

scenic stroll
Groton Long Point's
charming Main Beach is
perfect for photo ops.



10 things not to overlook in connecticut

Our ultimate planning tips and can't-miss spots in Connecticut. BY MEGHAN OVERDEEP

Whether it's a romantic stroll through a historic seaport, a scrumptious oyster festival or a night at the tables at Foxwoods or Mohegan Sun, Connecticut is full of fabulous activities for you and your hubby-to-be. Plan no further until you've read our list of need-to-know insider secrets about this wedding region. >>

1 hit the coast

“Connecticut is full of quaint coastal towns that are perfect not only for weddings, but for showers and rehearsal dinners,” says Stephanie Carmody of Très Chic Events (TresChicEventsCT.com) in Glastonbury. Two of our favorite event spots are Madison Beach Hotel (MadisonBeachHotel.com) in Madison and the historic Griswold Inn (GriswoldInn.com) in Essex.



nautical nosegay
A thick-striped ribbon is a seaside addition to a Connecticut beach wedding bouquet.

2 explore the capitol

As the capitol of the nation's fifth state, Hartford is rich in history. Tour top landmarks, including the Old State House (CTOldStateHouse.org), The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art (TheWadsworth.org), The Mark Twain House & Museum (MarkTwainHouse.org) and Elizabeth Park (ElizabethPark.org).

3 take a hike

“Connecticut is a beautiful state with both shorelines and countrysides and year-round diversity in climate,” Carmody says. Head to Sleeping Giant State Park (CT.gov) in Hamden for hiking in spring and summer and snowshoeing in winter. Take a break from planning to tackle Bear Mountain—it's the tallest point in the state and perfect for hiking, gorgeous views and clearing your head.

4 try the wine

Connecticut is home to a burgeoning wine region. Hop on the Connecticut Wine Trail (CTWine.com) during one of your planning visits so you can share your favorites with guests. Stop by Gouveia Vineyards (GouveiaVineyards.com) in Wallingford for a taste of its award-winning Stone House Red.

5 visit mystic

For a trip back in time and a fun weekend getaway, “Mystic Seaport is *the* place to visit during spring, summer and fall,” says Candice Coppola of Jubilee Events (EventJubilee.com) in Cheshire. Climb aboard the last wooden whaling ship in the world, the Charles W. Morgan, and experience maritime history firsthand at Mystic Seaport's (MysticSeaport.org) living museum. >>



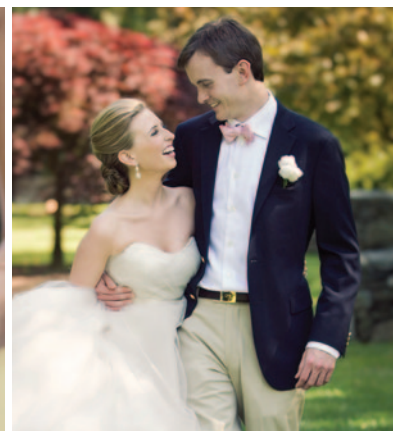
great estate
The exquisite Eolia Mansion at Harkness State Memorial Park.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: ALISSA DINDEN PHOTOGRAPHY; CARLA TEN EYCK PHOTOGRAPHY; STUDIO 1923 PHOTOGRAPHIC ART

the knot special southern connecticut guide

light works
Brighten up your tented reception with ethereal hanging lanterns.



prep work
Preppy elements like khaki pants and a bow tie reflect the southern New England locale.

6 sample local fare

No visit would be complete without sampling the fruits of the sea. Abbott's Lobster in the Rough (Abbotts-Lobster.com) in Noank and sea scallops from Stonington are two local favorites to try (and add to your menu). And visit Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana (PepesPizzeria.com) and Sally's Apizza (SallysApizza.com) in New Haven and decide for yourself which of these rivals reigns supreme.

7 ante up

Do a little gambling at one of eastern Connecticut's sprawling casinos. Mohegan Sun (MoheganSun.com) in Uncasville and Foxwoods Resort Casino (Foxwoods.com) in Mashantucket are both renowned for their food, entertainment and gambling. (Did somebody say bachelorette party?)

8 remember travel arrangements

Reminder: Connecticut is not a very large state, so a car is often the best way to get around, Carmody says. That being said, traffic can be awful during summer, so add buffers to your weekend timeline. Also, if you're planning a summer wedding, remember to secure your hotel blocks well in advance—they fill up fast!

9 take to the sea

For a unique perspective, tour the Long Island Sound by boat with Grass Island Cruises (GrassIslandCruisesCT.com) out of Guilford. Or ship out of Groton with DownEast Lighthouse Cruises for a boat tour of Connecticut's historic lighthouses (DownEastLighthouseCruises.com). If you're looking for romance on the seas, book a sunset cruise with Argia Mystic Cruises (ArgiaMystic.com) in Mystic. Include your favorite excursion on your wedding website for guests to test their sea legs, or charter one for a fun rehearsal dinner.

10 pay attention to the local calendar

Look at event calendars like CTVisit.com or talk to locals to make sure you're aware of everything going on in the area during—and immediately before and after—your wedding weekend. Shore towns host many events throughout the year that could affect hotel rates, airfare and transportation for out-of-town guests.

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