

In a world that seems to overvalue just about anything called "new," two Connecticut River towns have stuck with the moniker of "old." But don't be fooled. Old Saybrook and Old Lyme are anything but what the dictionary calls "outdated" or "obsolete."

In fact, as you navigate your way beyond mouth of the Connecticut River, you'll discover two shoreline communities that embody small-town charm, the tranquility of coastal living and a fair amount of spiffy new (or renovated) homes and businesses. History abounds too. For instance, you may recognize Saybrook's outer lighthouse—a classic "sparkplug" style light constructed in 1886 at the end of the breakwater jetty—as the one portrayed on many Connecticut license plates. Just inside the jetty stands the Saybrook Inner Lighthouse, also called the Lynde Point Lighthouse, built in 1838, which replaced an earlier wooden lighthouse.

Although not the oldest town in the state, Saybrook was the site of the oldest settlement on the Connecticut shoreline. In 1635, soldiers employed by Saybrook's founders landed near the mouth of the river. They were acting on a patent that generously transferred a vast swath of land stretching west to the Pacific Ocean to a small group of elites. Within a year Lion Gardiner, future proprietor of Gardiner's Island, had built a fort at Saybrook Point. Because it stood at the mouth of the Connecticut River, Saybrook eventually became an important center for coastal trade. Ships sailing to and from Saybrook visited Europe, Africa, and South America. But their primary trade was with the West Indies, as well as up and down the Eastern Seaboard.

Of course, change was inevitable. By 1663, Lyme had split from Saybrook, and over the next 300 years, the remaining



Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Old Saybrook's former Town Hall is home to "The Kate." The cultural arts center honors Katharine Hepburn, a longtime resident.

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1	Ragged Rock Marina	860-388-1049	16/68	235/	Y/		55		WC	<b>♦</b> 30		L20	GDFE			MI	All			MVD
2	Between The Bridges South Yard p.179	860-388-3614	16/68	300/	Y/	S	120	14/14	All	<b>♦</b> ▲50		L60	PGDWFE	GD	Shell	MI	RS	Р	R	All
3	Between the Bridges Marina p.179	860-388-1431	16/68	300/	Y/	S	120	14/14	All	<b>♦▲</b> 50		L60	PGDWFE	GD	Shell	MI	RS	Р	R	All
4	Oak Leaf Marina	860-388-9817	16/9	100/	Y/		110	30/20	W	<b>♦▲</b> 50		LCT35	PGDWFE			MI	RSL			All
5	Brewer Ferry Point Marina Inside Back Cover	860-388-3260	16/9	135/	Y/	S	55	6/4	WC	<b>♦</b> ▲50		LCT35	PGDWFE			MI	All	Р	I	All
6	Island Cove Marina p.181	860-388-0029	16/9	125/24		s	45	12/7	W	<b>♦</b> 30	D	L25	PGDWFE			ı	RSL		1	All
7	Old Lyme Marina	860-434-1272	9/11	24/55	Y/Y		45	15/15	W	<b>♦▲</b> 50	D	LC25	RGDWFE				RS			MVD
8	Old Lyme Dock Co. p.180	860-434-2267	16/9	25/4	Y/Y	S	200	16/13	WP	<b>♦</b> ▲100	D			GD	Shell	MI	RS			All
9	State of Connecticut DEP- Marine Division, pages 16-19	860-434-8638	16/9			S	75	15/12									Р			

Information in these listings is provided by the facilities themselves. An asterisk (\*) indicates we have confirmed the facility's existence, but it did not respond to our request for updated information.

land split into the five smaller towns of Chester, Deep River, Essex, Old Saybrook, and Westbrook. While the original settlement never encompassed the vast domain envisioned by its founders, the region remains treasured as one of Connecticut's strikingly attractive areas to visit. Today, visiting boaters are big beneficiaries of this.

## Things to See and Do

#### **Old Saybrook**

Although Old Saybrook has plenty to offer in the way of food and entertainment, be sure to visit the nature preserve at Saybrook Point. This estuarial marsh offers some of the highest productivity of marine ecosystems found anywhere in the world. Nearby is Fort Saybrook Monument Park, commemorating the history of Lion Gardiner, whose statue stands nearby, and depicts Saybrook's early years through a series of storyboards. Just a stone's throw away, you'll find a recreation of the locomotive turnstile from the old Connecticut Valley Railroad that once ran from Saybrook to Hartford.

For more information on attractions here, see the preceding chapter, *Saybrook Point and the Connecticut River*.

Old Saybrook's downtown along Main Street offers cafés and shops that could keep you busy for an entire day. If you'd like something to read while you await a favorable tide, **Harbor Books** (146 Main St.; 860-388-6850) has a vast selection of new and used books.

For art lovers aboard, you'll find several galleries here,

including **Gallery One** (665 Boston Post Road; 860-388-0907) in the Old Saybrook Shopping Center. Speaking of shopping, the gigantic new **West Marine** store (940 Boston Post Road; 860-395-5431) has everything nautical you need. While it's not right on the water, it's worth a trip—maybe even an afternoon!

### **Old Lyme**

Old Lyme presents wonderful opportunities for viewing art and nature, separate and together. Be sure to peruse the works at the **Florence Griswold Museum of American Impressionist Paintings** (96 Lyme St.; 860-434-5542), a National Historic Landmark within walking distance of **Old Lyme Marina**. This was once an artists' colony, where gifted followers of the Impressionist movement lived and painted. The results of their endeavors can still be seen today, including works applied directly to the walls and doors. The museum's gardens are works of art in their own right. The **Lyme Art Association** (90 Lyme St.; 860-434-7802) and the **Lyme Academy of Fine Arts** (84 Lyme St.; 860-434-5232) both offer frequently-changed exhibits of contemporary work.

Fishermen should be aware that the waters north of the Interstate 95 bridge are considered inland, so be sure your Connecticut saltwater fishing license also allows you to chase the blues and stripers upriver. Check with a tackle shop, marina manager or the town clerk for license information.



The Lynde Point light dates to 1838. After the construction of the Saybrook Breakwater Light in 1886, Lynde Point became commonly called the "Inner Light," while the Breakwater Light became known as the "Outer Light."

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## Restaurants and Provisions

### **Old Saybrook**

Considering its reputation as a quaint shoreline town, Old Saybrook features a varied array of dining options. **Between the Bridges Marina** (860-388-1431) offers waterside dining with a restaurant and snack bar. The on-site **Back Porch Restaurant** (142 Ferry Road; 860-510-0282) has an outstanding view of the Connecticut River. From their "lobster bonbons" to their seafood risotto, the menu and ambiance are sure to please.

Along the way to town, **Cloud Nine Cool Catering & Café** (256 Boston Post Road; 860-388-9999) can satisfy all kinds of cravings with its unique selection of sweet treats, soups, sandwiches, and salads. If you're in the mood for some finger-licking fried clams, onion rings, or burgers, **Johnny Ad's** (910 Boston Post Road; 860-388-4032) comes through with a great selection of seafood and food from the grill.

If it's breakfast time, be sure to check out **Café Toscana** (25 Main St.; 860-388-1270). Located in a tiny building where a narrow counter separates diners from the kitchen, this local favorite has indoor and outdoor seating, as well as some of the freshest bread and pastries around. Their homemade smoothies are excellent. **Paperback Café** (210 Main St.; 860-388-9718) is also a great place to stop for breakfast or lunch. Their "Fenwick French Toast" is a treat any morning.

Downtown Old Saybrook is about a mile from the marinas

and can be reached by cab, bicycle, or on foot. If you have kids along, don't miss **Pizza Works** (455 Boston Post Road; 860-388-2218) by the train station at Saybrook Junction. While you're waiting for your salad and pizza, be sure to go upstairs to see the elaborate model train layout that rounds out the railroad-themed decor. Main Street features several good dining choices, including **Penny Lane Pub** (150 Main St.; 860-388-9646). There's also a hardware store, three banks, and a small grocery, **Walt's** (178 Main St.; 860-388-3308), which puts together some fine sandwiches.

A full-sized **Stop & Shop** (655 Boston Post Road; 860-388-6354) supermarket and nearby **Walmart** (665 Boston Post Road; 860-388-0584) have everything you could possibly want for your icebox. Reaching this area will require some wheels. If you're in need of some bait or tips on the best fishing spots, stop at **Ted's Bait & Tackle** (35 Ferry Road; 860-388-4882) for friendly service and good advice from local fishing experts.

#### **Old Lyme**

In Old Lyme there are several fine restaurants not far from the marinas. The **Bee & Thistle Inn and Spa** (100 Lyme St.; 860-434-1667) offers overnight accommodations and uses fresh, local ingredients in its wonderful meals. The **Old Lyme Ice Cream Shoppe** (34 Lyme St.; 860-434-6942) in the historic district has a frequently-changed menu of excellent ice creams, yogurts, sherbets and more.



Old Lyme also has small plazas farther from the water-front, each with places to dine. Try **Jessie's Restaurant** (90 Halls Road; 860-434-9800) for good eats, or **The Hideaway** (19 Halls Road; 860-434-3335), across the street from the Old Lyme Shopping Center. **Hallmark Drive-In** (113 Shore Road; 860-434-1998) is a great roadside stop for homemade ice cream, hot dogs, and burgers.

### \* Charts

Use Maptech ChartKit Region 3, page 33; Maptech Waterproof Chartbook *Long Island Sound*; Maptech Waterproof Charts 2 and 17; and NOAA charts 12375 (1:20,000) and 12372 (1:20,000).

## Navigation and Anchorages

There are two separate waterfront areas in Old Saybrook. One, around Saybrook Point, is discussed in the preceding chapter, *Saybrook Point and The Connecticut River*; the other, farther upriver around Ferry Point, is often referred to as the place "up there by the bridges."

The Amtrak tracks cross the Connecticut River on the Old Lyme Drawbridge, about 2 miles from the river's mouth. The bridge has a vertical clearance of 19 feet; small powerboats can pass beneath it when it is closed. The bridgetender may be contacted on VHF 13, but he will only answer if you ask for the Old Lyme railroad bridge, not Old Saybrook. You may also contact the bridge with one long and one short blast of your horn; if you receive a similar horn signal, then the bridge will open shortly. If you receive a single, 5-second blast, a train is on its way and you'll have to wait. When the bridge is down, a lighted sign is supposed to indicate how long boaters have to wait, but the sign is not always operational.

Just north of the railroad bridge, you'll come to the I-95 bridges with vertical clearance on both spans of 81 feet. Before passing under the bridges you'll see the modern, state-owned launching ramp and pier on the Saybrook western shore.

Both sides of the river near the bridges have several choices of full-service marinas, all of which offer transient slips and can handle your repair needs.

North of the railroad bridge, on the west shore, you'll find Ragged Rock Marina (860-388-1049), Between the Bridges Marina (860-388-1431), the Connecticut DEP's (860-434-8638) public ramp and docks, and Oak Leaf Marina (860-388-9817). West of Ferry Point lie several facilities, including Brewer Ferry Point Marina (860-388-3260) and Island Cove Marina (860-388-0029). The marina at Between the Bridges is easily spotted by the towering smokestack of the old power plant that once generated power for the electric trolleys running between Old Saybrook and New London.

On the eastern shore, the first set of docks belongs to the Marine Patrol Division and the Marine Fisheries Program of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. About halfway between the railroad bridge and the I-95 bridges is the **Old Lyme Dock Company** (860-434-2267), an inexpensive option for transient dockage.

North of the double highway span, you'll find several small, scenic anchorages. \$\ddot\$ Those in medium-draft boats may want to check out the area east of Calves Island, a pleasant place to drop a hook away from the heavy wash of the main channel. You may have a fair number of neighbors while visiting, so make sure your anchor is well set because you may not be able to use a lot of scope.

For more privacy, head about a quarter-mile into Lord Cove, just east of Goose Island.  $\mathring{\Phi}$  You'll have good water up to the northeast corner of the island, but then the shallows take over, making further exploration difficult in anything but a dinghy. You may also want to anchor north of Ferry Point, across from Calves Island.

CAUTION: The rocky shoals in the center of the river, north of Ferry Point and west of R N "20" are unmarked and regularly snag unwary boaters.

## Shoreside and Emergency Services

**Airport**: Bradley International (Hartford) 860-292-2000 **Coast Guard**: New London 860-442-4471 or VHF 16

**Police, Fire, Ambulance**: 911 **Taxi**: Essex Taxi 860-767-7433

Tow Service:

—Sea Tow 800-4SEATOW or VHF 16

-TowBoatU.S. 800-391-4869 ◆

