

Discovering Cape Cod and the Islands

Cape Cod is renowned for 559 miles of glorious coastline, quaint villages, scenic byways and a rejuvenating ambiance. In its 15 towns and scores of villages, visitors find respite from the ordinary. The Cape is really many capes: tony in spots, a little tacky in others; sometimes it's a nature lover's dream, sometimes a living historical treasure, sometimes a hotbed of creativity. The different parts of the Cape are referred to as the Lower Cape, Mid Cape, Upper Cape and the Islands. This guide will introduce you to the Cape's most desirable destinations and should steer you there smoothly.

Lower Cape-Brewster, Chatham, Orleans, the Harwich's
Mid Cape-Barnstable, Hyannis, Dennis and Yarmouth
Upper Cape-Bourne, Mashpee, Sandwich, Falmouth and Woods Hole
Outer Cape- Eastham, Truro, Wellfleet and Provincetown
The Islands-Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket

Cape Cod is a spit of land thrust into the Atlantic Ocean like a sandy arm, with Provincetown at the "fist," Chatham at the "elbow," and Sandwich at the "shoulder." The Cape lies just south of Boston on the East Coast and is the premier vacation resort in New England. The name Cape Cod conjures up images of sea captains' homes, shipwrecks, whaling ports, pirates, rumrunners, lighthouses, and sand dunes and salt sea air. It is these images that even today create the backdrop for a Cape Cod vacation.

After traveling over the Cape Cod Canal via the Bourne Bridge, you'll see an arrangement of ornamental shrubs and flowers that spell out the words "Welcome to Cape Cod." This living greeting, planted so many years ago, expresses a truth. No matter how many times you visit Cape Cod, you'll sense the welcome, not only from those of who live there, but from the land itself, which seems to extend an invitation to explore this place that for centuries has attracted people from all parts of the world. From native tribes and early explorers to English Pilgrims and American presidents, many have visited or made Cape Cod their home, and left a lasting impression. And today people still fall in love with Cape Cod and eagerly set about exploring this narrow spit of land.

If you're a lover of the arts, you'll find that Cape Cod's art scene is thriving. If you love the visual arts, you'll be interested to know that readers of American Style magazine recently voted Cape Cod one of the best places to visit if you enjoy visiting art galleries. This is no surprise to us--painters have been drawn to this magical region for more than 100 years, since Charles Hawthorne set his easel in the sand in Provincetown in 1899 and started the Cape Cod School of Art. Edward Hopper spent more than 30 summers painting in Truro, and legendary figures of the New York School, such as Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Robert Motherwell, all lived in Provincetown at one time.

Drama thrives here too. Eugene O'Neill wrote many of his earliest plays in Provincetown, and James Stewart got his first acting break at the Falmouth Playhouse, while Bette Davis worked as an usher--and later, as an actress--at the Cape Playhouse in Dennis. Writers as well have claimed Cape Cod as their home: Pulitzer Prize-winning author Norman Mailer and acclaimed mystery writer Mary Higgins Clark among them.

Moreover, the Cape has been an especially attractive home to nature writers, ever since Henry Thoreau spent time here walking around the Cape and chronicling his perambulations in Cape Cod, which was published in 1864. In 1928 the writer Henry Beston lived on Coast Guard Beach in Eastham and reflected on his year of solitude in a dune shack on a barrier beach in his classic book, *The Outermost House*. More recently, noted nature writer John Hay was the winner of the John Burroughs Award for Best Nature Writing for his book *The Great Beach*, published in 1963. He was also heralded for numerous others books about Cape Cod, including *The Run* (1959) and *In the Company of Light* (1996). These people recognized that Cape Cod is a unique area for nature lovers, as well as being therapeutic for those craving rest and relaxation. They inspired many latter-day explorers to follow in their footsteps, and so Cape Cod began to attract more nature lovers and birdwatchers, hikers and whale watchers, sailors and surfcasters.

Visualize a kayak moving gracefully downstream, heading towards a paradise of dunes and ocean beach, through tidal flats and salt marsh, populated by terns, blacked-backed gulls, and piping plovers. The musical soundtrack of your imagination has been replaced with the sound of laughing gulls, the cackling call of the kingfisher in flight, and the swoosh of a paddle as it cuts through the water. This natural Cape Cod is as much our reality as those quaint villages of yesteryear. Nowadays, visiting Cape Cod, for many, is as much about nature walks around kettle ponds and understanding migratory paths of birds and marine mammals as it is about eating fried clams and lying on the beach to get a good tan. The people of Cape Cod have embraced the intricate relationship between human

interaction and the fragility of their natural resources and have discovered that responsible recreation coupled with managing local resources is essential if they want to retain the traditional images of Cape Cod and still move forward into the 21st century.

OVERVIEW OF THE LOWER CAPE: Brewster, Chatham, Orleans and the Harwich's

About Brewster

Considered by some to be Cape Cod's most picturesque town, Brewster captures the heart of anyone who loves the quaint and the quiet. Known as the "sea captain's town", Brewster was once part of Harwich before it broke off on its own. Many of the beautiful old mansions built by sea captains are now inns. All its saltwater beaches are on the Cape Cod Bay, where you can walk out for a mile at low tide. In addition, Brewster offers first class golfing, dining, and bike trails. This lovely town has become the de facto "Wedding Capital of Cape Cod" because of its many small and larger inns which cater to weddings. From the Brewster General Store, to numerous antique stores and small bed & breakfasts, Brewster is a slow-paced town, ideal for vacationing couples or families with older children. Points of Interest: The Grist Mill and Herring Run, the Brewster Flats, Brewster Ladies' Library, Cape Cod Museum of Natural History, Bayside beaches, Brewster General Store, Brewster Fire & History Museum, Nickerson State Park, Cape Cod Rail Trail.

About Chatham

Known as "the first stop of the East Wind," Chatham's past and present is intertwined with the sea. Chatham is a base of the US Weather Service, and Chatham Lighthouse, which houses the US Coast Guard. Bordering both the Nantucket Sound and the Atlantic, Chatham has first class, comparatively uncrowded beaches, especially the Outer Beach, accessible only by 4x4 or off-road vehicle. Seafaring sights include the Fish Pier, Stage Harbor, and the romantic Chatham fog, which rolls in nightly in the summer. Main Street offers upscale shopping and dining. Chatham also has numerous small festivals and fairs, making it a classic and fun destination for those seeking a memorable Cape Cod visit. Points of Interest: Chatham Light and Breakthrough, Chatham Fish Pier & Fisherman's Monument, Morris Island, Ocean & Sound Beaches, Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge, Atwood House, Godfrey Windmill, the Loop bike path in town.

About Orleans

Orleans is a beautiful town characterized by contrasts--while it's the unofficial business center of the Lower Cape, containing all the necessities of life, it's also a mecca for nature lovers. It's the starting point of world-famous Nauset Beach--known for its unique topography and dramatic weather events. It is also home to Rock Harbor on the bay side, not to be missed for its sunsets and fishing boats. Birdwatchers will enjoy the over 300 different species seen in Orleans every year, in places like Nauset Marsh & Beach, Pochet Island, and Skaket Beach. While Orleans can certainly be described as traditional small-town USA, the downtown area contains some offbeat stores and restaurants, and has a faintly Bohemian flavor which signals Orleans as the true beginning of the Lower Cape. Points of Interest: French Cable Station Museum, Jonathan Young Windmill, Rock Harbor charter boat fleet & sunsets.

About Harwich

Located midway between the Cape Cod Canal and Provincetown, Harwich offers a bit of the classic Cape Cod vacation to everyone. There are beautiful saltwater beaches along the Nantucket Sound. Historic Harwich Center and Harwich Port are a bit of old-time Americana, with band concerts in the summertime. Harwich also offers golf, charter fishing, and bike trails. Harwich is famous for its world class Cranberry Harvest Festival, which takes place every September. It's the largest small-town festival in America, a week-long extravaganza of craft fairs, a parade, and a spectacular, multimedia fireworks show. Points of Interest: Wychmere, Allen & Saquatucket Harbors, Nantucket Sound & Pleasant Bay beaches, Historical Society at Brooks Academy, Brooks Free Library/Rogers Collection, Brooks Park, Cape Cod Rail Trail.

The Best Beaches of the Lower Cape:

Nauset – Located along the outer "elbow" of the Cape, this barrier beach descends all the way from East Orleans to a point parallel to Chatham – about 9 miles in all, each mile increasingly deserted. The entry point, however, is a body squeeze: its here that the young crowd convenes to strut their stuff. Administered by the town of Orleans, but still considered part of the Cape Cod National Seashore, Nauset Beach offers paid parking, restrooms and a snack bar and is located in Orleans.

Recommended Dining on the Lower Cape:

- Twenty-Eight Atlantic, Come experience the dining at Wequassett Resort and Golf Club. Whether you are in the mood for four star, exquisite fine dining or just want to relax with a succulent cup of chowder we have the perfect spot for you. 2173 MA-28, Harwich, MA, (508) 432-5400 <http://www.wequassett.com/dining>
- Corner Store, Not your average corner store, with the best burritos you will ever find. They strive to serve the best food while having fun! 1403 Old Queen Anne Road, Chatham (508) 432-1077 or 54 Main Street, Orleans (508) 255-5454

Recommended Shopping on the Lower Cape:

In Chatham you will find old-fashioned, tree-shaded Main Street is packed with inviting storefronts, including the Chatham Glass Company where you can literally look over their shoulders as glass treasure take shape.

Stop by the Brewster General Store for unique assortment of merchandise and some history. Built as a church in 1852, the building was converted to a general store in 1866. Situated at the Heart of Brewster, the store serves locals and visitors alike, providing a "Third Place" for friends to meet on the benches from the morning, with fresh coffee, donuts and pastries, to summer nights with an ice cream cone from The Brewster Scoop next door.

OVERVIEW OF THE OUTER CAPE: Eastham, Truro, Wellfleet and Provincetown

About Eastham

Gateway to the Cape Cod National Seashore is Eastham's Nauset Lighthouse. The Salt Pond Visitor's Center is the starting point of the National Seashore and contains information on Eastham's gorgeous walking trails. There are several excellent Bay and ocean beaches which have been popular for generations. An interesting fact of Eastham's history is that it was essentially one giant asparagus patch until the 1920's. Now, it is known for its delicious turnips. This is indicative of Eastham's laid-back, rural flavor, which makes it a good choice for those seeking a low-key vacation in a beautiful town completely without pretensions. Points of Interest: 1869 Schoolhouse Museum, National Seashore Park, Salt Pond Visitor Center, Fort Hill/Capt. Penniman House, Nauset Light, Coast Guard Station/Great Marsh Boardwalk, Swift-Daley House, Cape Cod Rail Trail.

About Truro

Truro's quiet, unpretentious simplicity is both charming and misleading--this is a town full of interesting people and unexpected events. Truro's wild natural beauty comes from the dramatic combination of sandy cliffs and prehistoric kettle holes which make its beaches unsurpassed. Home of Cape Cod's oldest lighthouse, Highland Light, that offers tours May 1 through Columbus Day 7 days a week from 10am to 5:30pm. This town has a year round population of only 1500, who enjoy year-round activities including the summer concerts on the town green, but a highlight is the annual Truro Treasures Weekend each September. The weekend is filled with fun for all--everything from entertainment, arts and crafts, food, an adult treasure hunt and auction. The weekend culminates with the annual Grape Stomp and Jazz Festival at Truro Vineyards. Truro has a number of summer homes in strikingly modern architecture not typical of the rest of the Cape. There are a small number of restaurants but Truro is close enough to Provincetown to enjoy its offerings. The National Seashore and Castle Hill Center for the Arts make Truro an attractive destination for those seeking natural beauty in a unique setting. Points of Interest: Highland Light (officially known as Cape Cod Light)--due to eroding cliffs this lighthouse has been moved to the neighboring Highland Golf Links. Truro Historical Museum, Pilgrim Heights Interpretive Shelter, Jenny Lind Tower.

About Wellfleet

Wellfleet is uniquely characterized by its geography, culture and people. Located 75 miles out into the Atlantic Ocean, its only 2 miles wide, with beautiful beaches on both the bay and Atlantic sides. Despite its narrow width, strangely enough, it's endowed with beautiful, clear spring-fed ponds, or kettle holes, which were created by glaciers several thousand years ago. Wellfleet Harbor is an actively changing panorama of fishing boats, yachts, trawlers, and, at low tide, flats of shellfish. Wellfleet has become the art center of Cape Cod, and boasts many galleries containing a wide variety of art and fine crafts. The Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary offers first-class nature trips, cruises, walks, and instruction; the Cape Cod National Seashore encompasses the entire ocean side of the town. Due to the activity of the Harbor, you're sure to spot some textbook "Cape Cod characters" around town, who make an interesting contrast with the town's upscale restaurants, and are a sure sign you've landed on the Lower Cape. Points of Interest: Marconi Station at National Seashore, Town Clock, Historical Society and Museum, Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, Samuel Rider House, Uncle Tim's bridge to Duck Creek conservation island off Commercial Street.

About Provincetown

No one forgets the first time they visit Provincetown. The narrow and vibrant streets of Provincetown offer a cosmopolitan mix of

people, restaurants and stores; the Harbor is bustling with fishing boats and whale watches; and the dunes and beaches beckon the adventurous with bike trails and romantic sunsets. The Pilgrims landed here first, and then left for Plymouth in search of fresh water. Later, "P-town", as it known today, was settled by early colonial settlers, and later, Portuguese immigrants, who came here in large numbers to work in the fishing industry. Still later, Provincetown became, and still is, an artist's colony. Many visitors to the Cape make a day trip to Provincetown to go on whale watch and to see the Pilgrim Monument; others show up after sunset for the nightlife. Day or night, Provincetown is a very popular destination for many different kinds of people. Points of Interest: Commercial Street, MacMillan Wharf, Provincetown Art Association & Museum, Pilgrim Monument & Provincetown Museum.

OVERVIEW OF MID-CAPE: Barnstable, Hyannis, Dennis and Yarmouth

About Barnstable & Hyannis

Barnstable is comprised of seven villages, of which Hyannis is the largest. Hyannis is also the largest town and economic center of Cape Cod. Hyannis Harbor is bustling with activity--ferries to the islands, fishing and sailing charters, and the Kennedy Monument. Main Street is home to shops, restaurants, and beautiful scenery. Hyannis Port, home to the Kennedy Compound, is a quiet & residential part of Hyannis. Craigville Beach on the Nantucket Sound, popular with younger people, is in neighboring Centerville. Hyannis is a good choice for those who want to be centrally located and enjoy a bit of everything the Cape has to offer in an upbeat, popular location.

Barnstable is bucolic in comparison to Hyannis. Historic inns & antique stores line Rte 6A in this north side town, which is also home to Sandy Neck Beach and Barnstable Harbor on the Cape Cod Bay. Despite its quaint appearance, Barnstable is close to the myriad of activities and conveniences offered by Hyannis. If you want to stay enjoy the calmer waters of bayside beaches, take a day trip to Nantucket, and play a round of kitschy miniature golf, Barnstable, with its proximity to Hyannis, is a good destination for you. Points of Interest in Barnstable and Hyannis: John F. Kennedy Museum, JFK Memorial, Baptist Meeting House, Cape Cod Scenic Railroad, Harbor Walk, Kennedy Compound area, Kalmus Park & Sound Beaches, ferries to the Islands.

About Dennis

Dennis offers easy accessibility to all of Cape Cod and has beaches on both the North and South sides. Historic Dennis along Rte. 6A offers antiques and many of Cape Cod's nicer gift shops. There is a diversity of dining in Dennis, with everything from family-style Ye Olde Seafood-type restaurants to upscale cuisine. Dennis also has some of the best public golf courses on the Cape, and several fishing charters in Sesuit Harbor. It's an all-around versatile town for both first-time and experienced Cape Cod vacationers. Points of Interest: The Cape Playhouse, Cape Museum of Fine Arts, Scargo Hill & Tower, Discovery Days Children's Museum, Hockum Rocks, Bay & Sound Beaches, Bass River, Cape Cod Rail Trail.

About Yarmouth

Yarmouth is convenient to Hyannis and the rest of Cape Cod and is a very popular destination for families. Like Dennis, it encompasses both the north and the south side of the Cape, and each section has its own flavor. Yarmouthport, along Rte, 6A on the north side, is where you will find historic homes, antique stores, and fine restaurants, as well as the beautiful Bass River with a boardwalk perfect for watching sunsets. Rte. 28, along the south side, is full of shopping, family fun and entertainment, such as mini-golf (complete with miniature lighthouses) and many family-style seafood restaurants (most with yummy, classic entrees like the fisherman's platter, lazy lobster, etc.) South Yarmouth also has its share of nightlife, and many beaches on the Nantucket Sound. Points of Interest: Capt. Bangs Hallet House, Botanic Trails, Winslow Crocker House, Bass Hole & Grey's Beach Boardwalk, Baxter Grist Mill, Judah Baker Windmill.

The Best Beaches of the Mid Cape

Sandy Neck on Sandy Neck Road in Barnstable is a relatively unpopulated 6-mile barrier beach, extending from the eastern edge of Sandwich to shelter Barnstable Harbor and features pretty little dunes seldom seen on the bayside. Hike in far enough (but avoid the nests of piping plovers) and you're sure to find a secluded spot.

Recommended Dining on the Mid Cape

- Spanky's Clam Shack and Seaside Saloon is located directly on the water on Hyannis Harbor adjacent to the Hy-Line Harbor Cruise Ships and close to all the stores, shops and activities on Main Street Hyannis. Visit Spanky's for lunch or dinner. 138 Ocean St. Hyannis (508-771-2770) <http://www.spankysclamshack.com/>
- Summer Shanty, Seasonal, waterfront restaurant with a patio, offering seafood & cocktails, plus regular live music. (508-394- 0400) <https://www.summershanty.com/>

Recommended Shopping on the Mid Cape

A trip along Route 6A will yield many art galleries, antique shops and other unique finds – there’s bound to be something for everyone. Park your car and walk up and down both sides of Main Street in Hyannis, from restaurants to candy shops to clothing boutiques and more.

OVERVIEW OF UPPER CAPE: Bourne, Mashpee, Sandwich, Falmouth and Woods Hole

About Bourne

Straddling the Cape Cod Canal, Bourne is the gateway to Cape Cod. It's very convenient to Plymouth and other southeast Massachusetts attractions, as well as being close to Falmouth and the ferry to Martha's Vineyard. The Cape Cod Canal is a beautiful place for bike riding, walking and boat watching. Bourne is also interesting historically--the Aptucxet Trading Post is the nation's oldest store. This town borders both Buzzards Bay and Cape Cod Bay, and is a good choice for those interested in beaches with calmer waters, bike riding, and/or a location with easy accessibility to a number of areas. Points of Interest: Cape Cod Canal, Vertical Railroad Bridge, Massachusetts Maritime Academy, Aptucxet Trading Post & Museum, Otis Air Force Base, Cape Cod Scenic Railroad.

About Mashpee

Mashpee (including New Seabury and Popponesset) has a unique history, firmly rooted in its Native American Wampanoag background. It has experienced steady but sustainable growth over the past few years. With Popponesset Marketplace, Vineyard and Nantucket Sound beaches, several parks and wildlife sanctuaries, Mashpee has something for everyone. Lowell Holly Reservation is a wonderful place to visit. Just make sure you allow a good hour to an hour and a half to fully enjoy the reservation. Points of Interest: Lowell Holly Reservation, Wampanoag Indian Museum, South Cape Beach State Park, Mashpee River Woodlands trails.

About Sandwich

Sandwich (inc. 1638) is Cape Cod's oldest, and one of its most picturesque towns. Located on the Upper Cape, it is convenient to attractions both on and off Cape. Its town center and surrounding areas contain numerous beautiful old homes, some of which have been converted to bed and breakfasts. Sandwich makes a perfect stay or stop for those interested in history, antiques (Historic Old Kings Highway, or Rte. 6A, begins here), architecture, or glassmaking (see attractions below), and/or those who prefer bayside, calmer beaches. Points of Interest: Bay beaches, Heritage Museums & Gardens, Sandwich Glass Museum, Hoxie House, Green Briar Nature Center, Shawme Pond.

About Falmouth

"The Quiet Corner of Cape Cod" Falmouth (including Woods Hole) is one of the Cape's oldest resort towns. The island of Martha's Vineyard is plainly visible from any harbor in Falmouth, being just a few miles across the Vineyard Sound. For this reason, the harbor is busy with ferry boats going back and forth. The historic village square is charming. Woods Hole, home of the world-famous Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, is a fun walk and has a slightly more bohemian flavor than the rest of Falmouth. Both these towns are a nice stay if you're interested in going to the Vineyard, beachgoing (there are many beaches in Falmouth), and prefer a more vibrant, busy place to stay. Points of Interest: Nobska Light, Ashumet Holly Reservation & Audubon Society, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, Aquarium of the National Marine Fisheries, Falmouth Historical Museum & Colonial Garden.

This tiny Cape town has a global reputation. The Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, best known for discovering the Titanic, is the largest independent oceanography lab in the country. Its neighbor, the Marine Biological Laboratory, brings more scientists, research and discoveries to this corner of the world. Given this knowledge, it's not surprising that nine Nobel prizewinners are buried in the yard of the Church of the Messiah. Yet, the town's scholarly background doesn't put a damper on fun. Visitors can pedal to Falmouth and back along the Shining Sea Bikeway, board a ferry to Martha's Vineyard or Nantucket from the town's picture-perfect harbor, hike out to the "Knob," one of the Cape's prettiest overlooks, or visit Nobska's historic lighthouse. The Aquarium of the National Marine Fisheries, which opened in 1871, is considered to be the country's oldest. Parking in Woods Hole is extremely limited any time of the year. Unless you plan to bike in from Falmouth along the Shining Sea Bikeway (approx. 5 miles one way), the WHOOSH Trolley Service, run by the Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority (800-352-7155), is your best bet. Service runs daily between the Falmouth Mall (off Route 28) and the Aquarium in Woods Hole. The frequency varies during the season; pickups are every 30-60 minutes. Everything in Woods Hole is within walking distance, so once you've arrived, you're all set.

Best Beaches on the Upper Cape:

Falmouth Heights – On a clear day, you can see Martha’s Vineyard from this popular beach in Falmouth’s most picturesque neighborhood. Grand turn-of-the-20th-century homes compete for the view with newer motels, and the beach fills up with families throughout the day. Off season, this beach is virtually deserted, perfect for arm-in-arm strolling. Keep in mind, if you choose a beach on the bayside, you can expect the water temperature to be very cold.

Dining recommendations on the Upper Cape:

- Landfall at 9 Luscombe Ave, Woods Hole (508) 548 1758 <http://www.landfallwoodshole.com/>
- Quarterdeck Restaurant at 164 Main Street in Falmouth (508) 548-9900 www.qdfalmouth.com
- Chart Room at 1 Shipyard Lane in Pocasset (508) 563-5350 www.chartroomcataumet.com
- Jim’s Clam Shack in Falmouth Harbor 227 Clinton Ave (508) 540-7758 sits on the edge of the harbor and serves up reasonably priced seafood with all the fixings. Order the fried clams and squeeze into the picnic tables beside the counter to await your feast. <https://jims-clam-shack.business.site/>

Shopping on the Upper Cape:

This area, especially Sandwich, is an antique-ers heaven! Mixed in among the gracious old homes, restaurants and tea shops, you will find uncommon antique shops featuring Sandwich glass, decorative furnishings for the home and garden and so much more.

OVERVIEW OF THE CAPE COD NATIONAL SEASHORE: Take Route 6, the Mid-Cape Highway, to Eastham (about 50 miles). Pick up a map at the Salt Pond Visitor Center in Eastham. There is another Visitor Center at Race Point. Both centers have ranger activities, maps, gift shops and restrooms. Seashore beaches are all off of Route 6 and are clearly marked. Additional beaches along this stretch are run by individual towns, and you must pay a fee.

No trip to Cape Cod would be complete without a visit to the Cape Cod National Seashore on the Outer Cape and an afternoon barefoot stroll along the "The Great Beach," where you see exactly why the Cape attracts artists and poets. On August 7, 1961, Pres. John F. Kennedy signed a bill designating 27,000 acres in the 40 miles from Chatham to Provincetown as the Cape Cod National Seashore, a new national park. Unusual in a national park, the Seashore includes 500 private residences, the owners of which lease land from the park service. Convincing residents that a National Seashore would be a good thing for Cape Cod was an arduous task back then, and Provincetown still grapples with Seashore officials over town land issues.

The Seashore also includes several historic sites that tell their part of the region's history. The Old Harbor Lifesaving Station, Race Point Beach (off Race Point Road), Provincetown was one of 13 lifesaving stations mandated by Congress in the late 19th century. This shingled shelter with a lookout tower was part of a network responsible for saving some 100,000 lives. Before the U.S. Lifesaving Service was founded in 1872 (it became part of the Coast Guard in 1915), shipwreck victims lucky enough to be washed ashore were still doomed unless they could find a "charity shed"--a hut supplied with firewood--maintained by the Massachusetts Humane Society. The six valiant "Surfmen" manning each lifesaving station took a more active approach, patrolling the beach at all hours, sending up flares at the first sign of a ship in distress, and rowing out into the surf to save all they could. Their old equipment is on view at this museum. Visit Thursday evenings, at 6 PM, in July and August, for a historical reenactment of the 1902 Beach Apparatus Drill. Listen for the keeper’s command, "Open the boat room doors!" and return to the days of shipwrecks and lifesaving along Cape Cod. Watch uniformed surfmen fire a line from a cannon to a "ship" in distress and haul the "victim" to shore. One hour. Takes place at Old Harbor Life-Saving Station, Race Point Beach.

The Marconi Wireless Station, on Marconi Park Site Rd. (off Route 6), South Wellfleet (tel. 508-771-2144), tells the story of the first international telegraphic communication. It's from this bleak spot that Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi sent, via a complex of 210-foot cable towers, the world's first wireless communiqué: "Cordial greetings from President Theodore [sic] Roosevelt to King Edward VII in Poldhu, Wales." It was also here in 1912 that news of the troubled Titanic first reached these shores. There's scarcely a trace left of this extraordinary feat of technology (the station was dismantled in 1920); still, the outdoor displays convey the leap of imagination that was required.

The Captain Edward Penniman House, at Fort Hill off Route 6 in Eastham, is a grandly ornate, multicolored 1868 Second Empire mansion maintained by the National Seashore. The house is open for tours afternoons in season, but the exterior far outshines the interior.

Five lighthouses, all automated now, dot the Seashore. Nauset Light in Eastham, with its cheerful red stripe (a "day mark"), was moved from Chatham in 1923. The lighthouse flashes an alternating red-and-white light every 10 seconds and can be seen for 23 miles; public tours are offered. In 1996, both Nauset Light and Highland Light were successfully moved back from precarious positions on the edge of dunes.

Highland Light, also known as Cape Cod Light, in Truro, is the site of the first light in this area, dating back to 1798. The present structure was built in 1857. Follow signs from Route 6 in North Truro, to the end of Highland Road. This lighthouse, set high on a cliff, was the first light seen by ships traveling from Europe. Now that the structure has been moved back from the eroding cliff, the National Seashore allows visitors to climb the winding staircase to the top of the lighthouse with a tour guide. Nearby is the Truro Historical Society in the 1907 Highland House. The museum has a fascinating collection of nautical items. There is admission to both the museum and lighthouse, free for children under 12. (Note: there's a 4-foot height requirement for climbing to the top of the lighthouse.) Both the lighthouse and the Highland House are open June to September daily 10am—4:30pm. Closed October--May.

Wood End Light on Long Point in Provincetown is an unusual square lighthouse built as a "twin" to Long Point Light in 1873. Hearty souls can hike first across the breakwater at the west end of Commercial Street and then about half a mile over soft sand to see this lighthouse. Its beacon is now powered by solar energy.

Long Point Light in Provincetown, established in 1827, is isolated at the very tip of Cape Cod. It's about an hour's walk from the breakwater, or a short boat ride from the center of town. Its fixed green light can be seen for 8 miles. This lighthouse was once the center of a thriving fishing community in the 1800s. Storms and erosion led the community to float their house across the bay to Provincetown's west end, where a couple of the houses--some of the oldest in town--are still standing.

Beaches--The Seashore's claim to fame is its spectacular beaches--in reality, one long beach--with dunes 50 to 150 feet high. This is the Atlantic Ocean, so the surf is rough (and cold), but a number of the beaches have lifeguards. A fee is charged. Most of the Seashore beaches have large parking lots, but you'll need to get there early (before 10AM) on busy summer weekends to claim a spot. If the beach you want to go to is full, try the one next door--most of the beaches are 5 to 10 miles apart. Don't forget your beach umbrella; the sun exposure here can get intense. Seashore beaches include:

Coast Guard Beach and Nauset Light Beach, off Ocean View Drive, Eastham. Connected to outlying parking lots by a free shuttle, these pristine National Seashore beaches have lifeguards and rest rooms.

Marconi Beach, off Marconi Beach Road in South Wellfleet. The bluffs are so high at this National Seashore property that the beach lays in shadows by late afternoon. There are rest rooms.

Head of the Meadow Beach, off Head of the Meadow Road, Truro. Among the more remote National Seashore beaches, this spot (equipped with rest rooms) is known for its excellent surf. Because beachgoers don't have to traverse steep dunes to get to the beach, Head of the Meadow is easier to access than the other beaches for the elderly or handicapped.

Race Point Beach and Herring Cove Beach, off Route 6, Provincetown. Race Point has rough surf; it's a good place to watch spectacular sunsets, and you might even spot a whale on its way to Stellwagen Bank, a breeding ground. Herring Cove, with much calmer waters, is also very popular.

The best bike path on Cape Cod is the Province Lands Trail, 5 swooping and invigorating miles at Race Point Beach. There is also a 2-mile, relatively flat bike path linking Head of the Meadow Beach to High Head.

The Cape Cod Rail Trail follows a former railroad right-of-way for 22 miles through the towns of Dennis, Harwich, Brewster, Orleans, Eastham and Wellfleet. Its paved surface, few hills, and well-marked automobile crossings make it ideal for cyclists. The trail has a wide unpaved shoulder on one side to accommodate horseback riding, walkers, and runners. There are many opportunities to get off the trail and visit a beach. Food and water are also readily available and public restrooms can be found at Nickerson State Park, Salt Pond Visitors Center at Cape Cod National Seashore and the National Seashore Headquarters.

Walking:

The Seashore also has a number of walking trails--all free, all picturesque, and all worth a trip. In Eastham, Fort Hill (off Route 6) has one of the best scenic views on Cape Cod as well as a popular boardwalk trail through a red maple swamp. Following the trail markers around Fort Hill, you'll pass "Indian Rock" (bearing the marks of untold generations who used it to sharpen their tools) and enjoy scenic vantage points overlooking the channel-carved marsh and out to sea. Keep an eye out for egrets and great blue herons. The Fort Hill Trail hooks up with the 1/2 mile Red Cedar Swamp Trail, offering boardwalk views of an ecology otherwise inaccessible.

The Nauset Marsh Trail is accessed from the Salt Pond Visitor Center on Route 6 in Eastham. Great Island on the bay side in Wellfleet is surely one of the finest places to have a picnic; you could spend the day hiking the trails. On Pamet Cranberry Bog Trail off North

Pamet Road in Truro, hikers pass the decrepit old cranberry-bog building (restoration is in the works) after a boardwalk romp past the bog itself. The Atlantic White Cedar Swamp Trail is located at the Marconi Station site. Small Swamp and Pilgrim Spring trails are found at Pilgrim Heights, and Beech Forest Trail is located at Race Point in Provincetown.

Cape Cod Wildlife:

The wetlands of the Cape and Islands are part of one of the country's greatest annual wildlife spectacles: the passage of thousands of migratory sea-, shore-, and songbirds in spring and fall. Warblers, herons, terns, and oystercatchers; shorebirds like avocets and the endangered piping plover; dozens of species of ducks; huge flocks of snow geese, owls, and hawks -- these are just a few of the birds that take a rest stop on the Cape as they pass along the Atlantic Flyway, which for some birds extends from winter homes in South America to breeding grounds in the vast, marshy tundra within the Arctic Circle. March, April, October, and November are all good months to see migrating waterfowl. August is the month to observe migrating shorebirds, with thousands stopping to feed at places like Monomoy Island, Nauset Marsh, and Sandwich's Great Marsh. Fewer shorebirds stop at the Cape in spring, but those that do will be decked out in the bird equivalent of a tux -- their breeding plumage. Songbirds pass through in May, in their brightest plumage and in full-throated song (both color and voice are muted in the fall migration). If you're birding on the Cape during the height of the summer season, you'll find plenty of herons, egrets, terns, and osprey wherever you find sand and wetlands.

The other great wildlife-watching opportunity this region is known for is whale-watching. The humpbacks, huge finbacks, and small minkes all cluster to feed around the Stellwagen Bank north of Provincetown from April all the way through November.

Monomoy Island is worth a special trip in late winter, when thousands of harbor seals take their version of a holiday in the sun, retreating to Monomoy from Maine and points north. At that time of year, they share the island with many thousands of wintering sea ducks.

WHALE WATCHING: Head out on to the ocean blue and you'll be treated to the awe-inspiring sight of 50-foot, 40-ton whales breaching and spouting just 25 miles off the Massachusetts coast. But don't take our word for it: the World Wildlife Fund named Massachusetts as one of the world's top ten whale watching spots. Whale watch cruises operate April to October.

Dolphin Fleet Whale Watch, MacMillan Wharf 307 Commercial Street, Provincetown: 508-240-3636 <http://whalewatch.com/>
Hyannis Whale Watcher Cruises, 269 Millway Road in Barnstable:508-362-6088 <http://www.whales.net/>

OVERVIEW OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD:

Edgartown is an elegant historic town. Called "Uncle Edgar" by old-timers, visitors can tour grand white Greek Revival ship captains' homes, complete with fanlights and widow's walks. Most of these privately owned homes (that's right, still in use today!) are clustered around North and South Water Streets, while downtown tourists will find modern boutiques, shops, galleries, and restaurants.

Though less of a showpiece than Edgartown, Vineyard Haven is the real "heart" of Martha's Vineyard. The commercial center of the island, Vineyard Haven is where most of the year round residents live and work. The harbor houses more wooden boats than any other harbor of its size in New England, and the Gannon and Benjamin Boatbuilders on Beach Road continues to build and rebuild wooden boats using the same historic methods that were made famous on Martha's Vineyard 200 years ago. Tourists can stop in and watch, for an authentic historic Martha's Vineyard experience.

The city of Oak Bluffs, on the eastern shore of Martha's Vineyard, began as a meeting place for the Wesleyans in 1835, as a campground. The yearly revival gained such popularity that tents soon became small cottages. Small cottages became fanciful, brilliantly painted homes, ornamented with gingerbread cutouts, cupolas, domes, spires, and turrets right out of a fairytale. These whimsical cottages are a vast change from the traditional white homes of Edgartown, and a must see for anyone visiting Martha's Vineyard.

Often called the "Athens of the Vineyard", West Tisbury hosts the historic New England Congregational Church, Town Hall, and Grange Halls. "Music Street", where many descendants of the island's 19th century whaling ship captains reside, was so named because many of these seafaring families used their profits to purchase pianos.

Chilmark is a true representation of New England farmland. Peaceful rolling hills and 200-year old farm houses outlined by ancient stone fences dot the landscape. Dozens of working farms exist in this up-island town, still run by descendants of the original European settlers. A ride down the picturesque North Road to Menemsha village and harbor will reward many with a familiar town - the movie Jaws was filmed here. Formerly a sparsely populated town, Chilmark has had to limit its building permits to 3 acre parcels

in order to control the booming population of off-islanders desiring to settle there. In doing so, they preserve the farmland that makes this region so beautiful.

Aquinnah was renamed from the former Gay's Head in 1997. This town is the last stanchion of the Wampanoag tribe - approximately 300 of the remaining 700 still in the tribal roles live in Aquinnah. The tribe also owns the brilliantly colored bluffs and Clay Cliffs of Aquinnah (which means "land under the hill". If you see nothing else of Martha's Vineyard, see the natural wonder that is the Cliffs of Aquinnah.

Best Beaches on Martha's Vineyard:

Aquinnah Beach – these landmark bluffs on the western extremity of Martha's Vineyard are threatened with erosion, so its no longer politically correct to engage in multi-colored mud baths as the hippies once did. Still, it's an incredibly scenic place to swim – come early to beat the crowds.

Recommended Dining on Martha's Vineyard:

- The Black Dog Café on State Rd in Vineyard Haven Phone: 508-696-8190 – trendy spot for breakfast, lunch or dinner. Even if you don't go to eat, you'll want to stop by for a t-shirt! www.theblackdog.com
- L'étoile in Edgartown, 22 North Water Street (508) 627-5187 – French cuisine for a special occasion
<http://www.lettoile.net/>

Recommended Shopping in Martha's Vineyard:

Edgartown – Though it's the dowdiest of Martha's Vineyard's towns, this ferry port boasts the best shops, from housewares to designer and contemporary clothing. You might want to save some spending money, though, for the multi-ethnic boutiques of Oak Bluffs for the pricey preppy redoubts of Edgartown.

GETTING THERE:

A trip to Woods Hole will bring you to The Steamship Authority. Steamship Authority offers ferry service to both Oak Bluffs and Vineyard Haven in Martha's Vineyard. The ports are approximately 3.5 miles apart. Passengers never need a reservation but we recommend arriving one hour prior to sailing time, as they sometimes have cutoff times on busy weekends and holidays. This is the only ferry that carries cars, you would need to make reservations far in advance to transport a vehicle. To reach the Steamship Authority parking, simply follow Route 495 South, follow 495 across the Bourne Bridge, follow Route 28 to Falmouth and Woods Hole and follow ferry signs. There are several lots, one located next to the terminal in Woods Hole, another just off Route 28 (Palmer Avenue), and the newest large capacity lot in Cataumet. For Reservations Call: 508-477-8600 www.steamshipauthority.com
Sail away to the storybook island of Martha's Vineyard aboard the Island Queen ... relax with the sea and sky and wind on a delightful 35-minute cruise across the sparkling waters of Vineyard Sound. The Island Queen is the only cruise ship sailing regularly from Falmouth Harbor to Oak Bluffs, centrally located, easy to get to ... and with no hassle for parking. Leave your car behind, secure in our spacious paved lot nearby. Bring your bicycle aboard to explore the island ... and cruise the fun way to Martha's Vineyard. The Island Queen sails from Falmouth Heights Road, Falmouth Harbor, which is just below the eastern end of Main Street. This ferry only carries passengers, bicycles and even some pets, but no vehicles. Call the main office at 508-548-4800 for more information. 75 Falmouth Heights Road, Falmouth MA www.islandqueen.com

GETTING AROUND:

The down-island towns of Vineyard Haven, Oak Bluffs, and Edgartown are fairly compact, and if your visit is planned in the heart of one of these small towns, you will be within walking distance of shopping, beaches, and attractions in town. Frequent shuttle buses can whisk you to the other down-island towns and beaches in 5 to 15 minutes. To explore the up-island towns, you will need to bike; it's possible to tour the entire island -- 60-some odd miles -- in 1 day. In season, you can also take the shuttle bus up-island. There are numerous group and private tour companies available to help you see the beauty of Martha's Vineyard. Tour buses are located at the Steamship Terminals and most other incoming ferries and depart on regularly scheduled times. Otherwise, you will have to take a cab. For those considering ferrying over their own vehicle, you will find that reservations for a vehicle would need to be made months in advance.

By Bicycle & Moped -- You shouldn't leave without exploring the Vineyard on two wheels, even if only for a couple of hours. There's a little of everything for cyclists, from paved paths to hilly country roads, and you don't have to be an expert rider to enjoy yourself. Plus, biking is a relatively hassle-free way to get around the island.

Mopeds are also a way to navigate Vineyard roads, but remember that some roads tend to be narrow and rough -- the number of accidents involving mopeds seems to rise every year, and many islanders are opposed to these vehicles. The renting of mopeds is

banned in Edgartown. You'll need a driver's license to rent a moped. If you rent one, be aware they are considered quite dangerous on the island's busy, narrow, winding and sandy roads. Also, there is a lot of negative feeling about mopeds from islanders.

Bike-, scooter-, and moped-rental shops are clustered throughout all three down-island towns.

By Car -- If you're coming to the Vineyard and you're going to stick to the down-island towns, it's best to leave your car at home, since traffic and parking on the island can be brutal in summer. Also, it's easy to take the shuttle buses from town to town, or you can simply bike your way around.

By Shuttle Bus & Trolley -- In season, shuttle buses certainly run often enough to make them a practical means of getting around. Two different types of shuttle bus make the rounds, and they provide the cheapest, quickest and easiest way to get around the island during the busy summer season. Connecting Vineyard Haven (across from the ferry terminal), Oak Bluffs (near the Civil War statue in Ocean Park), and Edgartown (Church St., near the Old Whaling Church), the Island Transport yellow school buses cost very little and the fee is based on your desired location. They run daily from April through October. From late June to early September, they run more frequently from 6am to midnight every 15 minutes or half-hour. Hours are reduced in spring and fall.

The Martha's Vineyard Regional Transit Authority operates shuttle buses daily from mid-May to mid-October (white buses with a purple COME RIDE WITH US logo) on about a dozen routes around the island. The Edgartown Downtown Shuttle and the South Beach buses circle throughout town or out to South Beach every 20 minutes in season. They also stop at the free parking lots just north of the town center -- this is a great way to avoid circling the streets in search of a vacant spot on busy weekends.

The Chappaquiddick Ferry runs the 5-minute trip from Memorial Wharf on Dock Street in Edgartown to Chappaquiddick Island from June to mid-October daily, every 5 minutes from 6:45am to midnight. Passengers, bikes, mopeds, dogs, and cars (three at a time) are all welcome.

VISITING NANTUCKET:

In his classic, *Moby Dick*, Herman Melville wrote, "Nantucket! Take out your map and look at it. See what a real corner of the world it occupies; how it stands there, away off shore . . ." More than 100 years later, this tiny island, 30 miles off the coast of Cape Cod, still counts its isolation as a defining characteristic. At only 3 1/2 by 14 miles in size, Nantucket is smaller and more insular than Martha's Vineyard. But charm-wise, Nantucket stands alone -- 21st-century luxury and amenities wrapped in an elegant 19th-century package. Originally a booming whaling port, Nantucket has been named a National Historic District and has architecturally changed little since the 17th century, as seaside cottages and old-fashioned lamps still line its streets.

At the harbor front, where the great whaling ships set out on their hazardous journeys to return years later - if at all - pleasure boats now find safe harbor in one of the finest docking facilities in the world.

Inland on this idyllic "elbow of sand," the wild moors open to the endless sky. Nearly 40 percent of Nantucket is protected conservation land. Several areas and habitats, natural groups of plants and animals, are rare to this region and even the world. Come to enjoy this natural beauty and protected land where the springtime blossom of daffodils and forsythia give way to summer's lush flowerings of roses and hydrangea, and, perhaps best of all, the rich tawny hues of autumn.

Walk the wide sandy beaches, as beautiful as any in the world. Swim in the still, sparkling waters of Nantucket Sound to the north, or brave the mighty Atlantic along the island's south shore. Let the pounding surf, and clean, salty air restore you. Try your hand at surfcasting for stripers and bluefish or charter a boat for deep-sea fishing. Catch a breeze on a sailboat or a windsurfer.

Take in the boutique shops, and explore the art galleries and museums. Celebrate Nantucket's cultural offerings year-round with theatrical performances, music, art, film, and literature. Sign on for a guided tour of the island or pick up a picnic lunch and rent a bike, a good way of discovering Nantucket for yourself.

Restaurants abound! Whether for a beach picnic, an informal meal, or gourmet fare in sophisticated surroundings, there is something for everyone. How about a clambake prepared to your order? Fresh Nantucket seafood, especially the Nantucket bay scallop, provides unforgettable dining.

Visit Nantucket any time of year. Although a summer destination for many people, an off-season island visit is a special treat. Autumn on Nantucket is glorious, as the gardens of late summer are still blooming and the sun-drenched days are warm enough for swimming right through September. Celebrate the Annual Christmas Stroll the first weekend in December as part of a month-long Nantucket Noel celebration when the air is crisp, the shopping unhurried, and the island is dressed for an old-fashioned Christmas. Then come celebrate in April when millions of daffodils herald the coming of spring.

Whether you are drawn to Nantucket for its historical integrity, natural beauty, cultural offerings, world-class dining or shopping, or

simply the relaxed atmosphere and island-style way of life, a day to this small island will be a part of your trip you will always remember.

Those traveling to Nantucket should take the Sagamore Bridge and drive down Route 6 until reaching exit 7. From there you can follow the signs to the Ferry Terminal in Hyannis.

Getting There

A trip to Hyannis will bring you to The Steamship Authority (from Main Street in Hyannis, take a left onto Pleasant Street and then left onto South Street. There are 3 parking lots, all of which are convenient to the terminal and charge a small fee). There is a passenger only fast ferry which makes the trip in one hour and a traditional ferry with a trip time of 1 hour and 50 minutes. To make ferry reservations, 508-477-8600 or www.steamshipauthority.com. If you desire to bring a vehicle to the island, reservations must be made far in advance. For a day visit, take advantage of the island transportation (buses, tours, etc) and leave your car in the lot. Hy-Line Cruises also offer a fast ferry and traditional ferry from Ocean Street in Hyannis. Follow the above directions and Ocean Street is off of South Street. Travel times are the same and they can be reached at 800-492-8082. www.hylinecruises.com

Getting Around

Nantucket is easily navigated on bike, moped, or foot, and also by shuttle bus or taxi. The NRTA (Nantucket shuttle buses) are inexpensive and an easy way to get around. The bus station is one or two blocks from the ferry and provides transportation throughout the island and to the beaches. There is plenty to see and do within walking distance of the ferry dock. Same goes for Nantucket. Nantucket is smaller, and there are tour buses directly opposite the ferry dock for a tour of the entire island - leaving plenty of time to stroll all about, do some shopping, enjoy a nice meal, before taking the ferry back. In Nantucket since there really is only one main town, you can take a long leisurely stroll of Nantucket Town, immediately upon arriving with no need of other transport.

By Bike & Moped -- Biking is the preferred mode of transportation. The island itself is relatively flat, and paved bike paths abound -- they'll get you from Nantucket Town to Siasconset, Surfside, and Madaket. There are also many unpaved back roads to explore, which make mountain bikes a wise choice when pedaling around Nantucket.

By Shuttle Bus -- From June through September, inexpensive shuttle buses, with bike racks and accessibility for those with disabilities, make a loop through Nantucket Town and to a few outlying spots; for routes and stops, contact the Nantucket Regional Transit Authority (tel. 508-228-7025) or pick up a map and schedule at the visitor center on Federal Street or the chamber of commerce office on Main Street. The shuttle permits you to bring your clean, dry dog along, too. The cost is quite low, and exact change is required.

By Taxi -- You'll find taxis (many are vans that can accommodate large groups or those traveling with bikes) waiting at the airport and at all ferry ports. During the busy summer months, I recommend reserving a taxi in advance to avoid a long wait upon arrival. Rates are flat fees, based on one person riding before 1am, with surcharges for additional passengers, bikes, and dogs. Reliable cab companies on the island include All Point Taxi (tel. 508/228-5779) and Roger's Taxi (tel. 508/818-8294) .

Recommended beaches in Nantucket: Jetties Beach! Nantucket beaches have the best amenities of any beaches in the region, most have restrooms, showers, lifeguards and food concessions. For families and active types, Jetties Beach (just a half mile from the center of town) can't be beat. There are boat and windsurfing rentals, tennis courts, volleyball nets, a playground and great fishing (off the eponymous jetties). It's also scenic (those jetties again) with calm, warm water.

Recommended Dining on Nantucket:

Le Languedoc Bistro at 24 Broad Street in Nantucket (508)228-2552 <http://languedocbistro.com/>

American Seasons at 80 Centre Street in Nantucket (508) 228-7111 <http://www.americanseasons.com/>

Sayle's Seafood (508) 228-4599, take a 10 minute walk from town and arrive at 99 Washington Street Extension where you will find the fish store / clam shack. The owner is a local fisherman and everything is deliciously fresh.

<http://www.saylesseafood.com/>

Recommended Shopping on Nantucket:

Centre Street, known as "Petticoat Row" in whaling days still caters to feminine tastes, and the town's many esteemed antiques stores would never deign to present anything less than the genuine article.

Cape Cod Canal

An artificial waterway traversing the narrow neck of land that joins Cape Cod to mainland Massachusetts, part of the Atlantic Intercostals Waterway, the canal is roughly 17.4 miles (28 km) long (approximately 7 miles, or 11.3 km, of which are cut through land) and connects Cape Cod Bay in the north to Buzzards Bay in the south. The 540-foot (164.6 meter) width of the canal is spanned by the Cape Cod Canal Railroad Bridge and two highway bridges—the Bourne and the Sagamore. Traffic lights govern the approach of vessels over 65 feet (19.8 m), and are located at either end of the canal.

Cape Cod & The Islands Map

