



ATTRACTIONS IN COLUMBIA, CT

AIR LINE STATE PARK TRAIL

Visit Columbia to shop, relax and enjoy. Come peruse through antique and vintage shops, unwind and savor local craft wines, complete that dream garden by visiting the local nursery and garden center, pick up fresh organic produce or meats from local farmers, or relish a night under the stars listening to great music during our summer concert series.



Come explore Columbia's interesting history and events. Learn about Rochambeau's Army that marched through Columbia and camped at Columbia Lake, visit the c. 1754 Moor's Indian Charity School and more local history.



Photo: Paul Ramsey



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COLUMBIA

TRAILS AND HIKING

Columbia is very fortunate to have many public trails including the Airline Trail and the Hop River Trail. Loop Trails include Mono Pond State Park, Island Woods, Szedga Farm, Potter Meadow Preserve (Joshua Trust), Sunrise Drive Preserve, Ten Mile River Access, and Columbia Town Green. The trails offer diverse habitats and beautiful vistas, scenic watercourses, wildlife observation, and birding to enjoy.



Photo: Paul Ramsey



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AIR LINE STATE PARK TRAIL COLUMBIA

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Columbia

Columbia is nestled in the crossroads of Connecticut's eastern highlands, its earliest roots in agriculture are maintained with rolling hills and beautiful country vistas.

Attractions, dining, and outdoor activities can be conveniently accessed from Route 6, 66 and 87, a short ride to nearby Willimantic and Hebron provides more opportunities for shopping and dining.

www.columbiact.org



Photo: Paul Ramsey

WHERE TO EAT



Columbia offers a variety of dining experiences. Options include the Main Moose, a classic American roadside restaurant, as well as additional eateries for both breakfast and lunch, and a full-service Italian American Bakery. Some restaurants are accessible from the trails or a short drive. Use the scan code for a listing of Columbia restaurants.



TRAIL ACCESS

- AIRLINE TRAIL - Access points are at various road crossings. Lebanon has a large parking area on Leonard Bridge Road (at end of Pine St.), other parking areas are limited to 2 or 3 cars.
- HOP RIVER - Access points are at various road crossings (parking is limited), and designated parking is located at Mackey's (249 Columbia Ave. Rte 66).
- MONO POND STATE PARK - Main access point is at the boat launch off Hunt Road.

For additional copies of this map, please email townadministrator@columbiact.org



AIR LINE STATE PARK TRAIL HISTORY

In the 1960s, over fifty miles of the rail bed from East Hampton to the Massachusetts border were acquired by the Connecticut State Park System to construct a recreational linear park.

This trail has a colorful past. The "Air Line" was envisioned as a direct line between New York City and Boston. It opened in 1873 and 25 miles shorter, it offered fierce competition to the shoreline rail service from New York to Boston. The mesmerizing, white-painted express train, known as the Ghost Train, made the run between Boston and New York in six hours, a record time for 1884.

The construction of the new rail line contained ambitious feats of engineering, blasting through granite hills, navigating deep valleys and rivers along the route. The Air Line Railroad's "Ghost Train" began in 1891 and was designed to attract wealthy travelers. Luxurious Pullman cars were painted white with gold trim, and the staff of the train wore formal white uniforms.



The catastrophic Great East Thompson Train Wreck on December 4, 1891 clouded the introduction of this fast new rail service. It was one of the greatest train wrecks in American history, and the only train accident to involve four trains. Still, over the next four years, successful businessmen and prominent citizens, including President Benjamin Harrison, rode the increasingly well-known Ghost Train. As it sped across eastern Connecticut, its luminescent cars were easily recognized, especially at twilight.

In the new 20th century, technology increased, railroad engines became faster, rail cars became longer, everything became heavier and after World War II, access to automobiles and interstate highways reduce the profitability of rail travel. The quaintness of the Air Line's winding grades as well as the weight restrictions of the spindly trestle bridges began to show its limitations. During its construction, the Air Line Railroad was expensive and controversial, but its operational costs would lead to its ultimate demise and abandonment. Passenger service on the Air Line ceased by 1937, and the track was completely abandoned by 1965.

Today, visitors enjoy scenic panoramas, village life, wildlife, hiking trails, and the tranquility of the rural landscape. The United States Department of the Interior recognized the southern section of the Air Line State Park Trail as a national recreation trail in 2002.

For more maps in this series, email outreach@ctrcd.org or visit ctrcd.org.



Connecticut
CTvisit.com/MysticCountry



PARKING

Many parking areas serve the Air Line State Park Trail. Some primary locations are:

THOMPSON

- Large parking lot at 121 Riverside Dr, (Rt 12, Mechanicsville)
- Pull off for a few cars at Air Line trail crossing, 388 Sand Dam Rd
- 5 car parking lot, located at 662 East Thompson Rd, near the junction of New Rd

PUTNAM

- 18 Kennedy Dr, across from Canal
- 80 Kennedy Dr, directly across from the South entrance of Simonzi Park
- 98 Kennedy Dr
- 165 Kennedy Dr (DMV lot)

POMFRET

- 18 car paved parking lot at Pomfret Station, 13 Railroad Ave (off of Rt 169)
- Parking adjacent to trail, in Town owned paved parking lot, west side of Pomfret Town Hall
- Parking available in rear of Town owned paved parking lot at Pomfret Community Center, 207 Mashamoquet Rd (Rt. 44)

HAMPTON

- Potter Rd 0.6 mile north of its intersection with Rt 6 in Goodwin State Forest

WINDHAM

- Intersection of Beaver Hill Rd and Windham Rd (Rt 203) in North Windham, at the CT Eastern Railroad Museum and in downtown Willimantic.

COLUMBIA

- Rt 87, Cook Hill Rd and Village Hill Rd

EAST HAMPTON

- Depot Hill, Cobalt; Aldens Crossing (at Rt 16); Forest St (Between Hayes Rd and Childs Rd); Town Hall Rd (Off Main St.); Main Street; Watrous Street; Smith Street (at Cranberry Bog)

PORTLAND

- Parking at 82 Middle Haddam Rd