Litchfield, CT “Dawn to Dusk” Highlights Tour

Litchfield is a town known for its rich history, beautiful natural areas, and scrumptious eateries. We’ve mapped out a route around the five main regions of town, highlighting locations that can be viewed year-round. The tour includes both driving and walking sections. You can either follow the step-by-step directions or punch the final locations into a mapping application. While it’s possible to visit all of these locations within one very full day, feel free to take your time and extend your stay in bucolic Litchfield.

For a nice sunrise on a clear morning, head to The White Memorial Foundation’s Point Folly Campground. From the intersection of Route 202 and North Shore Rd. (use 583 Bantam Rd. on mapping apps), head south on North Shore Rd for .9 miles. You will see the sign for Point Folly Campground on your left. Park in the gravel lot just outside the campground gate and walk into the campground. About .09 miles/150 yards past the gate (just after Campsite #3), you will see a wooden platform on your left. Walk up onto the platform to observe a beautiful sunrise over Bantam Lake.

1) Bantam Lake from Point Folly Campground (123 North Shore Rd., Bantam)

At 947 acres, Bantam Lake is the largest natural lake in Connecticut, formed by a receding glacier. Several locations around the lake, including Point Folly, were used as hunting campsites by indigenous peoples, most recently the Peantum families of the Potatuck tribe. The area before you is the outlet where water flows back into the Bantam River. Even during cold winters, the water here remains unfrozen, making it a gathering spot for waterfowl. Year-round, birdwatching proves to be quite fruitful from this vantage point.

Now head back north on North Shore Rd. until it “T’s” with Route 202. Turn left onto Rt. 202
and drive .4 miles until you enter the Borough of Bantam (one of 5 major regions in the Town of Litchfield). At the top of the short hill, turn left into the parking lot of Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church. Walk east (parallel to Rt. 202) through Bantam Cemetery until you reach the far corner, where the oldest gravesites are located. About 20 rows back from the paved path, you will find the headstone of Revolutionary War soldier Elijah Horton.

2) Elijah Horton’s Gravesite in Bantam Cemetery (715 Bantam Rd., Bantam)

On December 16, 1773, Elijah Horton and other colonists boarded British ships docked in Boston Harbor and dumped 92,000 pounds of tea into the water (an event now known as the Boston Tea Party, of course). The Revolutionary War began on April 16, 1775 and Elijah Horton served in the Continental Army. In the 1790s, he moved to Litchfield. Elisha’s grave was refurbished in 2011 with a legible headstone acknowledging his significant roles in American history.

Turn left out of the church parking lot onto Rt. 202 and drive .3 miles. Just past the intersection with Vanderpoel Ave. (on your right), turn left into the parking lot of Bantam River Park (look for the crosswalk linking the park to Borough of Bantam Hall on the right). In the parking lot, you will see a small red building enclosing a Flynn and Doyle Carriage.

3) Flynn and Doyle Carriage (across from 890 Bantam Rd., Bantam)

The carriage-making firm Flynn & Doyle opened in Bantam in 1876. The company offered a variety of vehicles: carriages for everyday use, upscale driving models, wagons, and even sleighs. Specialized designs such as ice wagons attracted customers throughout Connecticut and across state lines. The firm closed in 1918 as automobiles became the preferred method of transportation. The Borough of Bantam, however, remained a “hub” of industry for several more decades.
4) Breakfast Time!
Take a break from the tour and enjoy breakfast at one of the many eateries in town. Check their websites to make sure they are open during breakfast hours.

From the intersection of Rt. 202 and Maple St. in Bantam (use 637 Bantam Rd. on mapping apps), head north on Maple St. for 2.7 miles. Just after the second stop sign (you’ll see historic Bunnell Farms at this corner), turn left onto Milton Rd. and proceed .8 miles, which will take you into the heart of the village of Milton.

5) Milton Center Historic District (use 536 Milton Rd., Litchfield)

The entire Milton Center Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Within its boundaries lie eleven 18th century buildings, including the 1791 Congregational Church. The triangular Green retains its historic appearance. Milton was once a thriving industrial community due to waterpower sourced from the Shepaug River. While evidence of its industrial roots are barely visible, the character of Milton as a quintessential New England settlement certainly remains intact.

Return to Rt. 202 via Milton St., then Maple Street. Turn left onto Rt. 202 and proceed 1.5 miles. Along the way (at .6 miles), you’ll pass part of the Community Greenway on your right, including a “Bridge to Everywhere.” (When all phases are complete, the Greenway will provide a contiguous recreational trail from the Boroughs of Litchfield to Bantam.) When you reach the intersection with Brush Hill Rd., veer left and proceed to the stop sign. Rather than turning left onto Brush Hill Rd., turn right, as if returning to Rt. 202. On that short stretch of the “triangle,” you’ll see a left turn into the Graham Thompson Preserve.

6) Litchfield Land Trust’s Marsh Hawk Trail (across from 407 Bantam Rd., Litchfield, at the intersection of Brush Hill Rd. and Rt. 202)

The Litchfield Land Trust was established in 1968 as one of Connecticut’s earliest land trusts. With over 200 parcels of land and five established trails, LLT is dedicated to helping protect our area’s scenic vistas, natural resources, and New England character. The Marsh Hawk Trail on the Graham Thompson Preserve is rated as
“easy” and goes out and back for a total of .5 miles. It begins at the Community Garden plots, then meanders along a stone wall to a platform at the edge of a hayfield, overlooking a beaver pond and the valley beyond.

Turn left to out of the Preserve and proceed to Rt. 202. Turn left onto Rt. 202 and head east for 1.1 miles. Just up the hill and past the intersection with Woodruff Lane on your right, veer right into the parking area adjacent to the Borough of Litchfield’s “Green.” The next 10 stops radiate from here, at the intersection of Rt. 202, North St. and South St. There is ample free parking at this location. From here, you can complete a walking loop of just under 2.5 miles to see Stops 7-16. You can also drive to each of these stops, but please be aware that space to pull over is limited in some locations.

On the corner of Rt. 202 and North St. (7 North St.), you will see a gray building with shops and restaurants occupying the former Litchfield Jailhouse.

**7) The Old Litchfield Jailhouse (7 North St., Litchfield)**

Built in 1812, the three-story brick Litchfield Jailhouse was the first major 19th century structure built in the center of town. Subsequent additions were added to the Jailhouse in 1846 and 1890.

In 1983, Anna Zaremba Thompson was appointed Warden of the Litchfield Correctional Center, making her the first woman warden of a male prison in the State of Connecticut.

A photograph of the Litchfield Jailhouse taken in 1959, Litchfield Historical Society Collection

Proceed .1 miles/175 yards north on North St. to the 3rd building on the left, 47 North Street.
8) Benjamin Tallmadge’s House (47 North St., Litchfield)

Benjamin Tallmadge is one of Litchfield’s most famous residents. As George Washington’s Director of Military Intelligence, Tallmadge organized the Culper Spy Ring, a network of spies that collected information on the British Army in New York and Long Island during the Revolution.

After the war, Tallmadge moved to Litchfield with his wife, Mary Floyd, and raised their family of seven children. Litchfield in the early 1800s was the perfect town for the ambitious and upwardly mobile Tallmadge’s. Tallmadge became involved in many political and business ventures, including operating a mercantile shop, purchasing and selling land in Ohio, and serving in Congress.

Continue going up North St. .17 miles/300 yards until you see a road sign on the west side of North St. and a large rock with a plaque signifying the site of the Sarah Pierce Academy.

9) Sarah Pierce’s Litchfield Female Academy (use 77 North St., Litchfield)

Sarah Pierce founded the Litchfield Female Academy in 1792, teaching basic academic subjects alongside ornamental skills like sewing, drawing, and music. Over the next 41 years, the Academy became a pioneering institution for women’s education that enrolled more than 3,000 students.

Pierce developed an academic curriculum that reflected her belief in the intellectual equality
of men and women. She sought to transform the education of her students from a “frivolous pursuit” focused on ornamental training to one of intellectual and social responsibility. Alumni of her school applied their training to lifelong pursuits in art, literature, charitable work, and social and educational reform.

Proceed another .12 miles/210 yards to the intersection of North St. and Prospect St., where you’ll see a road sign indicating the site of the former Beecher House.

10) The Beecher Home Site (use 201 North St., Litchfield)

The Reverend Lyman Beecher, a prominent Congregationalist and religious leader, moved to Litchfield and became the pastor at the First Congregational Church in 1810. Beecher’s time in Litchfield corresponded with the Second Great Awakening of the early 19th century. During the 16 years the Beecher family lived in Litchfield, Rev. Lyman Beecher attracted large crowds, and his influence extended beyond town.

Beecher’s daughter, Harriet Beecher Stowe, was born in Litchfield in 1811. Famous for her writings, including *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Harriet was first educated at the Litchfield Female Academy. Many of Lyman Beecher’s 11 children had a lasting influence on America, including oldest daughter and educator, Catherine, youngest daughter and suffragist, Isabella, and son Henry Ward, who used his pulpit at Brooklyn’s Plymouth Church to become one of the most famous men of his time.

Turn around and proceed back .4 miles to the intersection of Rt. 202 and North Street. (If you are walking, backtrack .14 miles/250 yards, and use the crosswalk just past the Pierce Academy sign to cross North St.; have a closer look at the historic homes on the other side of the street.) Take a left onto Rt. 202 and go .09 miles/150 yards to the First Congregational Church on your left. If you are driving, you will need to continue on Rt. 202 past the junction with Rt. 118 and turn left into the church parking lot.
11) First Congregational Church of Litchfield (21 Torrington Rd., Litchfield)

Litchfield’s First Congregational Church is well known for its photographic appeal. Most people assume the building dates to the Colonial period; however, the form of the church is more closely tied to the Colonial Revival period of the late 1800s.

When the current church was originally built in 1828, it was already the third building for the Congregational Church. In 1873 a new Victorian gothic-style church was built, and this 1828 church was moved off site and the steeple removed. Known as Colonial Hall, the building was used as a community space for dances and recreation. However, by the early 1900s, the neo-classical design of the 1828 church was preferred. The 1873 gothic church was demolished, and Colonial Hall was returned to its original spot, the steeple rebuilt, and the name returned to the First Congregational Church.

If you are driving, backtrack just slightly, staying right at the intersection with Rt.118, and come to the intersection of Rt. 202 and South St. Make a left onto South St. If you are walking, cross Rt. 202 using the crosswalk directly in front of the church. Abutting South St. on the edge of the Green, before you reach the next intersection, you will see a large stone monument, marking the site of the original Meeting House in Litchfield. Drivers will need to park in a parking space adjacent to the Green.

12) Site of the Original Meeting House (use 15 West St., Litchfield)

When the town of Litchfield was established, the town proprietors reserved three parcels of land for common use – a school lot, a parsonage, and a meeting house. The first meeting house was constructed in 1721.
where the Beecher monument stands today. In addition to being a house of worship, it was also a civic building and the site of town meetings. A second church was built on the same site in 1762. As the Green became a secular public space, the third iteration of the Congregational Church was built in 1828 at the current location, off of the common space.

From the Beecher monument, make your way to the row of businesses and restaurants along the southern edge of the Green. Look for the tallest building in the row with a cupola at its peak, which is the historic Litchfield County Courthouse.

13) The Former Litchfield County Courthouse (15 West St., Litchfield)

Litchfield was designated the county seat for northwest Connecticut in 1751. As a county seat, Litchfield was the home for the County Court where civil and criminal cases were heard. The designation as the county seat attracted many ambitious legal professionals, such as Oliver Wolcott, Tapping Reeve, and Elisha Sheldon.

The current building was erected in 1888, and a 1913 renovation replaced the original heavy clocktower with a Georgia-inspired cupola. The building operated as a courthouse until 2018, when all court functions moved to a newly built courthouse in Torrington.

From the Courthouse, go back to the intersection with South St. Across the street you will see the Litchfield Historical Society Museum (7 South St.). Feel free to stop in! Turn right onto South St. and proceed .12 miles/220 yards to a semicircle in front of the St. Anthony of Padua Church on your left. If you are walking, you might want to avoid crossing South St. until you get about 100 yards down, at which point you will see a crosswalk. In front of the church, you will see a large sycamore tree.

14) Sycamore Tree Planted by Oliver Wolcott, Jr. (use 49 South St., Litchfield)

This “Connecticut” Sycamore was planted by Oliver Wolcott, Jr. in 1779. It was one of 13 trees he planted along South Street to commemorate the 13 colonies. All but the Connecticut Sycamore died of illness. Oliver Wolcott, Jr. was 19 years old when he planted this tree.
As an adult, Wolcott had a career in finance and politics and helped Alexander Hamilton create the First Bank of the United States. He replaced Hamilton as Secretary of Treasury in 1795. He also served as Governor of CT from 1817-1827 and presided during the CT Constitution of 1818. His home down the street is now the town library, aptly named the Oliver Wolcott Library (160 South St.).

Proceed .1 miles/175 yards further south to reach 89 South St. You will see a plaque on the house that reads, “1754 Oliver Wolcott.”

15) Oliver Wolcott, Sr.’s House (89 South St., Litchfield)

Engraving of Oliver Wolcott, Sr. (1726-1797), Litchfield Historical Society Collection (left). Oil painting of pulling down the statue of King George, painted in 1857 by William Walcutt. Lafayette College Art Collection (right).

Oliver Wolcott, Sr. was born on November 20, 1726, the youngest child in a prominent Connecticut family. In the years leading up to the Revolutionary War, Wolcott served as a representative to the Continental Congress for the state of Connecticut. In that capacity, he became one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

Wolcott’s home was busy during the Revolution. In July 1776, a lead statue of King George III astride a horse in central Manhattan was torn down and cut into pieces. Wolcott then had these pieces brought to his home in Litchfield where they were melted down and made into bullets.

Just slightly north, on the other side of the street, is the Tapping Reeve House at 82 South St. If you are walking, please use the crosswalk south of the Oliver Wolcott house, at the intersection with Wolcott Street.
16) Tapping Reeve’s House and Law School (82 South St., Litchfield)

Tapping Reeve founded America’s first law school in Litchfield. Between 1774 and 1833, Reeve and his partner, James Gould, revolutionized the way law was taught in the United States, educating over 1,000 young men who became leaders in law, politics, education and business.

The students at the Litchfield Law School played an important role in the foundations of American democracy. Alumni of the school include 2 vice presidents, 101 U.S. congressmen, 28 U.S. senators, 6 cabinet members, 3 justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, 14 governors, and 13 chief justices of state supreme courts. Many more graduates held state and local political office; others became leaders of the nation’s emerging corporate, mercantile, industrial, and financial establishments.

16) Lunchtime!

Take a break from the tour to enjoy lunch at one of the many eateries in town, several of which are right on the Green. Check their websites to make sure they are open during lunch hours.

From the intersection of Routes 202 and 118 (use 21 Torrington Rd. on mapping apps), head east on Rt. 118 (East St.). In .3 miles, turn left onto Montfort Rd. At the end of the road, you will find The Shrine of Lourdes in Litchfield.

17) The Shrine of Lourdes in Litchfield (50 Montfort Rd., Litchfield)

In 1958, Brother Alfonso and Brother Gabriel of the Montfort Missionaries built an outdoor shrine into the hillside using local fieldstone. This shrine is a replica of the Our Lady of Lourdes grotto in France, a site of significance in the Catholic faith. The Litchfield Grotto is situated next to a babbling brook and is surrounded by trees, offering a pristine setting for
reflection and prayer. Religious services are offered here from May through October, but the grounds are always open.

Drive back to the intersection of Montfort Rd. and Rt. 118. Turn left onto Rt. 118 and proceed .35 miles to the junction of Rt. 254 on your right. Turn onto Rt. 254 and proceed 2.5 miles. Just after crossing into the village of Northfield, you will get to a traffic light. Turn right onto Main St. Drive .25 miles to reach the small Northfield Green, where the historic Civil War Monument stands.

18) The Northfield Civil War Monument (use 1 Main St., Northfield)

Only nine months after General Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, the village of Northfield formed a committee to memorialize the sacrifices of Northfield’s men in the Civil War. Erected on January 16, 1866, this monument was dedicated 20 years before the nationwide movement to memorialize its Civil War dead. A team of 13 oxen driven by Northfield resident Joel Thorpe brought the monument to this site. The names of the casualties are carved on three sides of the monument, joined by the name “LINCOLN,” whose assassination was still fresh in people’s minds. Also carved are the words “That the generations to come might know them.”

Backtrack north on Rt. 254 until it T’s with Rt. 118. Turn right onto Rt. 118, proceed .3 miles into the village of East Litchfield, and take a right onto East Litchfield Road. After .3 miles, take your first right onto Buell Road. In another .25 miles, Topsmead State Forest (29 Chase Rd.) will be on your right. Proceed up the dirt road to a parking lot on your right and meander through the property of Topsmead State Forest.

19) Topsmead State Forest (use 29 Chase Rd., Litchfield)

Topsmead State Forest blends beautiful scenery with enchanting architecture. Comprised of rolling meadows surrounded by forest, Topsmead also showcases an impeccable example of an English Tudor estate. The entire 510-acre property was
owned by Edith Wharton Chase in the early-to-mid 1900s. In her will, Miss Chase chose to donate her land and home to the State with the request that it “retain its natural beauty.” Topsmead remains a place of tranquility for visitors and also provides important habitat for wildlife.

The Tudor Estate is often open for weekend tours, and the grounds are open year-round.

At this point in the tour, consider when sunset will occur. You might need to do Stop #21 before dinner.

20) Dinnertime!

Satisfy your hunger with dinner at one of the many eateries in town. Check their websites to make sure they are open for dinnertime.

Just before the sun sets, head out to the Little Pond “Boardwalk” Trail, a 1.3 mile walking loop that is part of The White Memorial Foundation. From the intersection of Rt. 202 and Bissell Rd. (use 503 Bantam Rd. on mapping apps), turn onto Bissell Rd. and proceed .7 miles until it T’s with White’s Woods Rd. Take a left and park in the pull-off area along White’s Woods Road immediately to your right. Enter the trail where you see the White Memorial gate and trailhead marker. Walk .2 miles/350 yards down the Little Pond Trail until it comes to a T. Turn right and walk the loop counterclockwise, which eventually leads you back to this location. Be mindful of the time and bring a flashlight just in case. If you would rather not walk the whole loop, turn right and walk just .1 miles /175 yards until you reach Sutton Bridge. This location gives you a lovely view of the Bantam River below and Little Pond in the distance.

As an alternative to the Boardwalk Trail, head north on White’s Woods Rd. for .2 miles and pull over to the side. From your vehicle you can watch the sunset over Mallard Marsh.

21) The White Memorial Foundation (use 121 White’s Woods Rd., Litchfield)

Both the Little Pond Trail and Mallard Marsh are part of White Memorial’s 4,000 acre nature sanctuary. The White Memorial Foundation was founded in 1913 by Alain White and his sister, May, in memory of their parents. They purchased land surrounding the family estate and around Bantam Lake, vowing to promote conservation, recreation, and research. In 1954, a Conservation Center and Museum
opened in the old Whitehall residence (80 Whitehall Rd.), providing environmental education. Alain and May White were visionaries who also preserved over 6,000 additional acres throughout Connecticut.

**We hope you have enjoyed spending time touring key locations that make Litchfield, CT a historic, cultural, and natural gem in northwest Connecticut!**