the way: you'll easily find that "you can get there, from anywhere!"



### MARKET TOWNS & LOCAL MUST SEE PLACES:

**CHESTER:** Take Rt. 154 to west on Rt. 148 (Water Street) to find a back-road dream come true. Starting from shipbuilding and Mill Town roots, Chester today is that small town in which you want to linger longer. Sister to the Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam, The Norma Terris Theatre calls Chester home along with art galleries and other inviting shops. Waterfalls, the Cockaponset State Forest, an airport and marina, and the second oldest continually running river ferry (look for Rt. 148 east/ Ferry Road) all await your exploration. *Don't miss gems:* Simons Marketplace is the source for quirky gifts, freshly made foods, to-swoon-over French baguettes; plus coffee & ice cream, too. Best Chowder in a bread bowl can be had at the Pattecoik and visit CT River Artisans at 4 Water Street, for that just right, non-mass produced, locally crafted "something, for someone special."

**ROMWELL:** At a crossroads of two major state highways, Route 9 and Interstate 91, Cromwell is vibrant and family friendly year round. Golf aficionados turn their eyes toward Cromwell's Tournament Players Club in mid-June for the Travelers Championship. Plenty of great dining options here, from Asian to Mexican, hamburgs and pizzas. A day spa, gourmet treats and other kinds of shopping abounds in the intersection of Rt. 3 (locally known as **The Shunpike**), and Route 372, with the K-Mart Plaza, and Shop & Shop, among others. *Don't miss these unique town locales:* Cromwell's annual "Riverport Festival" on September 20-22; check the town website for info. Frehofer's Bakery Outlet, at

**ROMWELL (CONT.):** 207 Shunpike Rd, Cromwell, CT, as well as Classic Auto Wash Center, at 23 Shunpike, with Clark Kent in a phone booth and a T-Rex head bursting from the garage roof. Yes, a T-Rex head.

**WURHAM:** Named after a town in northern England, originally the Mettabesett Native American Tribe called this place "Coginchang" (meaning "thick swamp"). Today, Durham's Main Street and rural roads bear continual witness to its pre-colonial heritage in homes and stone walls. Visit the Durham Market (savvy locals knew it as Morse and Ote, and ask about the "elf") Like those surrounding towns, Durham's roads beckon in all seasons, but autumn's spotlight is on the annual Durham Fair, the largest agricultural fair in the state. Located at the junction of Routes 17, 77 and 68 (always the last weekend in September). *Other places not to miss:* Deerfield Farm with its gorgeous "Jersey Girls" and farm shop (just inside the barn), Parmelee Hill Road. Next, stop in and say hi to Laurie and Bill at their Old Glory Farm for great produce, pickles and jams at 423 New Haven Road/ Rt. 17 (ask for a photo of Old Glory herself, painted on the front of the barn). Cool off in the summer evening (until 9:30 or so) at Durham Dairi Serve—13 Main Street, May through October—cash only; call for opening and closing dates at: 860-349-3367.

**FAST HADDAM:** Travel east on Rt. 82 over the Swing Bridge and you'll first come to some great dining and boutique shopping. The area near the Salmon River was once home to over 30 resorts and was nicknamed "The Catskills of Connecticut." Picnic in Devil's Hopyard State Park, tour the school behind St. Stephen's Episcopal Church where Connecticut Patriot Nathan Hale taught, or journey to Gillette Castle State Park (great hiking trails). Look for the abandoned ghost town of Johnsonville just off Rt. 149, on Johnsonville Road. *Local shabby hot spot:* Machinoodus State Park (on Lees Road) is wealthy in both geologic and Native American lore, and offers a little earthquake excitement; the Wangunks gave the place its name which means, "place of scary noises," with nearly 300 acres woodlands, meadows, river and cove waterfronts, with hiking trails, too.

**FAST HAMPTON:** On the eastern side of the Connecticut River and originally called Chatham from the same town in England, settlers relied on the river for their earliest industries: ship building, rope and sail making. Known as "Belltown," due to bell manufacturing in the town from the early 1800's; the Bavin Brothers lost the last remaining bell factory in a fire in May of 2012. Visit the 30 foot long covered Comstock Bridge Rt. 16 on Comstock Bridge Road (foot traffic only) over the Salmon River; stunning in autumn. Angelico's Lake House Restaurant, at 81 North Main Street offers great cuisine, water cruises, and a romantic view of the Lake Pocotopaug; one of Connecticut's largest lakes. *Take time to visit:* Studio Fifty Five, L.L.C. at 55 Barton Hill Rd, is a wood-art studio specializing in artistic and functional wood turning. The trail head of the Air-Line Trail, at Smith Street and Flanders Road, stretches 13 miles east through Colchester, Hebron, and Lebanon on which you can hike, bike or cross country ski.

**HADDAM:** Founded in 1662 by agents of King Charles, Haddam is bisected by the Connecticut River. Going strong for over 100 years, "Neckers" on the east side lay claim to the annual Labor Day weekend "Haddam Neck Fair" filled with a midway, entertainment, foods and civic pride. Go west across the Goodspeed Swing Bridge to Tyterville for great eateries, and other brick and mortar shops, among them: Haddam Family Consignment, Farm 2 Hearth Bakery, Ye Oldie Tyterville Merchant House, Goodspeed Station (with a fun candy shop!), Connecticut Yarn and Wool, the Blue Oar Restaurant (bring bug spray), and another favorite wayside burger joint, The Pilot House, famous for incredible handmade relishes. Then, travel north on Rt. 154, to Higganum's center: complete with a grocery, pharmacy and several well visited restaurants. Stay for concerts at the gazebo under the stars on the Higganum Town Green, in July and early August (7:00 PM sharp, call 860-345-8334 for incident weather). Visit these sites near the Green: the Shad Museum (mid-April to June), and Haddam Veterans Museum (by appointment). Look for the privately owned Shipboard Rock, a glacial erratic as big as a house, visible from Rt. 154 when trees are bare—just north of Higganum Center on the east side of the road. It's reported to be the largest freestanding boulder in New England. *Local favorites:* RiverQuest runs ecology-minded cruises along the lower CT River (860-662-0577). The Thankful Arnold House (open year round but call for times: 860-345-2400 or visit their website) tells the story of early 19th century women and family life. Dino's Greek/Italian/American Restaurant (closed Tuesdays) on Rt. 81 along with the Sundial Tea Shop at 59 Hidden Lake Road are local gems. Haddam River Days is an annual town wide celebration the weekend after Labor Day, filled with family activities, music and fireworks held at Haddam Meadows State Park (free).

**IVORYTON:** The ivory industry gave the town its name; set up here by the Comstock family, who imported tusks to be shaped into covers for piano and organ keys. The Ivoryton Playhouse was built in 1911 as a recreation hall for workers of the Comstock-Cheney factory, but later became the first self-sustaining summer theater in the nation. Ivoryton and Centerbrook are both villages in the larger town of Essex; stop at the CT River Museum in Essex, the Comstock-Cheney factory,

**IVORYTON (CONT.):** but later became the first self-supporting summer theater in the nation. Ivoryton and Centerbrook are both villages in the larger town of Essex; stop at the CT River Museum in Essex, or take the whole family out to the Essex Steam Train and Riverboat excursions for a 5 mile train and boat ride on the beautiful CT River (exit 3, off Route 9). *Other special places:* ArtEssex Gallery at 10 Main Street in Essex is a great way to unwind, then head for the circa 1776 "Griswold Inn" offering fabulously wonderful food and merriment! Drop by Six Summit Gallery in Ivoryton Village, and look in on The Museum of Fife and Drum with glorious military parade uniforms and musical instruments (call ahead at: 860-399-6159).

**LYME:** Located on the eastern bank of the Connecticut River in New London County, near the mouth of the Connecticut River, Lyme is a small, rural community with about two thousand residents. Keen on preserving a rich agricultural heritage and a unique estuary ecosystem, Lyme today retains its colonial charm and has managed to avoid coastal sprawl. *Must visit:* sip freshly brewed coffee and delectable sweets at Ashlaw Farm, then mosey over to Sanlow's Beaverbrook Farm, Connecticut's largest sheep farm (both on Bill Hill). For sale are artfully knit sweaters, along with yarn, sheep and cow's milk (call ahead at: 860-434-2843).

**MIDDLETOWN:** The National Trust for Historic Preservation selected Middletown, CT as one of five "Most Romantic Main Streets" in America. With more than 30 downtown restaurants, and two college campuses, Middletown is full of great places to eat and things to do. In the North End, try breakfast or lunch at O'Rourke's classic box-car diner. Next door: Nora Cupcake Company serves up scrumptious delights. Eli Cannon's Tap Room is a local favorite with the college crowd. Vibrant cultural and arts opportunities abound at: The Burtonwood Tree Cultural Arts Center, Vinnie's Jump and Jive Dance Hall, KidCity Children's Museum, Green Street Art Center, and the Oddfellow's Playhouse. There's something for all ages at the Middletown Roller Rink, Metro Movies downtown theater, and the historic Vecchitto's Italian Ice Shop. *Do not miss:* Klekolo World Coffee at 181 Court Street, a Seattle style coffee bar and local fixture since 1994; it's the place for coffee sampling, dessert heaven – with music! Check out Wild Bill's Nostalgia Center for a blast from your past, at 1003 Newfield Street (860-613-0061 or 860-635-1226).

**OLD SAYBROOK:** Main Street in Old Saybrook is a walker's paradise, offering great dining and shopping, colonial history, bookstores, coffee shops and a movie theater. Stay on Rt. 154 south to Saybrook Point while gazing at beautifully preserved Colonial homes, and end at the newly renovated Dock & Dine restaurant. Alternatively, a drive along US Route 1 in either direction offers many local dining spots and special places to poke about. *Worthy of exploration:* Visit the Katherine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center (affectionately called "The Kate") at 300 Main Street and look over the local legends memorabilia. Look out for the remains of Fort Saybrook, with its boardwalk at the edge of a marsh and educational signs. Can you say cheese-co-ma?—one of the best local pilgrimage spots along US Highway 1 is Fromage Fine Foods and Coffees (at 873 Boston Post Road, Old Saybrook 860-388-5750); a foodie's heaven with cheeses from all corners of the world, plus-gourmet treats and coffees, with samples!



This map was made possible by a Grant from the State of Connecticut Department of Agriculture. Every effort was made to use correct information; please check with individual towns and markets for updates. Middlesex County includes the towns and villages of: Chester, Clinton, Cromwell, Deep River, Durham, East Haddam, East Hampton, Essex, Haddam, Killingworth, Middlefield, Middletown, Old Saybrook, Portland, and Westbrook. While Lyme is part of New London County, it is located on the eastern side of the mouth of the Connecticut River and is a wonderful place to start or end a farmer's market trail map journey. (Visit the Department of Agriculture online at <http://www.ct.gov/daag/>)



# FARMERS'

# MARKET TRAIL

# MAP OF THE

# LOWER

# CONNECTICUT

# RIVER

# VALLEY

