

August 7, 2008



## DAYCATION | NEW HAVEN

Now more than ever, we need a break — an occasional respite from our everyday lives. Yes, a “daycation” — a day spent away from the office or job site, and away from chores, just to relax and play. Once again this summer, we are taking one day a week to suggest a nearby escape. Enjoy!

# Free Pass To Yale

## Campus Just Part Of New Haven's Vibrant Cultural Life

BY ANNE VANDERMEY | COURANT STAFF WRITER

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL MCANDREWS | THE HARTFORD COURANT

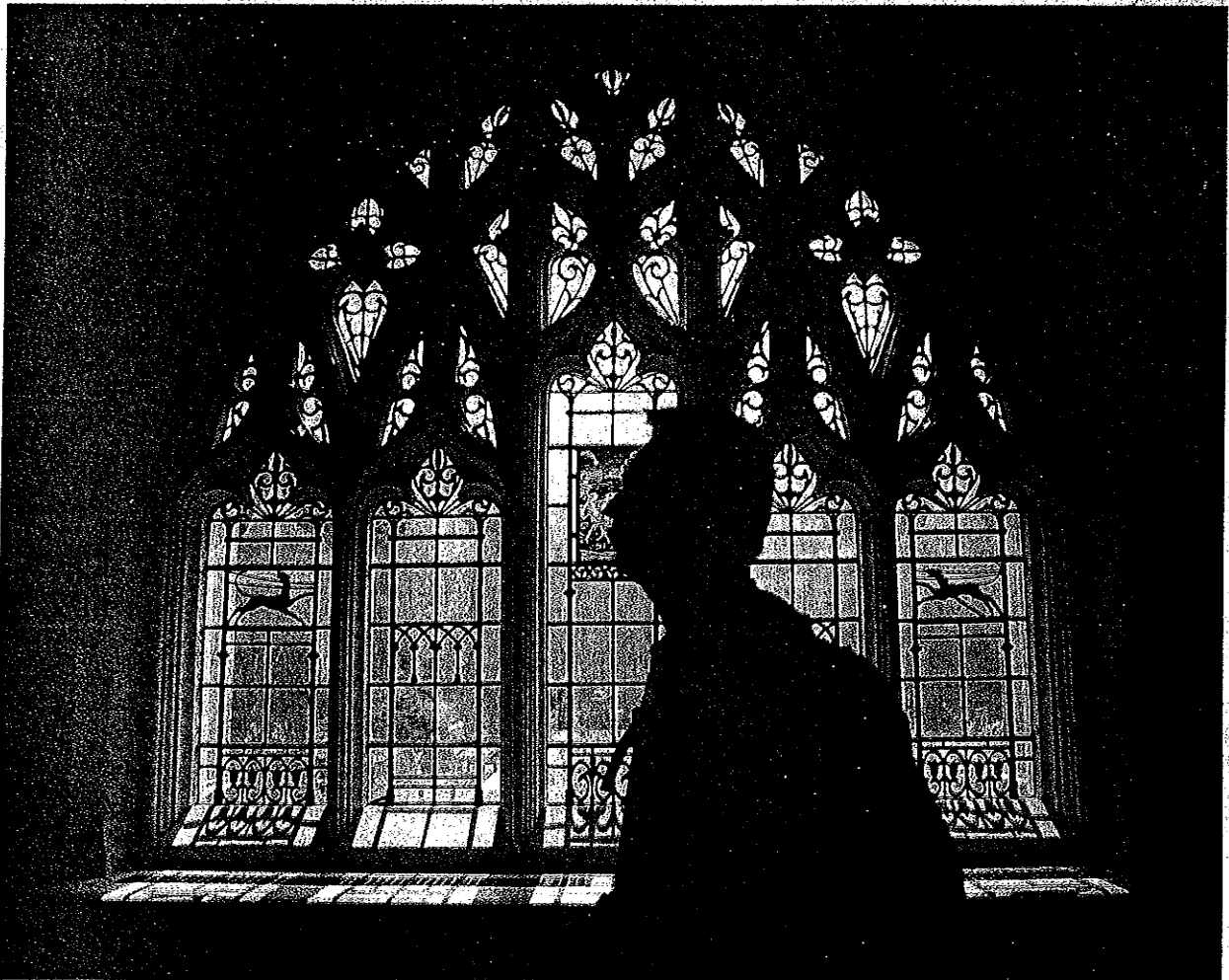
**S**kull and Bones is probably the most conspicuously wealthy secret society in the world. It purportedly owns an island, controls several million dollars amassed through alumni donations and operates out of a creepy, tomb-like New Haven building in a spot so central, most real estate developers would kill to build high-rise condos on it. Windowless and stark, the building on High Street is both intriguing and unnerving. It looks like a throwback to the fifth century B.C., but with an up-to-date security system. There are two padlocks on the double doors; one combination lock, the kind you'd find on a safe; and an electronic number pad.

Exclusivity is part of the allure of the Yale campus. Sure, the average visitor can't get into most of the buildings; even the architectural wonder that is the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library is closed to visitors for the summer. But it doesn't matter: A walk around the grounds is enough to leave you feeling soaked in Old World splendor; and rumor has it there are skulls and bones in the Skull and Bones basement. Count me out.

### GO TO D8

#### on the web

For a full guide to past 'daycations' around the region, visit [www.courant.com/daycation](http://www.courant.com/daycation).



A VISITOR to Yale University's Sterling Memorial Library passes one of the Gothic-inspired windows, at right. Above, waitress Donna Barbieri delivers a pie to customers at Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana.

## FROM PAGE D1

But if you're still longing for a little insider's access to those hallowed halls, a free tour of the Yale campus is a good place to start your New Haven daycation. Led by students bearing keycards, an hourlong tour from the Yale Visitors Center is a nice campus-history primer.

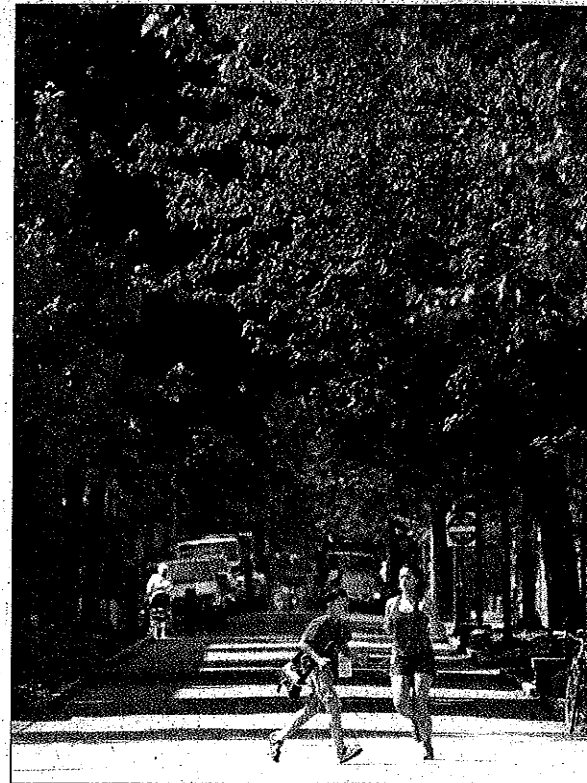
My tour, led by a recent graduate, touched on university lore (rub the foot of the bronze statue of Yale's Civil War-era president for good luck) and took us inside a few of the campus's landmark buildings. Yale boasts some of the best architecture of each era of the last century — from the Gothic, notably Harkness Tower in Memorial Quadrangle, to the modern, with the revered Yale Center for British Art.

And with its soaring turrets and cathedral-like library, you can feel like you're part of a period drama — big chunks of the latest Indiana Jones film were shot on the Yale campus — without crossing the Atlantic.

Once you step out of Yale's gilded premises, though, you might feel as if you're in a different kind of flick. Urban splendor this is not. Despite a wealth of upscale neighborhoods, New Haven is one of Connecticut's poorest cities.

But while it would be easy to while away a day in the company of the well-heeled and the brilliant, the best parts of my visit were off campus. As Yale and the city of New Haven dedicate millions toward art galleries and urban revitalization, the city is developing a world-class art scene, with more than a dozen smaller galleries holding their own alongside the world-famous Center for British Art and the Yale University Art Gallery. And the large young-and-educated population means downtown New Haven is brimming with restaurants and bars.

If you're not interested in hip, there's plenty of classic fare — Louis' Lunch on Crown Street, which claims to have invented the hamburger, and serves up beef so



MICHAEL MCANDREWS / THE HARTFORD COURANT

A LEAFY pedestrian way intersects Cross Campus at Yale University.

**FOR A CRAWLER'S GUIDE TO THE BEST PUBS, GRUB AND GOOD TIMES IN CONNECTICUT'S ELM CITY, GO TO METROMIX.COM/NHPUBCRAWL.**

flavorful, it refuses to serve patrons ketchup with burgers.

For lunch, I walked over to Wooster Street, scene of the fabled rivalry between Sally's Apizza and Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana, which claims to have invented the pizza. Just blocks apart, each parlor is more than a half-century old, and each claims to be the city's best. Not being a pizza connoisseur, I couldn't say which flavorful oven-toasted, New York-style pie was superior — I loved both (although with brutal lines and a long wait while they cooked each pizza, I was so hungry by the time it got there that Domino's would have seemed gourmet. Outside of Yale, much of the 370-year-old city has a story even if it's not much to look at.

Take the CT Rock Gym: To find it you have to drive through down-trodden neighborhoods and into the parking lot of what looks like abandoned warehouses. Once you drive around back though, you'll find a state-of-the-art climbing gym.

When I got there, eager for a more literal form of social climbing after hobnobbing with Yale grads, some of the gym regulars were gathered outside for a barbecue, with free beer for all.

Which goes to show, the best parts of New Haven aren't exclusive at all. They're perfectly accessible — if you know where to look.

*For more information about Yale tours, visit [www.yale.edu/visitor/tours.html](http://www.yale.edu/visitor/tours.html), or call the Yale Visitors Center at 203-432-2300.*

*Contact Anne VanderMey at [avandermey@courant.com](mailto:avandermey@courant.com).*