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"May, the month of gladness." John Lydgate (c1370-1449)

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Checking In...

Mystic: A Historic Connecticut Shore Town

Our *Checking In* columnist, Ward Morehouse III, is taking a break so we've asked our New England travel correspondent and expert, **Traci L. Suppa** to fill in for him. Mr. Morehouse returns next month to tell us about the best restaurants for pre- and post-theater dining in New York City.

With less than 5,000 full-time residents, Mystic is the quintessential small New England village. It's located on the estuary of the same name which, in turn flows into Long Island Sound, providing access to the Atlantic Ocean.

GETTING THERE

By car, take Exit 90 on I-95 in CT. Approx drive times: 3.5 hours from Albany, 2.5 hours from NYC, 1.5 hours from Boston and 1 hour from Providence. ■ **Amtrak** (☎ 800-872-7245, www.amtrak.com) from NYC takes under 3 hours; from Boston, 1.5 hours.

autumn it has vibrant fall foliage. If you plan vacations around festivals, check the dates (see **Mystic Country** below) for the Lobster Fest, Sea Music Festival, Antique & Classic Wooden Boat Rendezvous and the Chowder Fest. The village also sparkles during the Christmas season.

TEN WAYS TO ENJOY MYSTIC

1 Experience history

Founded in 1654, this shipbuilding town was home to captains, sailmakers, carpenters, merchants and shopkeepers. Much of its history is revealed at the famous Seaport...

■ The 17-acre **Mystic Seaport** (☎ 888-973-2767, www.mysticseaport.org, Rte 27), one of the world's leading maritime museums, has recreated a 19th century coastal village with a schoolhouse, church, general store and lighthouse. It also has several fully rigged sailing ships which you can board, the two



Mystic Seaport Waterfront

TIP: Amtrak makes more frequent stops at its New London station, 15 min away. ■ **Peter Pan Bus** (☎ 800-343-9999, www.peterpanbus.com) has service from Boston's Logan Airport and South Station, NY's Port Authority, Providence and Warwick's T.F. Green Airport. Pickup/drop off at north end of Olde Mistick Village. **Greyhound** (☎ 800-231-2222, www.greyhound.com), which has a station in New London, partners with Peter Pan so you can transfer there to a bus heading for Olde Mistick Village. ■ Airports within an hour's drive: Hartford's **Bradley** and Providence-Warwick's **T.F. Green**.

WHEN TO GO

While Mystic is a four-season destination, spring and summer are ideal times to enjoy the Long Island Sound beaches. And, in

most famous being the 1841 *Charles W. Morgan* (America's last surviving wooden whaler) and the 1882 Joseph Conrad. **TIP:** Excellent gift shop with nautical items.

TIP: Have lunch or dinner nearby at the **Captain Daniel Packer Inne** which dates back to 1756 (☎ 860-536-3555, www.danielpacker.com, 32 Water St). Entrees: \$19.95-\$28.95. Entertainment most nights in the tavern. More formal dining rooms upstairs.

2 Shop until you drop

Independent retailers thrive in Mystic, to the shopaholic's delight. ■ Unique "mom and pop" shops line **West Main Street** and several cross streets, selling gifts, clothing, jewelry, art and books.

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RIDING THE RAILS AN AMTRAK UPDATE

TRAVEL EAST COAST CITIES: FROM \$35

Amtrak's 14-day advance purchase discount fares on *Northeast Regional* trains were scheduled to expire at the end of March — but they're now ongoing!

You can travel between Washington & NY, Boston & NY and Baltimore & NY for a little as \$49 o/w. The rate between NY & Philadelphia and NY & Baltimore is just \$35 o/w.

"With ridership up on the *Northeast Regional* service, it's obvious these low fares are popular with our passengers," **Emmett Fremaux**, Amtrak's vp of marketing told T/S.

City Pairs	Old Fare	New Low Fare
DC - NY	\$74	\$49
Boston - NY	\$64	\$49
NY - Philly	\$47	\$35
Philly - DC	\$46	\$35
Baltimore - NY	\$67	\$49

The *Northeast Regional* fare is also available on trains from Washington to Newport News and Lynchburg; on the *Vermont* between Springfield (MA) and Washington; and on the *Keystone* between Philadelphia and NY.

\$TIP: Reservations must be made 14 days in advance; not available Nov 24 & 28, Dec 26 or Jan 2.

Good News: The *Northeast Regional* fare may be combined with the every day "Kid's Half Price" fare for up to 2 children (ages 2 to 15), when accompanied by an adult. Tickets are non-refundable but exchangeable.

Particulars: ☎ 800-USA-RAIL, www.amtrak.com.

In the early 1800s, the British inventor Richard Trevithick

(who was a poor student and intensely disliked school) built the first full-scale working railway steam engine.



Mystic: A Historic Connecticut Shore Town *(cont'd from page 9)*

■ The colonial-style **Olde Mistick Village** (☎ 860-536-4941, www.oldemistickvillage.com) has 40+ stores selling unique items from around the world in a charming setting with brick pathways, gardens, trees, duck ponds, a waterfall and fine restaurants. **Our picks:** Irish Eyes, Yankee Silversmith and the Grey Goose Cookery.

TIP: There's a helpful Visitor Information Center here.

3 Hear live entertainment

In nearby Mashantucket and Uncasville you'll find two casinos, **Foxwoods** (☎ 800-FOXWOODS, www.foxwoods.com) and **Mohegan Sun** (☎ 888-226-7711, www.mohegan.sun.com) where top entertainers (such as Kenny Rogers, Englebert Humperdinck and Jerry Seinfeld) have performed.

4 Tour Mystic Country

Set aside several days to see New London, Norwich, Storrs, Putnam and Woodstock. ■ Travel along the **Winery Trail** (☎ 860-677-5467, www.CTwine.com) which covers 19 wineries in various towns from Shelton to Guilford, or take the **Connecticut Art Trail** (www.arttrail.org) which incl 15 world-class museums and historic sites, such as the Wadsworth Atheneum, Bruce Museum, Yale University Art Gallery and the Florence Griswold Museum. Incl special hotel/motel & B&B packages. ■ Tee off at any of the 10 regional public golf courses, incl **Shennecossett** in Groton, one of *Golf magazine's best public courses; fees under \$50* (☎ 860-445-6912, www.shennygolf.com).

5 See the Belugas

The **Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration** (☎ 860-572-5955, www.mysticaquarium.org) houses one of the largest outdoor Beluga Whale exhibits in the US. The aquarium's 750,000 gallons of water accommodates 13 of them! Current melon-headed residents — Kela, Naku and Juno — fascinate young and old alike. Set aside time to see the other 40 live sea life exhibits.

TIP: Have lunch at the **Penguins Café** where the food is locally grown, harvested or caught.

6 Entertain your kids or grandkids

There's plenty for the 2-12 set to see and do, incl the Mystic Aquarium (see above), the **Children's Museum** at Mystic Seaport (see above) and **Ocean Beach Park** (☎ 800-510-7263, www.ocean-beach-park.com) in New London. Voted one of the "12 Best Beaches in New England," it has a boardwalk, water slide, miniature golf course, carousel, food concessions and more.

7 Take to the sea

A variety of cruises are available during the season. ■ At **Mystic Seaport** you can: a) Go downriver on the 1908 steamboat, **Sabino**, said to be the oldest coal-fired wooden steamboat still running; b) Take a cruise on the **Break Marshall Catboat**; c) **Rent a sailboat** or rowboat. ■ The 110-ft windjammer, **Mystic Whaler**, has day cruises, lobster dinner outings and overnight sails (☎ 800-697-8420, www.mysticwhaler.com). ■ The **ARGIA**, a replica of a 19th century schooner, has half-day sails, sunset cruises and 40-min harbor cruises (☎ 860-536-0416, www.voyagermystic.com).

8 Partake of culture

■ The **Eugene O'Neill Memorial Theater Center** (☎ 860-443-5378, www.oneilltheatercenter.org) in Waterford has indoor and outdoor performance spaces overlooking Long Island Sound. ■ The Center also owns O'Neill's childhood home, the 1888 **Monte Cristo Cottage** (☎ 860-443-5378) on Pequot Ave in New London. Call for hours.

9 Dine

Some of the best meals are served at the least pretentious eateries. This is "clam shack country" where briny bites are dispensed from roadside stands. Diners, pizzerias and ice cream stands are part of Mystic's culinary culture. ■ Be sure to stop in the **Cove** (☎ 860-536-0061, www.covefishmarket.com) on Stonington Rd, for their acclaimed cod sandwich. Entrees from \$8.95, sandwiches from \$3.50. ■ **Kitchen Little** on Greenmanville Ave (☎ 860-536-2122) has sublime yet affordable breakfasts.

■ Visitors like to eat at least once where Julia worked. **Mystic Pizza** on Main St (☎ 860-536-3700, www.mysticpizza.com) is worthy of all the hype. This casual

restaurant, popularized in the 1988 Julia Roberts' film of the same name, still serves a delectable pie with a light, airy dough. No reservations, so if the wait is too long, order "to-go" or have it delivered or try their second location, which is in North Stonington.

For elegant dining, head for the **Flood-tide Restaurant** (☎ 860-536-8140) in the **Inn at Mystic** (see below). Entrees, \$20-\$36. Open to the public for dinner.

10 Stay overnight

Looking for romance? ■ Choose from several inns and B&B's, incl the historic **Inn at Mystic**, (☎ 860-536-9604, www.innatmystic.com) where Bogart and Bacall honeymooned in the main house, an impressive 1904 mansion. Many rooms, which range from \$195-\$285, have fireplaces or balconies. Rates incl bkfst and afternoon tea. Located at the junction of Routes 1 & 27. ■ **Kids in tow?** The **Hilton** (☎ 860-572-0731, www.hiltonmystic.com) has the perfect location — across the street from the Aquarium. The 182 rooms range from \$229-\$336. ■ **Searching for a spa?** The AAA-4-diamond **Mystic Marriott Hotel & Spa** (☎ 860-446-2600; www.Marriott.com) has rooms ranging from \$74-\$189. (Both the Hilton and Marriott have indoor swimming pools.)

For Further Information

- **Mystic Country:** This organization gives recommendations from locals on its website as well as a personal itinerary planner, maps and up-to-date lists of special offers and discounts. ☎ 860-536-8822, www.mysticcountry.com.
- **Mystic & Noank Public Library:** 40 Library St, ☎ 860-536-7721, www.mysticnoanklibrary.com. Built of Roman brick with Italian tile floors, the library has an impressive children's activity room. Great for rainy days.



The historic Inn at Mystic, overlooking Long Island Sound, is where Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall spent their honeymoon.