

## Riverside history, vineyards, symphony



The largest tree in the Nutmeg State is the Pinchot sycamore in Simsbury. (Ellen Albanese for The Boston Globe)

By [Ellen Albanese](#)

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For the record, we were onto Simsbury even before it was named one of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 2010 Dozen Distinctive Destinations earlier this year. Historic inns, upscale restaurants, natural beauty, and a host of cultural attractions make this pretty town on the Farmington River a great destination for couples who enjoy the outdoors, history, and farm-fresh food.

### Stay

The brick-faced **Simsbury Inn** (397 Hopmeadow St., 860-651-5700, [www.simsburyinn.com](http://www.simsburyinn.com), \$169-\$229, suites \$275-\$375), exudes understated elegance. Rooms are spacious and comfortably furnished, and the hotel has three restaurants, an indoor heated pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, and health club. If you favor historic buildings, try the **Simsbury 1820 House** (731 Hopmeadow St., 860-658-7658, [www.simsbury1820house.com](http://www.simsbury1820house.com), \$129-\$229). Built in 1820 by Elijah Phelps and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this home has hosted many notables, including Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Coolidge. Today guests can admire the finely carved woodwork, leaded glass windows, working fireplaces, and grounds that preserve the features of the original landscaping done by Frederick Olmsted's firm. In the village of Weatogue, the **Linden House** (288 Hopmeadow St., 860-408-1321, [www.lindenhousebb.com](http://www.lindenhousebb.com), \$115-\$150), is an imposing Victorian home with five guest rooms, four with working fireplaces, and a view of Talcott Mountain.

## Eat

One of the most challenging elements of a weekend in Simsbury is choosing where to dine from among the many terrific restaurants. For breakfast you can't beat **Harvest Cafe and Bakery** (1390 Hopmeadow St., 860-658-5000, [www.harvestcafebakery.com](http://www.harvestcafebakery.com), \$4.79-\$10), where we tried the house special banana-bread French toast stuffed with cinnamon cream cheese, as delicious and decadent as it sounds. The former Pettibone's Tavern is now **Abigail's Grille and Wine Bar** (4 Hartford Road, 860-264-1580, [www.abigailsgrill.com](http://www.abigailsgrill.com), lunch \$8-\$22, dinner \$15-\$35), named for the ghost said to haunt this 1780 building. Dine on homemade pasta, steak, or seafood in the dining room or at umbrella-shaded tables on the stone patio. **Meadow Asian Cuisine** (532 Hopmeadow St., 860-408-9800, [www.meadowrestaurant.com](http://www.meadowrestaurant.com), \$6-\$26) serves Chinese, Japanese, and Thai dishes, including sushi, in a small dining room done in neutrals and stone; there are also a few tables outdoors. The Zagat-rated **Metro Bis** (928 Hopmeadow St., 860-651-1908, [www.metrobis.com](http://www.metrobis.com), lunch \$7-\$15, dinner \$20-\$29) recalls a Paris cafe, its tables topped with fresh white linens and crisp shelf paper. Chef-owner Christopher Prosperi changes the menu seasonally. Housed in an 1874 train depot, **Plan B Burger Bar** (4 Railroad St., 860-658-4477, [www.planbburger.com](http://www.planbburger.com), \$10-\$16) touts its hormone-free beef ground fresh in house, boutique bourbons, and American craft beers. Check out the meat hook chandeliers.

## During the Day

On a clear day, you can see Mount Monadnock in New Hampshire from the top of the **Heublein Tower** atop Talcott Mountain. The 165-foot structure, built in 1914 by food magnate Gilbert Heublein as a summer home, is open Thursday-Sunday 10 a.m.-5 p.m. through Labor Day, then daily through October ([www.friendsoftheheubleintower.org](http://www.friendsoftheheubleintower.org)). The 1.25-mile hike to the tower, steep in spots, begins at the entrance to Talcott Mountain State Park, off Route 185. Both the **Farmington Canal Heritage Trail** ([www.ct.gov/dot/LIB/dot/documents/dbikes/034.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/dot/LIB/dot/documents/dbikes/034.pdf)) and the **Farmington River Trail** ([www.ct.gov/dot/LIB/dot/documents/dbikes/046.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/dot/LIB/dot/documents/dbikes/046.pdf)) run through Simsbury, offering many opportunities for hiking and biking. There are several working farms in town, many selling local honey. Try red raspberry chocolate chip ice cream, a specialty of **Tulmeadow Farm** (255 Farms Village Road, 860-658-1430, [www.tulmeadowfarmstore.com](http://www.tulmeadowfarmstore.com)), and taste award-winning wines produced by **Rosedale Farms and Vineyards** (25 East Weatogue St., 860-651-3926, [www.rosedale1920.com](http://www.rosedale1920.com), wine tastings Fridays 5-7 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays noon-5, July through October, \$5). Everyone gets a personal tour at the **Phelps Tavern Museum** (800 Hopmeadow St., 860-658-2500, [www.simsburyhistory.org](http://www.simsburyhistory.org), \$6 adults). In addition to the original 1786 tavern (with an unusual "cove," or domed, ceiling in the second-floor ballroom), the complex includes a barn, one-room schoolhouse, and meetinghouse. The grounds and period gardens are always open.

## After dark

Simsbury is the summer home of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra. Its **Talcott Mountain Music Festival** (22 Iron Horse Blvd., 860-244-2999, [www.hartfordsymphony.org](http://www.hartfordsymphony.org), single-concert tickets \$20-\$45) runs June 25-July 16 under the stars at the Performing Arts Center at Simsbury Meadows. Performances range from classical to doo-wop to Beatles covers. Rather dance with the stars? Head for the **Maple Tree Cafe** (781 Hopmeadow St., 860-651-1297, [www.mapletreecafe.com](http://www.mapletreecafe.com)), where bands perform from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights, and a large dance floor beckons.

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