The best outdoor spots around campus



The Wilbur Cross building shines its golden dome over The University of Connecticut. The building offers services for student needs, all housed within one of 47 buildings at UConn on the Natonal Register of Historic Places. File Photo/The Daily Campus.

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Like clockwork, September is in full swing at the University of Connecticut. The first few weeks of the fall semester, with mild weather, colorful trees and midterm season far from sight, are some of the best times to get outside and enjoy outdoor spaces on campus. Whether you are a first-year student who is still getting used to UConn, or a returner who wants somewhere new to explore, here are a few locations where you can make the most of the season.

Behind the Benton

While there are plenty of lawn spaces around campus to lounge about, none are quite as calm as the cobbled path sandwiched between the back of the William Benton Museum of Art and the Wilbur Cross Building. The small space has a few bench areas to sit at, and the small cluster of trees keeps the area well-shaded and cool. Even during the busiest passing times, the path is quieter than the surrounding sidewalks. Its proximity to the Beanery and Crossroads cafes also makes it a handy spot to eat a quick bite outside.

As an added bonus, even if you head there by yourself, you will never feel alone. Whether it is the stone head sculpture on a stone wall, squirrels chasing each other through the trees or deer passing by at night, there is always something there to observe.

Horsebarn Hill

Horsebarn Hill may be the most rewarding place to walk on campus. The hill itself is pleasant, but not too busy, and steep enough to give a nice dose of exercise. Its crest gives an incredible view of the entire campus from the front, while the back oversees many of the barns located below. The sunsets and sunrises are spectacular, a great backdrop for an evening or morning picnic with some friends.

The Dairy Bar, just off to the side, is yet another bonus that makes the hills worth visiting. What's better than a quick bite of ice cream before seeing one of the best sights UConn has to offer?

UConn Forest

Right beside Horsebarn Hill is the UConn Forest, which sports 2,100 acres of maintained land. There's an abundance of trails to walk, split between various tracts. With its immense size, it is easy to find yourself deep in the woods, fully free from the sounds of nearby cars and other distractions.

The Fenton Tract in particular boasts a dense network of trails, ones that can leave you lost if you're not careful. Certain routes lead you by mild stretches of the Fenton River, where the water is low enough to cross without much difficulty. Best of all, the riverside clearings work as a great spot to relax with friends.

Hillside Environmental Education Park

On the complete other end of campus, tucked behind the Innovation Partnership Building, is the Hillside Environmental Education Park, commonly referred to as the HEEP. The 165-acre preservation area sits on top of a remediated landfill, with a main path connecting Discovery Drive to Hunting Lodge Road. Smaller marked trails branch off from the large walkway, taking you deeper into the forest and alongside different environmental features, like wetlands and vernal pools.

A nice addition to HEEP are the various signs displayed throughout the park. The posts provide extra information on local environmental features and wildlife, making any walks just as enriching as they are entertaining.

Whetton Woods

If you've spent a lot of time in Downtown Storrs, you may have noticed signs pointing to the Town of Mansfield trail. If you follow these signs to the back of the Sherwood Park Apartments area, you'll find the entrance to Whetton Woods, a small trail site with parts managed by the Town of Mansfield and Joshua's Trust. With about a one and one-half miles of trails, with a scenic loop that takes you over multiple wooden bridges, it can be a great place to get away and breathe forest air for an hour or so. For any soccer enjoyers, it may be worth bringing a ball or two to take advantage of the sports fields that the trail can lead you to.

SUBOG WEEKLY EVENTS:

SEPTEMBER 13TH - SEPTEMBER 20TH

Giants vs Cowboys Travel Trip – Details located on our Instagram

Suicide Prevention Week – A Talk with Chamique Holdsclaw – 7 pm – 8pm in SU Theatre

Dive Into SUBOG – 2 pm – 5pm – SU Mall

Six Flags Travel Trip – Details located on our Instagram

Any questions? Email subog@uconn.edu and check out @subogatuconn on Instagram for updates on our events!



The UConn Dairy Bar, located at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, CT

PHOTOGRAPH BY SAMANTHA BRODY, EDITOR IN CHIEF/THE DAILY CAMPUS