

Your Guide to Hiking in Connecticut

May 16, 2022



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New Haven is a great place to live. It has the good food, bustle, and social scene of a city, without feeling overwhelming. There's easy access to Boston and New York City. A major university in town means the Elm City punches above its weight for arts and culture. Surprisingly to many, New Haven also has great access to hiking and the outdoors in general.

Any of the northeastern mountain ranges are easy weekend trips from New Haven. However, you don't have to travel far for splendid hiking. In the past year, the pandemic led me to hike closer to home. Now, I can say that I've hiked for hundreds of miles on Connecticut trails.



Connecticut has a great diversity of hikes. You can find hikes of almost any difficulty and over almost any terrain. Want a stroll by the beach? Drive a short distance to [Hammonasset](#) [1]. Ready for some strenuousness with views? Gear up for [Bear Mountain](#) [2]. A ramble through classic New England woodland with boulders, majestic trees, and old stone fences? Take a walk on the [Chatfield Trail](#) [3]. Now that you're excited about hiking in Connecticut, here are some simple tips to start hiking in Connecticut using New Haven as a home base.

Here is how I find Connecticut's hiking gems, whether they're hidden or not:

- **Check out the Connecticut State Parks and Forests.** I haven't been to a bad one yet, and they always have good hiking maps. Here is a [full listing of the parks and forests](#). [4] Some good starters are the trails at the south end of [West Rock State Park](#) [5] or the Blue Trail at [Sleeping Giant State Park](#) [6] (take the Blue Trail from the parking lot all the way to the tower with scenic views, then come down the Tower Trail).
- **Just about every town in Connecticut has a town land trust.** These local nonprofit organizations buy land and maintain it for ecological preservation and outdoor recreation. Don't take these for granted; many places in America don't have the concept of land trusts or accessible, local trails. Due to the land trusts, there is great hiking in every part of Connecticut. Just look at a [map of Connecticut's towns](#) [7], and then google that town's name with land trust. I'm sure you'll find a hike you like! To skip that research, you can use this [blog's listing of land trusts](#) [8]. By the way, [that blog, CTMQ](#). [9] is a phenomenal source for all sorts of Connecticut activities. To get started next to New Haven, the [Woodbridge Land Trust's trails](#) [10] get good reviews (although I can't say I've hiked any of them... yet!). New Haven has some neat land trust properties – be sure to check out the [Quinnipiac Meadows Preserve](#) [11] for a thoroughly unique hike.
- **Up for a challenge?** The Connecticut Forest & Park Association maintains the crown jewel of Connecticut hiking, the [Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System](#). [12] These trails are selected for their quality. I think that most of my favorite moments hiking in Connecticut have happened on these trails. They're generally longer, but there are some shorter ones. For a real bucket list item, try to do the [Blue Trails Challenge](#) [13] while

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Published on Office of International Students & Scholars (<https://oiss.yale.edu>)

you're living in New Haven. A great introduction is the [Regicides Trail](#) [14]. Have a friend drop you at the northern end, about 20 minutes from the OISS office. Then, just walk south until you're at West Rock. From there, you can easily take a bus or an Uber to downtown.



I hope that you try out some of Connecticut's hiking while you're in New Haven. Hiking is not just an activity for "outdoorsy" people. It's a restorative, healthy, and free activity almost anyone can enjoy and benefit from. I hope to write some more about hiking in Connecticut this summer for OISS, but if you have any questions, feel free to write me at eli.westerman@yale.edu [15]. Happy Trails!

Source URL: <https://oiss.yale.edu/news/your-guide-to-hiking-in-connecticut>

Links

[1] <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/State-Parks/Parks/Hammonasset-Beach-State-Park> [2] http://berkshirehiking.com/hikes/bearmt_salisbury.html [3] <https://ctwoodlands.org/trails/chatfield-trail/> [4] <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/State-Parks/Listing-of-State-Parks> [5] <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/stateparks/maps/WestRockParkmappdf.pdf> [6] <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/stateparks/maps/sleepgiantpdf.pdf> [7] <http://www.rovac.org/documents/maps/townmap.pdf> [8] <https://www.ctmq.org/land-trust-trails/> [9] <https://www.ctmq.org/> [10] <http://woodbridgelandtrust.org/WLT/our-properties/trail-maps/> [11] <https://gathernewhaven.org/our-programs/preserves> [12] <https://www.ctwoodlands.org/blue-blazed-hiking-trails> [13] <https://ctwoodlands.org/explore-trails/blue-blazed-hiking-trails-challenge/> [14] <https://ctwoodlands.org/trails/regicides-trail/> [15] <https://www.ctmq.org/>

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