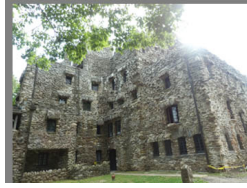


Gillette Castle, Hadlyme, CT, USA - Where Fantasy and Romance Come To Life



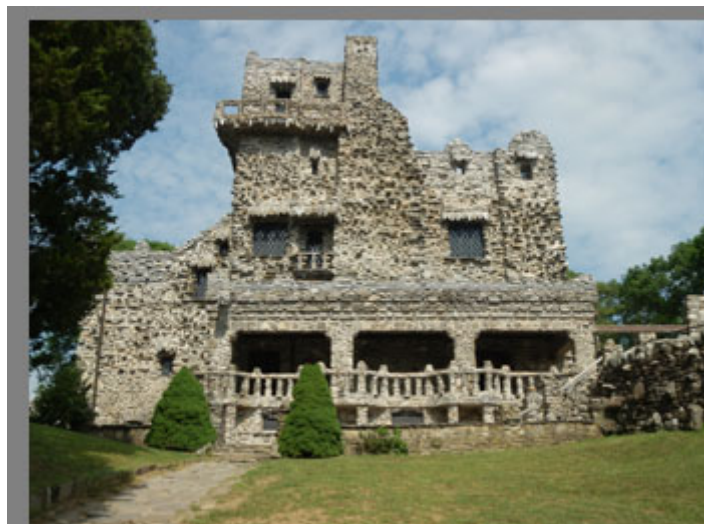
We spent a wonderful afternoon at **Gillette Castle State Park** in [Hadlyme, Connecticut](#) exploring the impressive **Gillette Castle** with its rough granite fieldstone exterior and unique interiors that was once home to **actor William Gillette**. Whether you are looking for a fun family outing or a romantic setting to propose or say "I do," **Gillette Castle** and **Gillette Castle State Park** are sure to stir the imagination.



Debra and Edward at Gillette Castle

The Man behind the Castle

William Gillette was born in Hartford, Connecticut on July 24, 1853 and died in Hartford on April 29, 1937. He was the son of former U.S. Senator Francis Gillette and his wife Elizabeth Daggett Hooker Gillette, a descendent of Thomas Hooker, the founder of Hartford. He gained acclaim as a stage actor in Boston, New York, New Orleans, and Philadelphia, and also performed around the world in the role he created as Sherlock Holmes. He married Helen Nichols in 1882 (she died unexpectedly in 1888 of peritonitis from a ruptured appendix), and he never remarried. He wrote 13 original plays as well as adaptations of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, wrote a crime detective novel, was an inventor and had 4 patents mostly in the theatrical world.



Gillette Castle

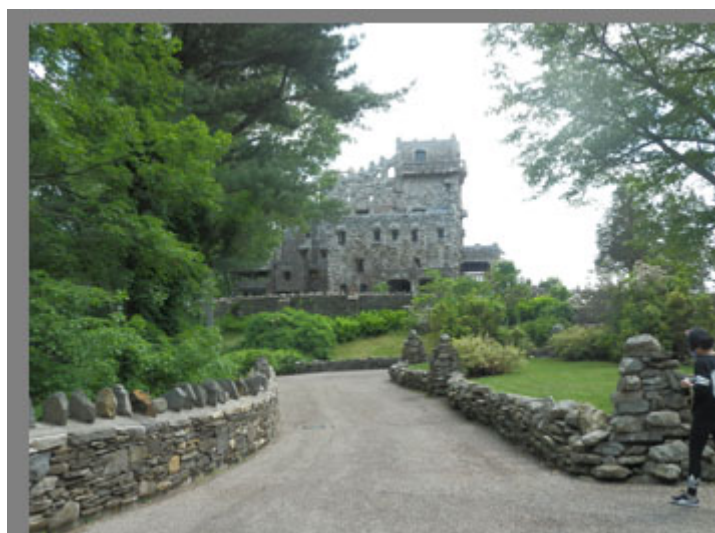
Constructed of local granite in the medieval style, the castle, which was called "Seventh Sister" was built between 1914 and 1919 at a cost of \$1.1 million and was designed by William Gillette with the architectural firm of Porteus-Walker Company. This impressive and romantic castle soars 200 feet above the Connecticut River, has 24 rooms, and totals 14,000 square feet. To carry his guests, including Albert Einstein, and actors Helen Hayes and Charlie Chaplin around this vast property, Mr. Gillette had his own railroad which he called the Seventh Sister Short-Line. The train had a steam and an electric engine and could carry up to 28 passengers over 3 miles of his property. Situated on the river, Mr. Gillette also had a boat to entertain his guests. Leaving no heirs, the State of Connecticut took ownership of the property in 1942, it was added to the US National Registry of Historic Places in 1986, and reopened as a museum in 2002 after an extensive \$11 million renovation.



Gillette Castle

Visiting the Castle

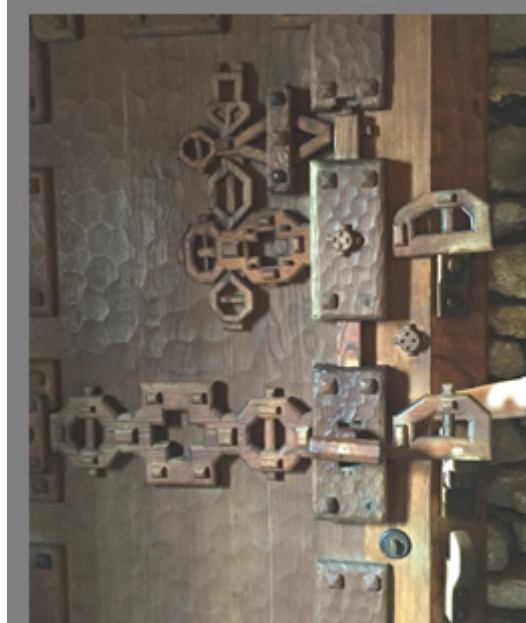
We visited Gillette Castle State Park on a beautiful, warm and sunny day in early June 2016 where the expansive grounds invited al fresco dining at the picnic tables set around the scenic water lily pond and families and friends gathered to enjoy the tranquil setting.



Drive up to the Gillette Castle

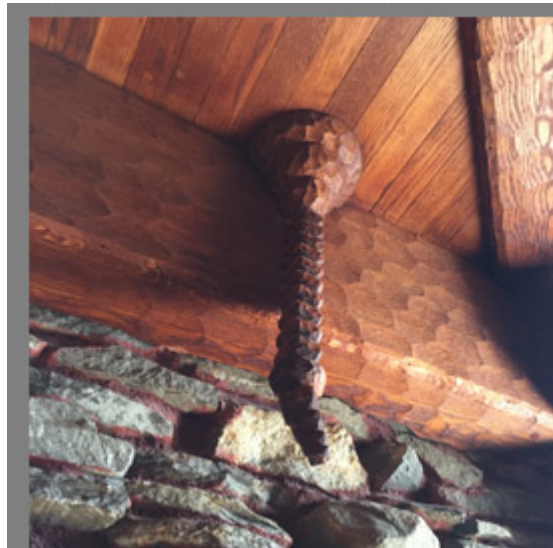
Created by: Debra C. Argen and Edward F. Nesta

After our lunch, we drove up the hill and as the castle came into view through the trees, it sparked our imaginations with thoughts of romance and fantasy with its rough granite fieldstone exterior and its many balconies, and we could not wait to go inside and discover its many secrets.



Door Locks

Once inside the castle, we were impressed with the design of the structure as well as its remarkable details including each of the 47 uniquely hand-carved doors with their intricate locking devices which William Gillette designed. Other interesting things to look for during a visit to the castle are the locking mechanism on the wood bar cabinet, and the metal runners on the floor in the dining room so that he could slide the table out when needed, and the wooden "icicle," which hid a watering system in the event of a fire.



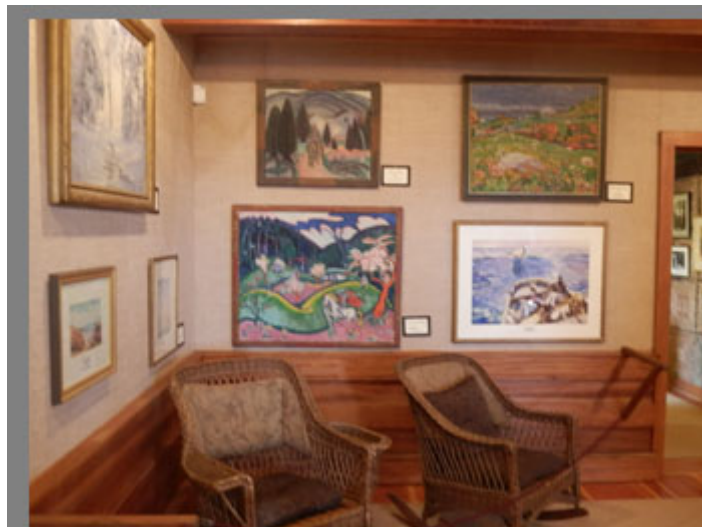
Wooden "icicle"

Architecturally, the castle is a dream of a design that makes the most of every space with ingeniously hidden cabinets, built-in seating areas, drawers, and closets, the way one would use space on a boat. There are also fascinating wall-coverings that are artwork in their own right. Mr. Gillette loved animals, especially cats, and there is playfulness throughout the castle, which includes a pair of cat shaped andirons where the eyes would glow when there was a fire in the fireplace.



Built in Sofa

Although the tour is self-guided, there are knowledgeable guides in each of the rooms to share information and fun tidbits about Mr. Gillette and the objects in the rooms that bring life into the castle. We especially enjoyed seeing Mr. Gillette's vast collection of art in the specially designed gallery, the original furnishings, as well as the many interesting objects that he bought during his travels around the world. Other highlights included his workshop, library, great room, secret passageways, and conservatory.



Gillette Castle Gallery

Plan your visit to arrive early, perhaps bring a picnic lunch to enjoy before or after your visit to the castle, or have something to eat in their snack bar. Do take time to enjoy the remarkable views and explore the grounds and the hiking trails and create special memories of your visit.

Visiting Tip: The castle has many stairs with multiple floors so wear comfortable shoes. There are scenic walking and hiking trails for those that would like to explore this visually stunning park.



View from the Gillette Castle

Gillette Castle State Park grounds are open year round, however Gillette Castle is only open for tours from Memorial Day Weekend (late May) until Columbus Day (in October) from 10:00 am until 5:00 pm, with the last ticket sold at 4:30 pm. Entrance to the park and grounds is free, there is a small fee to enter the castle.

Castle Entrance Fees: Adults (13 and older): \$6.00, Children (6 - 12 years): \$2, Children (5 and under): Free. There are no discounts for Seniors or Groups.



Gillette Castle

Directions: From late April until late November, you can take the Chester - Hadlyme ferry across the Connecticut River from Chester to get to Gillette Castle.

The alternative is to drive north along Route 154, to the famous East Haddam Swing Bridge, and then follow signs to the castle. In all, the drive is about 10 miles through some wonderful scenic areas of Haddam, and East Haddam, Connecticut.



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