

Two Scenic and Easy Rides in Cheshire and Hamden

These cycling and walking routes are on the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT), as out and back trips from the Lock 12 parking lot in Cheshire. The trail here closely follows the route of the original canal and rail line. Mileage is from the Lock 12 parking lot, assuming no side trips. Turning back at any point can shorten the route. The trail is mostly level, all paved, and considered easy to bike and walk on, and, except during midday, is usually partially shaded. For a history of the canal-railroad-trail see: <https://fchtrail.org/history>. More about the FCHT and a map is at: <https://www.cttrailfinder.com/trails/trail/farmington-canal-heritage-trail> For directions to the parking lot, search online for "lock 12 historic park cheshire ct"; the parking entrance is on N Brooksvale Rd (Rt42)

Going South from the Lock 12 Parking Lot - 10 Miles Round Trip

From the parking lot, bike along the short parking lot road, and very soon you'll reach the Lock 12, a restored 150 year old canal lock. It's ok to cross over the bridge and bike past the house, where you'll find restrooms that are open during the summer.

From Lock 12, enter the trail and continue south. At 1.4 mi you'll leave Cheshire and enter Hamden.

At 1.6 mi there's an optional side trip of the very close Brooksvale Park, which can be a treat for children as it has a small working farm and, depending on the time and season, sheep, pigs, goats, chickens, and horses. To reach Brooksville Park take a right at the kiosk and cross the bridge then cross the road and in a few hundred feet you'll be at the Park. There are portable toilets in the Park.

At 3 mi you'll cross the busy Shepard Ave. There are a variety of restaurants along the trail from Shepard Ave to Sherman Ave.

At 3.1 mi reach the lockkeeper's house, built in 1828. There are remnants of Lock 14 which are usually obscured by brush and trees. The house has a small museum about the canal, however it is rarely open. You'll find a water fountain here during the summer.

At 3.6 mi, just past a private driveway crossing, the paved trail continues ahead while a stone dust and gravel trail goes to the right and parallels the paved trail for 0.3 mi. Taking this parallel trail can add some variation to your ride.

At 3.9 mi is the Todd St parking lot where you'll find a portable toilet. Use caution for the next half mile or so as there are shopping areas and traffic.

At 4.4 mi you'll cross W Woods Rd. When on the other side look northeast and you'll see one of the peaks in Sleeping Giants State Park. This park has 32 miles of hiking

trails, however there are no biking trails.

Continue and you'll go up a couple of short inclines and reach the Sherman Ave parking lot at 5 mi.

From the parking lot you can return to the Lock 12 parking by going north following the regular paved route.

Going North from the Lock 12 Parking Lot - 4.6 Miles Round Trip

From the parking lot, cross N Brooksvale Rd and continue north. At 1.5 mi you'll reach Cornwall Ave and another parking lot.

After crossing Cornwall Ave you'll be on a meandering section of the trail, part of this is an elevated concrete path built to go around a factory that uses the original canal/railroad path. Although this section has no shade, it traverses a wetland with some interesting views.

At 2.3 mi you'll reach West Main St but don't cross the street, instead take a right onto the sidewalk and take a right into the Ball and Socket Arts complex, which has a fascinating history that is highlighted on historical signs near the front and rear of the building. Drinking water and a restroom are inside and open when the on-site ice cream shop is open. A free art exhibit can be viewed most weekend afternoons.

To get back on the trail follow the one-way arrow through the Ball and Socket Arts parking lot to the trail entrance at the far right of the rear lot. This rear lot can also be used for trail parking. Between the front and rear lots is a building that often hosts a weekend art exhibit.

Return by going south on the FCHT to the Lock 12 parking lot following the same route.