



DAY TRIP TO GAY CITY STATE PARK

From Manchester · Tolland County, Connecticut



MILL, LUMBER
AND COMPANY



Photo: Morrowlong, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0

STATE PARK

Connecticut state park, open daily in season from 8 a.m. to sunset. The mill-village ruins are along the trails.

From Manchester, Gay City is an easy half day, and a full one if you swim or walk the whole loop. The mill ruins are a short walk from the end of the park road, the pond has a beach, and the red trail circles the park in about five miles. Bring food and water: DEEP's page lists none for sale.

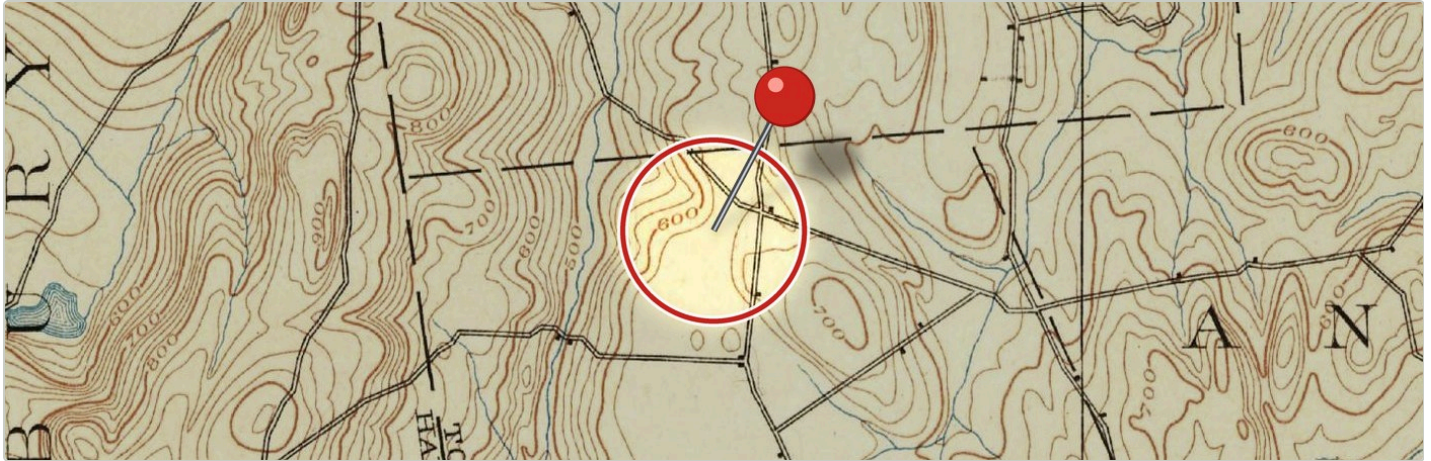
A SAMPLE DAY

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| ☐ 9 a.m. | Leave Manchester by Porter Street, Camp Meeting Road and CT 85, about a quarter of an hour. |
| ☐ 9:30 a.m. | Follow the park road past the fork to the small lot at its end. Walk the white trail to the mill ruins below the pond. |
| ☐ 10:30 a.m. | Take the yellow trail south along the Blackledge River to the stone foundations, then the red loop or the Split Rock Trail. |
| ☐ 1 p.m. | Picnic by the pond. In summer, swim from the beach. |
| ☐ Afternoon | Return by your chosen park trail and leave before sunset. Check posted gate notices before setting out. |

Coming from Hartford? The cached route estimates 23 minutes to the entrance via I-384, before the park road and walking.

WHAT TO PHOTOGRAPH

- **The mill ruins.** Below the pond beside the picnic area. Morning light comes through the trees from the east.
- **Cellar walls.** The moss-covered foundations south of the pond, west of the yellow trail, are the clearest trace of the village.
- **Split Rock.** A cleft boulder on its own trail. Shoot it from low down with the trees behind.
- **The river.** The footbridge at the park's southern tip looks down the Blackledge River into Meshomasic State Forest.
- **Gay Cemetery.** Marked on the 1967 USGS sheet south of the park road near Route 85. DEEP's page mentions it but does not give a visitor route; ask the park office before looking for it.
- **Drones.** DEEP prohibits drones in state parks unless specifically authorized by the Commissioner through a Special Use License.



USGS topographic map, 1892 (public domain). The ring and pin mark the town.

DAY TRIP ESSENTIALS

DRIVE	7 mi, about 14 min each way from East Center Street, Manchester. From Hartford: 16 mi, about 23 min.
OPEN	Daily, late April to Columbus Day, 8 a.m. to sunset. Parking is available off-season.
PARKING FEE	Free for Connecticut-registered vehicles. Out-of-state vehicles pay \$10 on weekdays and \$15 on weekends and holidays, or \$112 for a season pass.
TIME ON SITE	The mill ruins are a short walk on the white trail from the small lot at the end of the park road. The red loop around the park is about five miles.
RESTROOMS	DEEP's trail map marks a toilet building near the beach and composting toilets elsewhere in the park.
FOOD AND WATER	DEEP's page lists no food. The trail map marks one water point. Bring your own.
SWIMMING	A beach on the pond, with a weekly water-quality report from Memorial Day to Labor Day. No dogs on the beach.
DOGS	On leash on the trails and in the picnic areas. Not permitted on the beach.
BIKES	Allowed on the park's trails except the blue-blazed Shenipsit Trail, which is foot travel only.
CAMPING	One youth-group site for up to 50 campers, by permit and advance reservation, for qualified youth groups only.
WEBSITE	ctparks.com/parks/gay-city-state-park

BEFORE YOU GO

- Check the status with the land manager before you go; conditions change.
- Keep out of unstable buildings and off fenced ruins.
- Leave artifacts where they lie. Removing them can be a crime.
- Carry water, a paper map and a charged phone; signal is often poor.

Coordinates 41.72611, -72.44000 · 41°43'34"N
72°26'24"W

Directions [Google Maps](#)

Full guide abandonedtowns.com/connecticut/gay-city-state-park/

Details checked October 2026. Hours, prices and access change: confirm before you go.