

# Mystic's Secret

From whalers and chanties to hillside mansions and stunning coastal views, this New England town charms Hollywood and tourists alike



Mystic Seaport

**N**amed one of the top waterfront towns by *National Geographic Adventure*, home to a little pizza shop that helped launch Julia Roberts' career and the romantic honeymoon setting for Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, Mystic, Conn., is a small New England destination with big offerings. Nestled roughly halfway between Boston and New York City and the only active seaport in Connecticut, quaint Mystic has a rich maritime history and seafaring culture. Sailboats, ships, kayaks and canoes regularly dot the Mystic Harbor River, and Long Island Sound—even during the icy winter months. Boating is a way of life here and you'd be hard-pressed to not pick up a little nautical knowledge after a short stay. Whether you have a day to pass through or several to spend, here's the inside scoop on what makes Mystic so magical.



The Mystic Aquarium Institute for Exploration



## SEA LIFE

For those who want to check out marine life and animals, the nearby Mystic Aquarium Institute for Exploration is fun for all ages. The hands-on exhibits let you roll up your sleeves and touch stingrays, see trained sea lions perform, watch the way beluga whales eat, and perhaps even hug one or pet a penguin. The aquarium is also home to otters, sharks, electric eels, piranhas, tarantulas and many other creatures and plants, as well as a leading oceanic research institute headed by famed explorer and *Titanic* discoverer Robert Ballard. [mysticaquarium.org](http://mysticaquarium.org), 860-572-5955

## SEA ROMANCE

Topping the list of great Mystic accommodations is the deliciously charming Inn at Mystic. Set on 15 hillside acres surrounded by beautifully landscaped English gardens, stunning Mystic Harbor, views of Long Island Sound and featuring a delightful restaurant, it's no wonder Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall chose this for their honeymoon love nest. The couple stayed in the tranquil Gate House—part of a colonial revival mansion built in 1904 and a private estate at the time—complete with canopied bed, whirlpool tub, fireplace and private patio. Inn guests can enjoy similar accommodations in other mansion rooms. The adjacent Motor Inn offers elegance and comfort for less. [innatmystic.com](http://innatmystic.com), 800-237-2415



## SEA SPIRIT

The Mystic Seaport is a must-see attraction that can give you a little seafaring know-how in just a couple of hours or days. The nation's leading maritime museum boasts the world's largest collection of boats (more than 500 vessels); an authentic and working preservation shipyard; and a re-created, 19th-century seafaring village complete with real New England architecture, historic ships and residents who bring seafaring's and whaling's vibrant pasts to life. You can visit shipsmiths, coopers, woodcarvers, printers, bakers, chanteymen and the like, who work their crafts on site with traditional tools. Unlike other historical attractions, this isn't overacted—the people are genuine and believable. In fact, Steven Spielberg loved the little locale so much that he filmed *Amistad* on location and recruited staffers as extras. [mysticseaport.org](http://mysticseaport.org), 888-973-2767

The Inn at Mystic



## Mystic Pizza —Fact or Fiction?

Opened in 1973 by the Zelepos family, Mystic Pizza is a real restaurant known for its secret sauce. Screenwriter Amy Jones discovered

the locale while she summured in the area, and decided to write a romantic comedy about three waitresses slinging pizzas. Released in 1988, the movie was a hit, star Julia Roberts' career bloomed, and the restaurant proudly tells a story of "the pizza that made the movie famous."