



# Welcome to Westport

*Population: approximately 27,000*

## History

Although colonists settled along the Saugatuck River in 1648, Westport wasn't created until 1835, with land taken from Fairfield, Weston and Norwalk. For several decades after that, Westport was a prosperous agricultural community, which distinguished itself as the nation's leading

onion-growing center.

When the era of mills and farms was ending, Westport began its second renaissance. Famous writers, artists and theater people set the pace. Seeking a retreat from the noise and bright lights of New York City, they found another world just "up the mainline" (railroad) into Connecticut.

Here by the seacoast and the green woods was escape. Inevitably though, they brought change with them.

Beginning in the 1920s, the growing stream of glittering newcomers was making Westport's legend. Through the next

decades, the town began to figure in the plays, novels, artwork and movies generated by this talented coterie. From F. Scott Fitzgerald to Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward and Michael Bolton, from *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* to *I Love Lucy*, from the Westport Famous Writers' Photographers and Artists' Schools to Stevan Dohanos famous covers for the *Saturday Evening Post*, Westport's sparks were flying.

The images of the town defined a lifestyle, invented a new vocabulary and forever fixed Westport in the American imagination. "Playing Westport", commuters and bedroom communities came to stay. Westport retains its cultural vibrancy, plus. The population has grown and executives and professionals from the arenas of advertising, communications, national and international business have created a new diversity.

## Geography

Just 47 miles northeast of Manhattan, Westport is located on the Connecticut shore of Long Island Sound between Norwalk and Fairfield in Fairfield County. Easy access to the Connecticut Turnpike, the Merritt Parkway and Metro North Railroad, has made Westport a long time haven for artistic professionals.

## Government

Selectman, Representative Town Meeting, Board of Finance.



*Saugatuck River Bridge to Main Street.*

## Culture, the Arts, & Heritage

Most Westporters are well educated, charged with creativity and actively involved in the pursuit and support of all those elements that make the good life. Energy and opportunities are in the air; the town has a strong pulse and lots of heart.

Theater and the arts flourish at The Westport Country Playhouse, The White Barn Theater, the Levitt Pavilion and the Westport Arts Center to name a few. Westport also offers an arts center, a historical society, an area symphony, and over 70 free programs all summer long at the Levitt Pavilion, an outdoor theater on the banks of the Saugatuck River.

The downtown Main Street hub with its boutiques, specialty shops and exceptional services represents varied and upscale shopping at its best. Restaurants make Westport the eating-out capitol of Fairfield County. Harmoniously scaled new building for corporate, retail and mixed use are carefully integrated into the landscape. Westport keeps its small town ambiance with cosmopolitan flare.

## On Stage

Devotion to the performing arts is strong and broadly popular. Since its inception in 1930, The Westport Country Playhouse has been America's foremost summer theater. Five professional productions are staged for three-week runs each. This is the national prototype for seasonal theater. Its red barn home built in 1835 is listed on the Connecticut Register of Historic Places. Originally a 19th century cow barn then the Kemper tanning factory, it was purchased in by a Weston resident and theatrical producer, Laurence Langer. Renovated for use as a playhouse, the stage was constructed with the same dimensions as the Times Square Theater. Productions mounted in New York could be exported to this country venue without a hitch. A star-studded line-up of American's performing greats have since walked upon that stage: Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Geraldine Page, Gene Kelly, Lillian Gish, Jane Fonda,

Helen Hayes, Liza Minelli and the list goes on and on. And so do the singing, dancing, musicals and plays. The Playhouse hosts an equally professional and heavily-attended Children's series.

The Levitt Pavilion on the banks of the Saugatuck River with a great view across the river and back toward town is another of Westport's summer perform-



Compo Beach

ance hallmarks. Every night throughout the season the show does go on. Reggae to rock, musicals to blue grass, big band, choral singing, barbershop and dance, all tastes and all ages find something to love. Its amphitheater shell, the river walk and grassy knoll make just the right setting for a summer night.

The Westport Community theater is at home in the Westport Town Hall. Five major productions are staged each year. There is fresh new work by debuting playwrights, drama, comedy, musicals and experimental theater. A great community builder and resource, anyone who wants to be in, around or attend theater can start here.

The intimate, little White Barn Theater Lucille Lortel's is another venerable summer tradition. Innovative, full of cabaret and stage magic and names, its performances offer an exciting and unusual experience.

**Westport Country Playhouse**  
Main Number – 227-5137  
Box Office 227-4177

### Levitt Pavilion

Office – 226-7600

### Westport Community Theater, Inc

Office – 226-5459

### White Barn Theater and Museum

Office – 227-3768

## Faith

Its many churches representing several denominations and religions, Christian Science, Congregational, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Unitarian, Roman Catholic and Jewish demonstrate worship in Westport.

The oldest churches are as much a part of the town by their history and architecture as their statement of faith. Westport churches and synagogues have ecumenical reach and offer many resources to the community at large. The Unitarian Church hosts Westport Singles, an extensive program of singles activities that has a county-wide following and reputation. The South Shore Summer Music Festival featuring distinguished visiting artists is held at the Saugatuck Congregational Church. The list goes on as religion and social services combine.

The diversification of belief has been occurring since the colonial times. It defines the growth and change of the community and its people.

## Recreation Seaside

Westport's Recreation Commission overseas 210 acres of public fun space. The Compo Beach-Longshore complex offers so much. There is the beautiful beach itself, a long stretch of sand leaning against the blue Long Island Sound. At waterside is the Longshore Sailing School, filling the horizon line with a rainbow of colored sails. The Longshore Clubhouse occupies a sea-facing rise overlooking the mouth of the Saugatuck River. With its terraces, gardens and bright awnings, it is a sumptuous place for a meal or as a private

party venue. The 18-hole golf course at Longshore Park is immediately behind the Clubhouse. Both from its driving range and at many intervals along the fairway, players enjoy coastal vistas as well as a great game. There is a swimming pool, a new state-of-the-art playground, a boating marina and yacht basin, a softball field and 26 tennis courts. The Westport minivan shuttle serves the Compo/Longshore complex (as it does the entire town of Westport), so getting there is never a problem.

The other Westport public beaches are Old Mill, Burying Hill and offshore Cockenoe Island Beach. The huge 300-acre Sherwood Island Beach complex in Westport is a state park.

Swimming pool swimming is available to Westporters both at the Staples High School pool and at the heart-of-town Westport YMCA's two indoor pools. Little League, Pal football and the Westport Soccer Association (one of the nation's oldest and largest leagues) all use park and school fields throughout town for their packed seasons.

Westport has two private clubs: Birchwood Country Club and the Fairfield County Hunt Club. Both of these have pools; one offers an 18-hole golf course and the other, horseback riding.

## Landward

Westport's outstanding public resource in its woody interior is The Nature Center for Environmental Activities. A non-profit organization, it is devoted to public environmental education, preservation and conservation. A 62-acre preserve that welcomes some 80,000 visitors a year surrounds the Center's facility and natural science museum. About three miles of inter-connecting trails invite walkers to explore the indigenous habitat, stop for a picnic and use the playground. The Center's building contains exhibits and interactive educational displays for people of all ages. There is a live Animal Hall, an Exhibit Hall with Connecticut flora and fauna dioramas, a hands-on

learning Discovery Room and a 250-gallon hands-on Marine Tank. The Center has become the state's largest animal rehabilitator. In this context, it acts as a resource to the Connecticut Wildlife Rehabilitation Association and supplies a wildlife hotline servicing Fairfield County. Environmental learning and sensitivity are nurtured beginning with Eathplace, The



*Compo Beach Marina*

Nature Center Nursery School. There are outdoor-based summer programs for children up to age 12 and a Junior Staff program for children in grades 7-12. Adult opportunities are available, too. Staff naturalists and regional experts lead hiking, canoeing, and touring expeditions.

Another putting-based resource is the YMCA Outdoor Center. At its lodge-in-the-woods are meetings, lectures, get-togethers and planning sessions for their very active outing program. Tubing, cycling, skiing, rafting and caving are all in their agenda.

And talk about outing, The Great Race, held every summer on the Saugatuck River, fields a splashy array of seaworthy crafts as well as designers' specials, the "Funtastical" tubs. In the heart of a Westport winter is the extraordinary Westport/Weston First Night celebration for New Year's Eve. At the height of the summer, the 4th of July fireworks are an

extravaganza on the beach. Look up, the Rolnick Observatory is open, weather permitting. Like the sea and the land, there is public access to the heavens.

## Education

### Westport has five elementary schools grades K-5

Coleytown Elementary  
King's Highway Elementary  
Long Lots Elementary  
Greens Farms Elementary  
Saugatuck Elementary

### Westport has two middle schools, grades 5-8

Bedford Middle  
Coleytown Middle

### Westport has one high school, grades 9-12

Staples High

This town that has so long been peopled by highly creative and successful citizens makes a unique demand on its educational system. Westport's talent pool is self-perpetuating because the quality of its public schools fosters and guarantees it.

The learning odyssey may begin with a brand new and inclusive Pre-K program for three and four year olds, some of whom are special education students. A smaller Pre-K group is already established (Stepping Stones Pre-school) at the Coleytown Elementary School.

All registrations are conducted at the individual school sites. Parents must present their child's birth certificate or current passport, immunization record, proof of recent physical examination, as well as proof of Westport residency.

All PK-8 students are bused to school as are most of their high school students. K-4 students may be required to walk one-half mile to the nearest bus stop; Grades 5-8 walk one mile, and grades 9-12, two miles.

## Elementary Schools K-4

The five-day, 4.75-hour, extended day kindergarten program begins the five years of Westport's elementary school instruction. Students are provided with an

enriched language arts program to build up reading and writing skills. The students are also taught art, music, physical education and computers. Each school has a part-time gifted program teacher.

## Middle Schools 5-8

Students in the middle schools are taught by teams of teachers for language, arts, social studies, science and math, allowing the teachers to share insight about the students' achievements and needs, as well as plan units of study together. Foreign language instruction is introduced in fifth grade. Activities and programs include intramural sports, clubs and co-curricular music, drama and literary activities, as well as a student advocacy program.

## High School

Staples High School provides a wide range of curriculum offerings as well as extra-curricular activities and programs. The facilities are also geared toward the many academic and other activities of the students. Facilities include a state-of-the-art auditorium, a field house that contains an indoor track, a pool, a library media center, and a television production studio. There are also athletic fields, tennis courts and a baseball diamond. There are student publications, as well as a student-operated FM radio station. The prize-winning publications include yearbook, newspaper, literary arts magazine and scholarly journal.

Staples students have been consistently honored for their scholastic achievements, athletic skills, drama and music productions, as well as their literary work.

## Special Education

Special education programs are available at all grade levels for eligible students. The

array of services includes diagnostic testing, special education instruction, consultation with regular education teachers, related services of speech/language therapy, counseling, occupational therapy, physical therapy and services for students who are hearing impaired.



*Longshore Country Club*

A legally constituted Planning and Placement Team that includes parents, teachers, specialists and administrators determine student eligibility.

## Private Schools

There are numerous nursery, day care, and extended care alternatives available in Westport. Some of these are public or community-sponsored facilities, some have religious affiliations and some are private, non-sectarian schools. Greens Farms Academy is a private, coeducational, college preparatory day school on Beachside Avenue. It offers a distinctive curriculum for kindergarten to 12th grade youngsters in an easy, close-to-home environment. There are several other private secular and parochial schools in neighboring towns.

Greens Farms Academy, 35 Beachside Avenue, 256-0717.

## Nursery Schools

Christ & Holy Trinity Preschool  
Community Nursery School  
Greens Farms Preschool

The Learning Community  
Nature Center Nursery School  
Saint Paul Christian School  
Saugatuck Child Care Services  
Saugatuck Nursery School  
Westport/Weston Cooperative Nursery School  
YMCA PALS  
Day Care Services  
Beginnings  
Children's Community Day Care  
Saugatuck Community Nursery School  
Hilltop/Norfield Children's Center  
Child Care Services  
Staples Play School at Staples H.S.

For more information about Westport's Schools including:

- Faculty experience
- Faculty salaries
- School registration
- Class sizes
- SAT scores

Please contact the Westport Board of Education at [www.westport.k12.ct.us](http://www.westport.k12.ct.us)