

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



NECEE REGIS FOR THE GLOBE

THE TIP

JOHN'S CAFE FINDS ITS WAY INTO A GOURMET'S GPS

WOODBURY — John's Cafe is the perfect example of how mishaps when traveling can lead to wonderful results. If we hadn't gotten lost, we never would have found this place, in an inauspicious house in a commercial district along Route 6 in Connecticut's Litchfield Hills. Turning in to the parking lot to check the GPS, we decided we might as well catch a quick lunch. Our seemingly unexceptional choices — steamed mussels, grilled ham and cheese — turned out to be the highlights of our weekend getaway, proving that high-quality ingredients in the hands of a talented chef can elevate the prosaic to the sublime. Chef-owner Bill Okesson III took the helm from his father-in-law, John, in 1995. Though he kept the name, he changed the menu to reflect his own cooking style. Lunch Mon-Sat (\$9-\$17), dinner every night (\$12-\$30). Reservations recommended for dinner.

JOHN'S CAFE 693 Main St. South, Woodbury, Conn. 203-263-0188, www.johnscafe.com

NECEE REGIS



THE LIST

SIPS TO TAKE ON THE CONNECTICUT WINE TRAIL

There are 25 wineries on the Connecticut Wine Trail offering everything from apple cider to zinfandel. Here are five we like for their distinctive locations and delicious wines.

- 1 SHARPE HILL VINEYARD** One of the oldest wineries in the state, Sharpe Hill is a beautiful, historical property that includes a brick-red 1750 house and barn and the excellent Fireside Tavern. You can sip the signature Ballet of Angels in the rustic tasting room, on an outdoor patio overlooking the vineyard, or in the whimsical "Monkey Lounge," with its black-and-white checkerboard floor and parasol-wielding monkey lamps. 108 Wade Road, Pomfret, 860-974-3549, sharpehill.com. Fri-Sun tastings \$10 and \$15.
- 2 SALTWATER FARM VINEYARD** Housed in a 1930s airplane hangar with a vaulted roof, milled aluminum exterior, and massive timber trusses, Saltwater Farm overlooks the tidal marshes of southeastern Connecticut. Saltwater makes eight wines, including an unoaked chardonnay and a classic Bordeaux-style cabernet franc-merlot blend aged in French oak. This summer there's live music on Thursdays from 5-7 p.m. 349 Elm St., Stonington, 800-818-7258, www.saltwaterfarmvineyard.com. Wed-Sun tastings \$10.
- 3 PRESTON RIDGE** One of the state's newest wineries, Preston Ridge is in its second full season. The tasting room in a soaring, light-filled barn provides panoramic views over the countryside. The winery's most popular pour is Fieldstone White, made with Cayuga grapes; Mélange is a limited-vintage blend of cab franc and cab sauvignon geared toward serious red wine enthusiasts. In summer there's live music Friday nights and Sunday afternoons. 100 Miller Road, Preston, 860-383-4278, www.prestonridgevineyard.com. Fri-Sun tastings \$8.
- 4 DIGRAZIA VINEYARDS** With Dr. Paul DiGrazia at the helm, it shouldn't be surprising that DiGrazia Vineyards specializes in "healthy" wines. Its signature Wild Blue, a port-style blueberry wine, boasts government-verified high antioxidant levels, and Honey Blush, a white wine with a touch of honey, has no added sulfites. Other varieties run the gamut from dry to sweet to spiced. In good weather, guests can taste by a waterfall at a pretty outdoor patio. 131 Tower Road, Brookfield, 203-775-1616, www.digraziavineyards.com. Daily through December, tastings \$8.
- 5 HOPKINS VINEYARD** Overlooking Lake Waramaug, Hopkins is a national bicentennial farm, meaning it has been in the same family for more than 200 years. A big red barn houses the tasting room (from which you can view the tanks and wine-making equipment) and a wine bar in the loft. In addition to a variety of red and white wines, Hopkins produces two sparkling wines made with the French champenoise method. 25 Hopkins Road, New Preston, 860-868-7954, www.hopkinsvineyard.com. Daily through October, tastings \$8.50.

ELLEN ALBANESE



HERE

WATERVILLE VALLEY'S NEW CRAFT BREW RACE

Run a race and then reward yourself at a craft beer festival in Waterville Valley, N.H., Aug. 23. The new Craft Brew Races Waterville Valley event starts with a 5K road race at 11 a.m., followed by a brew fest, during which you can sample an unlimited amount of beer from more than 20 breweries, including White Birch Brewing, Woodstock Inn Brewery, and Moat Mountain. Sign up for the race (pictured below) and festival (\$55 by Aug. 19, \$65 on site) or the festival only (\$45/\$55); designated drivers available (\$15/\$20). Can't make it? A similar brew fest is held in each New England state every year, and you can still hit the Cape Cod event Sept. 28. No one under 21 allowed. 800-468-2553, www.craftbrewraces.com/waterville

CRUISE GLOUCESTER'S HISTORIC HARBOR

No better way to experience historic Gloucester Harbor than from the deck of a ship. The new Beauport Princess Cruise ship hosts lobster and clam-bake luncheons, sunset dinner cruises, Sunday jazz brunches, and private events. From the 300-passenger ship, you'll see the harbor's many fishing boats and schooners, the iconic Man

at the Wheel statue, the Rocky Neck Art Colony, the country's first light-houses, and the famous Greasy Pole. The Beauport Princess has two dance floors, an open-air top deck, indoor seating, three full-service bars, and top cuisine. 978-865-3210, www.beauportprincess.com

THERE

MORE FLIGHT OPTIONS TO TAIWAN

EVA Air, a Star Alliance member, has boosted its service between North America and Taiwan with the purchase of three new Boeing 777-300ERs and the addition of 10 new flights. The Taiwan-based airline now offers three daily flights from Los Angeles, daily flights from New York, 12 flights per week from San Francisco, four weekly flights from Toronto, and four weekly flights from Vancouver, British Columbia, all to Taipei. The airline has also introduced Sky Wi-Fi (\$11.95 for one hour to \$21.95 for 24 hours), which lets all passengers get online to send and receive e-mails, send text messages through their phones, and surf apps and entertainment systems with larger monitors and enhanced touch-screen technology. EVA Air's new planes offer three classes of service: economy class, elite premium economy, and royal laurel



TONY NOVAK-CLIFFORD

(its business class). 800-695-1188, www.evaair.com

MAUI SPA TREATS BODY, MIND, AND SPIRIT

One of this Hawaiian island's top yoga and wellness retreats, Lumeria Maui, which is known for its barefoot luxury, has opened a boutique plantation-style spa. The Lumeria Crystal Spa offers a variety of international therapies and treatments that incorporate healing crystals and pure local products. Enter the spa through a lush and spacious coconut grove, where you can relax and meditate. Then take part in a musical journey in the Janta Lounge, where the sounds of nature and of silicon crystal bowls set the tone for your therapy: Try acupuncture, kinesiology, mystic readings, psychic healing, medicine songs, and Ayurveda, among others. Also enjoy the color and aromatherapy shower, crystal energy sauna, and aroma crys-

tal bar, which serves Maui-made oils. Any treatment earns you access to the natural saline pool, whirlpool, labyrinth, hammocks in the whispering pine forest, walking paths among tropical gardens (pictured at left), and a complimentary yoga class. 855-579-8877, www.lumeriamauui.com

EVERYWHERE

GET YOUR ARM OUT OF YOUR SELFIE

Take a good selfie on your next adventure — without any arm shots or funky angles — using the new Quik Pod SPORT. This extendable pole comes with a GoPRO mount and tripod adapter so you can attach it to your GoPRO action camera or any device with a standard ¼-inch tripod socket. Quickly extend the pole from 15.5 inches to 39 inches using the two thumb-release levers, and help frame your shot using the built-in selfie mirror at the top of the pole. The waterproof SPORT's rubberized hand grip makes it easy to hold even at high speeds and in other challenging conditions. It comes with a wrist strap, tether, hiking clip, and split key ring

to help you transport and protect the pole. Buy the floating lanyard (\$14.95; not included) for water-based activities or attach a mini tripod to the bottom to turn the SPORT into a free-standing device. \$59.95. 800-567-0878, www.quikpod.com

CHARGE YOUR DEVICES USING WATER

Going off the grid, or at least out of wall-socket range? Keep your devices up and running using the clever myFC PowerTrek (pictured). This Swedish-made fuel-cell charger uses water and a proprietary puck containing salt to generate power to charge handheld mobile devices and tablets. Other chargers need to be charged before you hit the road. The PowerTrek creates the electricity needed to refuel your other devices. This waterproof device comes with connectors to fit macro and micro USB, and Apple's lightning and 30-pin products. The fuel cells are TSA approved, so you can carry them onto a plane. \$149 at Kittery Trading Post in Maine; \$11.99 for 3-pack of fuel cells. www.powertrek.com

KARI BODNARCHUK

