

Ranger Bill's Twelve Things To Do in 2017

I am a keeper of lists. My work day starts with a check on the list of things I have planned for the week. My work week is based on my month plan which is based on my annual plan. At home I will make a list of weekend chores to accomplish. A trip to the super market always starts with a list.

Here is my list of ideas for this year in **The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor**, with one for every month.

1. Go for a Snowshoe Hike



January is a perfect time to get out and experience the winter season. I love to snowshoe and hopefully this year we'll have enough snow so I can pull those old snowshoes off the wall and strap them on. Our state parks and forests are perfect locations for snowshoeing.

2. Enjoy Valentine's Day



Our region is known for wonderful town-wide events, fairs and festivals. Even in February there are opportunities to enjoy the fun. Here are two events close to Valentine's Day that I have attended and hope to attend again this year.

Putnam's Fire and Ice Valentine's Festival will be held on Saturday, February 11th and includes ice sculptures, ice luminarias, live ice carving demonstrations, fire torches, fire dancing performances, fantastic food & drink, live entertainment, and more! Here is a link for more information

<http://www.discoverputnam.com/#!fire-and-ice/cs62>.

If you love chocolate as much as I do, then you'll want to head over to Willimantic on Saturday, February 11th for the day-long Romantic Willimantic Chocolate Festival. There is a cake baking contest with prizes, and restaurants and businesses will welcome you with free samples, deals and more. For more information and updates check out the Romantic Willimantic Chocolate Festival Facebook page.

3. Buy Local Maple Syrup



March in The Last Green Valley is maple sugar season. If you haven't been to a sugar house to see the process and taste the goodness, then you're missing out on a real treat. You can find a brochure of maple sugar houses that are open to the public by going to the CT Department of Agriculture website and typing in maple sugar houses open to the public in the search option. <http://www.ct.gov/doag/site/default.asp>

4. Spring Outdoors and Visit a Land Trust Property



The snow is gone, our summer birds are returning, a few shrubs are blooming, and that means **April** is here -- time to explore the great outdoors. This year TLGV will be expanding our Spring Outdoors program that was started in 2016. From the Vernal Equinox to the Summer Solstice, you'll have three full months of opportunities to explore. Check the TLGV website for updates and to download the schedule of walk, hikes and more.

We'll again be partnering with our local land trusts to bring this program to you. There are several active land trusts in the 35 towns that comprise The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor. Here is a list with their websites.

Avalonia Land Conservancy: avalonialandconservancy.org

Dudley Conservation Land Trust: dudleyclt.org

Eastern CT Forest Landowners Association & Wolf Den Land Trust: ecfla.org

Joshua's Trust: joshuaslandtrust.org

New Roxbury Land Trust: nrlt.org

Opacum Land Trust: opacumlt.org

Wyndham Land Trust: wyndhamlandtrust.org

5. Go to a Memorial Day Parade



Does your town have a Memorial Day parade? This **May**, remember those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our country and honor them by participating in your local Memorial Day parade and program.

6. Buy from a Farmer's Market



Most regional farmer's markets are open by June. If you live in one of The Last Green Valley towns there is a farmer's market near you. Farmer's markets are a perfect way to find excellent veggies and other food products produced by local farmers. Here is a link to the farmer's markets in the region.

<http://thelastgreenvalley.org/explore-the-last-green-valley/farmers-markets/>

7. Pick Blueberries



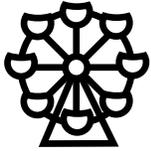
July is blueberry season and there is a good selection of pick-your-own farms in the region. I take my granddaughter blueberry picking every year and stock up. I joke with her that the farmer will check her tongue when we leave and if it's blue he'll charge us extra. We freeze several quarts so that the fresh tasty goodness from our day of picking blueberries can be enjoyed throughout the year.

8. Go Swimming



I love to swim – provided it is a nice hot day, and August usually has plenty. Do you have a favorite swimming hole or swimming location? If you're looking for a new place to swim, check out TLGV's website, and click on the "Explore" then "Swimming" tabs.

9. Everyone Loves a Country Fair



September is country fair season, the chance to enjoy the end of the summer with a traditional fair full of animals, farm and home products, music, food and rides for the kids. From the Lebanon Fair to the Woodstock Fair, late summer is the height of fair season in The Last Green Valley.

10. Participate in Walktober



If it's **October**, it's time to get out and explore in The Last Green Valley. Last year we had more than 270 walks, hikes, bikes, paddles and experiences, and we are working on an even bigger offering in 2017. Check out the TLGV website for regular Walktober updates. The Walktober brochure will be available in August so get in touch then for your copy.

11. Get Lost in a Maze



Corn mazes seem to be "all-the-craze" these days. They start up in September when the corn is high enough to create the maze and go through the fall season into **November**. If you haven't been to a corn maze, you're missing the fun. The kids will enjoy it too!

12. Cut your own Christmas tree



December is not just the holiday season; it's the memory-creating season too. My adult children still talk about our adventures selecting and cutting our own trees from local Christmas tree farms. Find a Christmas tree farm in your area and start your own family tradition.

So there you have it -- Ranger Bill's list of experiences in The Last Green Valley for the next twelve months. What's on your list this year? Feel free to share it with me. Together we can enjoy our beautiful National Heritage Corridor, share it with family and friends, and pass it on to those who come after us.

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