BUCKET LIST

26 Yale experiences for the class of 2026

// BY MADISON BUTCHKO

When people ask what I do for fun at Yale, I say I explore. I let my curiosity lead me, driven by my obsession with knowing what is inside every room and trying every door. There is no other time in your life when you have this kind of access: to a whole city, to buildings full of beautiful and unexpected things, to places that can start to feel entirely your own. That is how all of these experiences reached me, and how I hope for them to reach you.

1. Sit by the hidden koi pond at the Marsh Botanical Garden—Behind the greenhouses, there's a little path that leads to a hidden koi pond. There are benches where you can sit, watch the fish and listen to the water. In the springtime, elegant camellia flowers and roses also grow there.

2. Visit the sunroom at the top of Marsh Hall—Marsh Hall is a unique building with a beautiful staircase inside. If you go up to the very top, there's a little sunroom that's perfect for watching sunsets.

3. Go to the Leitner Observatory—They have public viewings on Tuesday nights. It's also just a lovely place to walk up to.

4. Walk through the Yale Divinity School garden—Behind the Divinity School there's a peaceful garden with a little fireplace, plants and nice seating.

5. Visit the chapel in the Divinity School library—This is one of the most beautiful libraries on campus. It has a gorgeous reading room and several other rooms to explore. Downstairs, there's a hidden chapel with a really old organ. Also, keep your eyes open; there's a box full of Jesus puppets somewhere in there.

6. Check out the fish tank in the basement of the Yale Law School library—Hidden in the basement of the law library, there's a large fish tank.

7. Visit the small libraries around campus—Some of my favorite Yale spaces are the tiny libraries tucked inside random buildings. On the third floor of Mason Lab, there's a small Chemical Engineering Library worth visiting. The Institution for Social and Policy Studies on Prospect Street houses another of my favorite little libraries, with a quiet room, books and a couch, plus a small room above with a window. The Linguistics Library in Dow Hall is a small room full of books and an espresso machine. I also love the Classics Library in Phelps because it has a great view of Old Campus and is filled with old books that look like they might fall apart if you touch them.

8. Visit the Harvey Cushing Medical Library—In the basement of the medical school library, you'll find the Cushing Center, where you can look at brain specimens and learn about anatomical history.

9. Explore the Senior Fellows Office at the Jackson School of Global Affairs—All things considered, it's really just a small room, but as it's filled with dark wood and a ton of books, I see it as a hidden gem of a library.

10. The spiral staircase in the Jonathan Edwards College library—This is the best library on campus—though admittedly, I am biased. It has multiple reading rooms, including the Curtis Curtiss reading room and the Taft reading room, and if you take a little spiral staircase up from the Taft room, you reach the upper floor—a beautiful, Hogwarts-style space. You can access the JE library through the college itself or through the art gallery.

11. Walk through the Jonathan Edwards Sculpture Garden—This garden connects the Jonathan Edwards courtyard to the Yale University Art Gallery. It is a beautiful and oft-overlooked in-between space.

12. Find the sunroom in Steinbach Hall—Steinbach Hall is a pinkish building that is now part of the Jackson School. Go upstairs, and you'll find a little sunroom full of light with chairs—a lovely, quiet spot.

13. Explore the hidden garden behind 46 Hillhouse Ave.—Behind 46 Hillhouse Ave., which is also part of the Jackson School, there's a small secret garden with a little bush maze you can walk through.

14. Visit Edgerton Park—This isn't on Yale's campus, but it's close by. In September, the park's community garden is in full bloom with stunning dahlias. In June, there are masses of blue hydrangea bushes. They also have chickens, which is a bonus.

15. Use the printing presses at JE or Pierson College—JE has a printing press you can use. You can take a class or sign up for a printmaking workshop. Pierson boasts similar workshops.

16. Grab food from the food trucks—Near the medical school and near Science Hill, there are great food trucks that I've been dragged to dozens of times over the past years. My favorites include arepas and Thai food.



ILLUSTRATION BY LUCAS CASTILLO-WEST

17. Do bookbinding in Silliman's basement—Silliman has a bookbinding setup in the basement. You can sign up to join the Guild of Bookmakers via their mailing list and learn the craft.

18. Try pottery in Branford, Davenport, Grace Hopper, Pauli Murray or Trumbull colleges—Multiple residential colleges have pottery wheels and kilns in their basements. They are a fun creative outlet tucked right into the college system.

19. Explore the staircase inside the Loria Center—Inside the Loria Center, there's a really cool staircase decorated with Egyptian statues, murals and architectural models. It is worth a slow walk through just to take it all in.

20. Visit Slifka for the best cookies—Aside from being Yale's Jewish life center, Slifka is my Crumbl. The cookies are exceptional, especially the chocolate chip and red velvet, all of which are dairy-free. They also have a community fridge stocked with snacks.

21. Visit St. Thomas More—St. Thomas More is Yale's Catholic center and has one of the most handsome libraries on campus. The building also has snacks and tea in the Golden Center as well as a meditation room.

22. Play ping-pong at the Sloane Physics Lab student lounge—Sloane has a small student lounge tucked behind a door, with couches and a cozy place to sit. There is also a ping-pong table on the third floor of the lab.

23. Climb to the top of Harkness Tower—In early September, you can audition for the Guild of Carillonneurs, which plays the bells at the top of Harkness Tower. It's a competitive process, but if you don't make it, you can also join Hand Bells, and either way, you get to play music from the top of the tower.

24. Visit the Breathing Room—The Breathing Room has a ton of free crafts: origami, drawing, paper projects or whatever you're in the mood for. There's also a meditation space inside with cushions and a wall fountain. The sound of the running water alone makes it worth the visit.

25. Stop by the Chaplain's Office in the basement of Bingham Hall—The Chaplain's Office has free ice cream bars and lip balm, in case you're in need.

26. Visit the Cultural Centers—Even if you're not a member, you're welcome. The Asian American Cultural Center, the Native American Cultural Center, La Casa Cultural and the Middle Eastern and North African Cultural Community spaces are mostly located along Crown Street, and each has its own library, a great kitchen and fun events with free food. Also check out the Women's Center, which is open every day, and the LGBTQ+ Center in Watson Hall on Prospect Street.

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HOROSCOPES

Commencement horoscopes

// BY KIVA BANK

You said it was over, but the stars are calling you back like a toxic ex after they've had two vodka crans and an unknown number of tequila shots. Of course, you always pick up because you're curious to hear what new bullshit they will say to try to win you back. Maybe, somehow, they'll have the answers to your future.

For now, the only upcoming certainty is that Commencement is near. You'll finally be free to do whatever you want — except you're graduating in worse economic conditions than your broke ex, so your options are severely limited.

Without further ado, here's said star-spangled bullshit, brought to you straight from the cosmos:

Aries

You're sad you never completed your "Yookup" bucket list—a.k.a. the entire first page of your first-year fall journal. You didn't get a chance to fornicate in the stacks or go to that orgy. Luckily, your foray into corporate life will bring new opportunities for scandal: heavy petting in an office cubicle or playing footsie during company dinners.

Taurus

You earned your computer science degree after spending hundreds of hours completing tortuous p-sets and sucking up to your TAs in office hours. Unfortunately, those days you went without showering were all for nothing. Newsflash: A.I. is going to take your job. You're now regretting your major, especially because it seems like your peers are doing great—but don't worry. A humanities degree is also worthless, since critical thinking is becoming automated, too!

Gemini

You're glad to graduate and leave the Ivy League behind. You had a hard time fitting in these past four years because you feel like no one understands you as a bisexual woman that only dates men who are "in touch with their feminine side." Oh wait. That's the vast majority of Yale! Maybe just nobody liked you in particular. It looks like you're going to have to rebrand your personality post-grad—and probably your wardrobe, too.

Cancer

When you daydreamed longingly about graduation this past year—and you did, frequently—you always expected that you'd miss your friends, and perhaps your favorite study spots in Sterling. Surprisingly, though, what you'll really miss the most is the ice cream cake from Ashley's (not sponsored, unfortunately). How are you to be expected to work a 9 to 5 without a sweet treat?

Leo

You've been so worried about securing a job post-grad that you haven't had the time to enjoy the Commencement festivities. You're especially frustrated because you feel like you shouldn't be struggling to make it to the interview round of the application process. That's why you went to Yale—not to get rejected but to be a shoo-in for any position. But you've got it all wrong. This is Yale. You should be using your network and connections, not applying through the front door. The back door is a much better route.

Virgo

You wanted to enjoy the last few days with just your senior friends, but unfortunately, some random juniors crashed the Myrtle Beach trip. Sigh. You can't have anything these days. At least the experience prepared you for your new position as an intern. You won't have any time to do what you want while appeasing the whims of your Miranda Priestly-like boss. Good luck!

Libra

Put your money where your mouth is. And no, that doesn't mean buying more Zyns. You keep saying that it's not alcoholism until after college, but your days before being reported to AA are numbered. You need to start investing in things that are less damaging to your organs. Try stocks instead.

Scorpio

You're worried about having to move far away from Yale and make new friends, so you're desperately looking for possible hangout spots that can be your "third place." Unfortunately, in your search process, you'll likely end up doomscrolling on Substack and instead find community among moon landing conspiracy theorists. In the end, you'll convince yourself it's just lonely at the top.

Sagittarius

You can't believe the price of gas—and, more importantly, alcohol—these days. The lack of liberally flowing liquor at LEO is the real recession indicator. You're unsure how you are expected to "adult" in these economic conditions when you can't even drink for free at the frats anymore. You're leaving the frats behind anyway as you graduate, but you're still woefully unprepared for life outside of it. Welcome to the real world of paying for club cover charges and $20 for a subpar martini.

Capricorn

You're contemplating going on a hike with your friends to celebrate graduation because you didn't get to spend enough time in nature touching grass. You were busy completing your double major in chemistry and biomedical engineering on the pre-med track with a certificate in ed-studies. You think you can prepare for the hike with enough water jugs, granola and first aid supplies in your pack, but it'll only take one accidental faceplant before you decide to drive up East Rock instead. Save the hardcore backpacking for your eventual midlife crisis.

Aquarius

You're not ready to lose your revered status as a thespian once you leave the Yale bubble. You've been spoiled during your four years here, beloved on and off the stage, but it's time for a reality check. Everyone hates theater kids, especially ones like you who once had a "Hamilton" phase and now sing showtunes obnoxiously loudly, and no one will care about you again until you make it big on Broadway.

Pisces

Someone in your society confessed they have a crush on you, and it's not even the cute guy you've been eyeing ever since tap night last year. You're disappointed that your final chance of experiencing Yale romance is slipping away, but hey, at least keeping things platonic will prevent reunions from getting a whole lot more awkward.

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