

Luxury Unleashed

Living the Good Life

Venture to Connecticut's Gold Coast and immerse yourself in the best of the best – from yachts to couture dresses and world-class art.



Philip Johnson Glass House

Picturesque with rolling hills, historical homes and sandy beaches, Fairfield County, Connecticut, is a vacationer's haven. A short 35 miles from New York City, this charming enclave boasts some of America's wealthiest communities. That's a boon for visitors, who can see monied mansions, participate in festivals, tour museums, enjoy cultural events and find shopping bargains – all affordably.

While many Fairfield County pleasures are simple, anyone can delve into the world of the privileged for a weekend or a week. Watch a polo match at the Greenwich Polo Club. Charter a

yacht in the Long Island Sound. Ogle antique and international cars at an auto show. Tour stunning homes decorated for the holidays in winter; meander through their gardens in summer. Explore a wealth of nature, from a 1,746-acre nature preserve known as Devil's Den, within Weston, to an extraordinary arboretum in Stamford; or two Audubon centers, in Greenwich and Fairfield.

More straightforward endeavors are seemingly endless. The county has almost 30 miles of coastline, so sun worshippers can soak up the rays at beaches and marinas. Lighthouses, party boats, brunch cruises, fishing expeditions and kayaking adventures are all on offer.

Shopping is serious business in the county's charming communities. In addition to malls with

lounges, valet parking and concierge service, the retail-oriented will delight in Main Streets chock-full of boutiques. Downtown Greenwich National Historic Register District, for example, is known as "the Rodeo Drive of the East" for its 1/4-mile strip filled with European collectibles, art galleries and designer shops. Pre-Civil War-era brick merchant emporiums are the backdrop for window browsing in Norwalk's artsy SoNo neighborhood. Artist lofts and chic galleries are housed in converted factory buildings in booming Bridgeport. The restaurants and water views are as fine as the goods stocking the shelves in New Canaan and Darien's downtown centers.

Bargain hunting is great sport here. Throughout the summer, communities host old-fashioned

sidewalk sales where savvy savers can uncover amazing bargains on not only apparel but also furniture, rugs and accessories. In Greenwich alone, five over-the-top consignment stores have a better selection of oh-my! items than most department stores. Antiquing is hugely popular in this nook of the country, so dealers offer incredible selections in stores, in galleries, at shows and at the newest addition, a donation center that specializes in kitchen equipment.

Culture abounds in Fairfield County. Architecture buffs book months in advance to visit the Philip Johnson Glass House, a 47-acre campus featuring the modernist home of the renowned architect. Fourteen structures, original art and sculpted landscaping are among the features. Other museums run the gamut, from the Garbage Museum, teaching kids about ecology, to the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion, a 62-room Empire-style country home. Additional museums celebrate circus icon P.T. Barnum, decorative arts, space and modern art.

Theater and music delight residents and visitors in Fairfield County, with Shakespeare performances; outdoor jazz, classic and rock concerts; and regional theater productions.

Whatever your pleasure – leisurely alfresco lunches, Sound sails, bird watching, back-roads cycling, Colonial-era gravestone rubbing or garden tours – one pleasure is universal: In the autumn, when the leaves change colors, lovely little Fairfield County, with its leafy trees fronting quaint communities, has some of the best foliage anywhere. To learn more, call 800-483-4868 or visit visitfairfieldcountyc.com.

Several area hotels, knowing their clientele will appreciate lodgings equal in excellence to the



Auto show

Gold Coast venues they'll visit, go above and beyond to provide luxe environs and amenities.

Greenwich stands tall as a center of sophistication, and the **Delamar Greenwich Harbor** represents the destination's class well. Best of all, this den of luxury is a quick jaunt from midtown Manhattan. City dwellers can settle in by the

Delamar library's fireplace, complimentary glass of sherry in hand, after a mere 45-minute auto or train ride. You can also arrive by yacht, or even sailboat. The Delamar's yellow stucco exterior, with its red terracotta tile roof, fronts 600 feet of private dock.

However you approach, the Delamar staff is

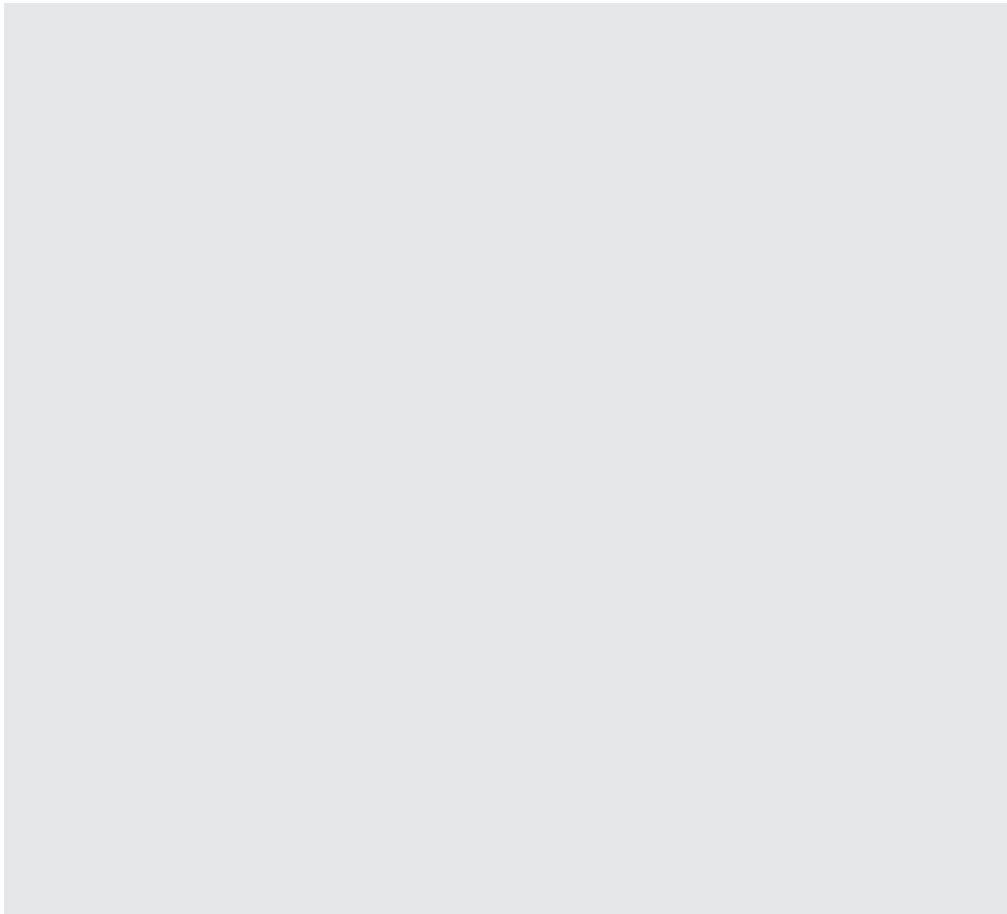
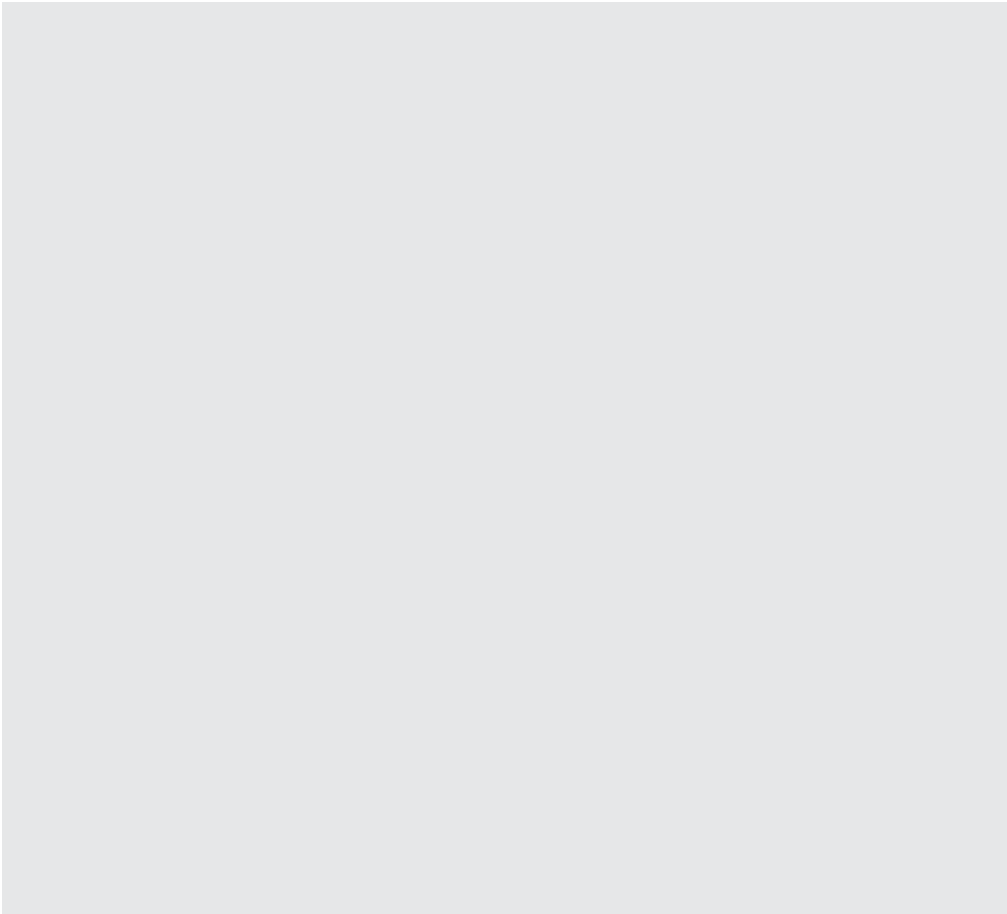
Getting There

BY CAR Fairfield County is 35 miles from Manhattan via Interstate 95 and 170 miles from Boston on interstates 90, 91 and 95.

BY AIR Seven airports are within a 1½-hour drive of Connecticut's Gold Coast. Local Bradley International Airport and Tweed New Haven Regional Airport have regular flights. Regional airports like Bridgewater's Sikorsky Memorial Airport (with helicopter service) and Westchester County, New York's White Plains Westchester County Airport welcome private planes.

BY TRAIN Amtrak and Metro-North Railroad make daily stops.

BY FERRY Bridgeport & Port Jefferson Ferry runs year-round between Bridgeport, Connecticut, and Port Jefferson, New York.



Polo match

determined to spoil you throughout your visit. The only member of the exclusive Small Luxury Hotels of the World in the entire state, the Delamar is renowned for its doting service.

Your surroundings will be exquisite. Opulent fabrics, custom-crafted furnishings and original artwork conspire to create the refined, warm feel of an Italian villa. The hotel has only 82 guest rooms and suites, many with spectacular harbor views and each appointed with hand-painted armoires that house flat-screen TVs. Sink into a steaming bath in an oversize cast-iron tub, mix a martini from the well-stocked mini bar, and lounge on Italian Fili D'Oro linens while wrapped in a plush Frete robe. For the ultimate in rejuvenation, book a treatment at the Spa at Delamar.

The Delamar's restaurant, L'Escale, has a well-regarded creative Provençal menu. Dine on the waterfront terrace sipping a fine wine from the south of France. The hotel is minutes from Greenwich's boutiques and restaurants. 866-335-2627, thedelamar.com

Live Americana for a few days at the **Inn at National Hall**, a boutique luxury hotel in located in scenic Westport, Connecticut. Perched beside the Saugatuck River, this lovingly restored property is 136 years old. It began as a bank and had many lives after that, but since 1993 it has been New England's answer to European manor homes. Its place on the National Register of Historic Places only begins to tell of its charms.

The Inn at National Hall's lobby is on the third floor of the Italianate brick structure, and it will envelop you in its personality immediately. Warm and intimate, the public spaces boast cherry panel

moldings and handcrafted arch ceilings, with whimsical extras lightening the tone. Guests gather in the drawing room for a game of snooker – and for breakfast every morning. Meetings for up to 16 take place under an antique crystal chandelier.

Each of the 16 guest rooms and suites has its own themed décor, complete with antiques, artisan stenciling, lavish fabrics and canopy beds. Some even have trompe l'oeil enhancements. The Raindrop Room, with a nurturing peach and coral color scheme, is brightened with hand-painted flowers and gold leaf raindrops on the walls. *800-NAT-HALL, innatnationalhall.com*

The Hotel Chesterfield, a seaside favorite for almost 100 years, is Stamford's only super luxury boutique hotel, and possibly one of the most spectacular combinations of gilded-age elegance and new-age luxury to be found. Thomas L. Rich, a lifelong resident of Shippan Point and the president/CEO of the F. D. Rich Company in Stamford, completed a stunning transformation of the hotel shortly after acquiring it in July 2008.

The new luxury boutique hotel is as affordable as it is chic. You'll lodge in one of only nine guest rooms at the one-time mansion, where doting service and genuinely warm hospitality are given in a space filled with contemporary amenities and original artwork. Just ask, and the staff will arrange

for a therapist to perform a healing Thai massage in the privacy of a massage therapy room. Book a private one-on-one yoga session.

Indulgence is found in every nook of the Hotel Chesterfield. Each guest room has its own personality, with original stained-glass windows, fireplaces, bay windows or antiques. Down comforters and plush robes pamper guests. While the lodgings appear timeless, subtly mixed in are 42-inch flat-screen TVs, iPod docks and WiFi access. Bathrooms are magnificent sanctuaries of fashionable white tile as the canvas for pedestal sinks, imported chrome fixtures, rainfall showers and Gilchrist & Soames toiletries.

In common areas, comfortable club chairs are placed around fireplaces, where complimentary wine and cheese are served every afternoon. Breakfast is served by windows, morning sunlight and nature views.

"Preferred Guests" can gain entrance to the Osprey Club, a private members-only yachting club. The hotel's free shuttle takes guests to area attractions. *203-978-1227, thehotelchesterfield.com*

With amenities and extras so extraordinary in Fairfield County inns, visitors may be tempted to revel in the luxury all day long. But the destination has so very many incredible attractions and activities. Go for the Gold.

Fairfield by the Numbers

5 Private art collections of the Connecticut Art Trail's 17 located in Fairfield

18 Regattas annually

8 Marathons and triathlons

1,400 Seats on the UBS trading floor, the world's largest

22 Marinas

9 Lighthouses

53 Festivals, fairs and fireworks annually

17 Pick-your-own farms

23 Historical homes on the Heritage Trail