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Do Something Crazy and Fun This Weekend: Drive to 17 Indie Bookstores Around This Beautiful State

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The first thing you should know is that (1) **this is more fun than a written description can relay**. If you do this, you will remember for the rest of your life just how beautiful Connecticut is, especially when you leave the highway. **Prepare to be charmed.**

The second, third and fourth things you should know are that if you participate in the Passport event for Independent Bookstore "Day" this weekend, April 27 and 28, (2) you'd **better not mind being in a car for most of the day** Saturday and Sunday, because you'll be traveling to 17 bookstores around the state; (3) you'll find it more fun **if you love books**, because 20%-off coupons at these bookstores are the direct reward; and

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Plan your trip beforehand and expect to arrive at your first bookstore of each day when it opens, because you're going to be tempted to linger in a charming store and then in its beautiful neighborhood — and find yourself racing to complete the trip late on Sunday afternoon, before your last bookstore closes.

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(Lucky you: Your Darienite.com editor took this trek last year, and we've got tips for you.)

You don't actually have time to shop at these bookstores — just visit them, get a gander at the place and leave for your next stop. You'll want to go back when you've got your passport stamped and you've got coupons to get your 20% discount. The discount actually isn't much in this age of Internet bookselling, but the trips back will be worth the next drive.

- **Beware:** You'll be in the car all day long, each day; this is not for little kids and probably not big kids, either. Bring an audiobook. Get gas at the Pilot Travel Center at Exit 40 in Milford, [here](#); it's the cheapest near a highway (but the bathrooms are being renovated). Use an app like Waze or Google Maps to avoid getting lost. Watch your driving. Don't linger — you'll want to go back, anyway.
- **Plan Your Route:** We suggest a Saturday trip going north, stopping at Bethel first and taking a big loop up to South Windsor (where the bookstore is only open on Saturday, not Sunday), then down along I-91. That will get you to eight stores (and you can also stop in Hamden and New Haven if you have time). It will be easier to drive along I-95 to get to the other bookstores the next day. Remember that I-95 traffic on Sunday afternoon can be a little slow. Don't forget a book store. Fill up that gas tank.

Here's [the announcement](#) from the independent state booksellers association that's sponsoring the event:

Independent Bookstore Day is a one-day national party that takes place at indie bookstores across the country on the last Saturday in April.

As a thank-you to customers who support indies, bookstores plan tons of fun, in-store events and stock exclusive books and literary items that you can only get on that day. Not before. Not after. And not online.

[*Darienite.com editor's note: Remember Rule #4! Do it quick, **don't linger.***]

- Oh, and (5) **don't step on any of the several cats** at the Book Barn in Niantic, where you'll be awed by the campus of little buildings and big old barn where scads and scads of used books must make the shelves groan the way your feet make the old barn's floorboards groan. Do pick up the brochure introducing you to the cats so you'll know their names on the next visit. If you have time for a quick — quick! — walk around the campus of little out-buildings, stretch your legs. (They've got two or three other locations in Niantic because they couldn't fit all the used books on the main campus. If this isn't the biggest bookstore in the state, it's one of the top two.)

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Celebrate your local indies on Independent Bookstore Day (April 27th) by participating in the Connecticut Passport! Visit all 17 participating bookstores over the weekend to win a Passport Prize, a 20% coupon from each store (some exclusions apply), and be entered into a Grand Prize raffle. Five (5) people will be drawn at random to win a Grand Prize of a \$50 gift card from EACH store!

- Oh, and the **bathrooms at the Wesleyan RJ Julia bookstore** in Middletown are co-ed, but we seem to remember each has only one toilet. We think. Just sayin'.

[Click here](#) for a map of participating bookstores.

Rules:

- This event takes place over IBD weekend (Saturday, April 27th, and Sunday, April 28th) during each bookstore's business hours.
- Participants can pick up a passport at any of the 17 bookstores on Independent Bookstore Day.
- Participants must visit **ALL** bookstores to qualify for the passport prize and gain entry to win a Grand Prize.
- No purchase is required to participate.
- Each participating bookstore will issue an original stamp/sticker in the passport during your visit.
- Upon completion of the passport, a bookseller at the final stop will review the stamps and confirm your eligibility to win. You will be asked to fill out a form with your contact information, which will be used to mail Passport Prizes and for entry into the Grand Prize.
- Participants can finish their passport at ANY of the stores and are welcome to keep their passports.
- (6) **You can say you've been to Podunk.** To get to the Book Club Bookstore [in South Windsor](#), you'll pass over the Podunk River (there will be a little sign). Yes, you'll be in Podunk, Connecticut. It's not a mythical place.

Passport Prize: A coupon from each of the 17 participating stores for 20% off a purchase on a future visit (some exclusions apply). Awarded to everyone who completes the passport by visiting ALL 17 participating bookstores

Grand Prize: One \$50 gift certificate to each of the 17 participating bookstores (an \$850 value), awarded to five, randomly-drawn Passport Prize winners.

- (7) The RJ Julia Booksellers store in Madison has **probably the most beautiful interior of**

any book shop in Connecticut. You don't have time to linger for more than a few minutes! Also very nice: Don't miss the coffee bar in the back of the Books and Company store in Hamden (or the river view behind the store).

To print a passport, please [click this link](#).

- (8) **Prettiest neighborhood:** Near the Goods & Curiosities store in Essex. Parking is difficult and that narrow Main Street is crowded. Don't miss the view of the Connecticut River at the end of the street. That may be the only spot where you can find parking. New Milford is also surprisingly charming, as is Madison and Ridgefield.

- (9) **Prettiest driving:** Between bookstores #1 and #12 **in New Milford and Washington Depot.** Winding roads up and down hills, cows, gorgeous streams. Bring tissues — you'll get teary.
- (10) **Worst traffic: In downtown Ridgefield,** where the Books on the Green store is another one of the charmers on this trek. We were there on a Sunday afternoon. Park anywhere downtown — anywhere where they'll allow it — and walk. It's faster than waiting in traffic and more enjoyable (anything is more enjoyable). This is even worse than Main Street in Essex. Honestly, you'll be telling your great-grandchildren about downtown Ridgefield weekend traffic. It's just that awful.