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9 Best Things to Do in Cape Cod in the Fall

Ride Bikes on the Cape Cod Rail Trail

Fall is an ideal time to ride the Cape Cod Rail Trail, a 25-mile scenic bike path that winds through forests, marshes, and charming towns.

It runs parallel to the historic Old King's Highway Route 6A and passes through some of the most beautiful regions of Cape Cod. You'll even be able to access the beach right from the trail in several spots.

We didn't have time to ride the whole trail, so we opted for one of the most scenic stretches from Brewster to Orleans.

We rented e-bikes from the Rail Trail Bike Shop in Brewster and rode about 4 miles to the cute town of Orleans. We stopped for a bite to eat at the Hot Chocolate Sparrow, because the name alone intrigued us! The sandwiches and ice cream were delicious and it made for the perfect pit stop.

On the way back, we took a detour at Nickerson State Park where you'll find beautiful fall leaves. It was the perfect afternoon activity and one of our favorite things that we did in Cape Cod!

Take a Cranberry Bog Tour

Cape Cod is famous for its cranberry bogs that are native to the region. Fall is harvest season, so it's the best time to visit.

We booked a guided tour with [Cranberry Bog Tours](#) in Harwich to visit the largest cranberry bog in Cape Cod. It was fascinating to learn about the region's cranberry farming history and the lengthy process to grow and harvest cranberries.

The actual harvesting that you see on the Ocean Spray commercials only happens for a few days every year, and they don't hold tours on those days so that they can focus on harvesting.

Even though you won't see flooded bogs and floating cranberries on the tour, it was still interesting and we learned so much.

The farm is family-owned and the wife is the one that runs the tours. She is entertaining and engaging as you ride in a shuttle van around the 20-acre bog and learn everything you would ever want to know about growing and harvesting cranberries. It is a year-long process with different steps each month, I had no idea!

We learned that some of the oldest bogs in the country are found here on the cape. In fact, American Indians introduced cranberries to the pilgrims and they harvested berries from this region and served them at the first Thanksgiving in 1621.

We also learned that it costs about \$30k per acre to prepare, plant, and harvest the cranberries, and it takes 2-3 years for each plant to produce fruit!

If you're interested in booking a tour, you'll need to call and reserve your spot. Once you arrive, you'll pay cash for the tour, it was \$20 per person at the time of our visit. There is also a small cash-only shop where you can purchase cranberry products, such as jams and candles.

If you are looking for a more hands-on experience, [Benson's Pond](#) in Middleboro offers Berry Bog Adventures where you can don a pair of waders and step into a flooded cranberry bog and actually participate in the harvest!

Visit Nauset Lighthouse

Nauset Lighthouse is the most iconic lighthouse in Cape Cod. This historic lighthouse is also one of the most recognizable landmarks as it is featured on every bag of Cape Cod Kettle Cooked Potato Chips!

The first lighthouse towers were built here in 1838 but fell victim to erosion. In 1892, a trio of lighthouses named the "Three Sisters" was built here on the coast to mark the mid-point of the cape. They had to be moved further inland after the cliff continued to erode at a staggering rate of 3 feet per year.

In 1923, the current cast-iron Nauset Lighthouse was brought over from Chatham. The Three Sisters were moved about a quarter mile inland where you can still see them on display today just off Cable Road.

The lighthouses were run manually by a lighthouse keeper for 114 years until Nauset Lighthouse was automated in 1952. The keepers house is still on the property, but has since been turned into a private residence, so be respectful when visiting the lighthouse.

It is such a quintessential Cape Cod experience to visit this lighthouse and take a photo. I especially loved visiting in the fall with the moody ominous sky in the background!

Eat Brunch at Hangar B Eatery

Hangar B Eatery in Chatham is such a fun spot for brunch! This cozy eatery is known for its homemade biscuits, thick pancakes, and locally sourced coffee.

What makes it a truly unique experience is that it is located at the Chatham Municipal Airport where you can watch small planes taking off and landing while you enjoy a warm breakfast.

If you're looking for a quick bite to eat, we really liked the Corner Store in Chatham.

You'll find a small convenience store with a counter to order fresh sandwiches, salads, wraps, breakfast burritos, and even homemade whoopie pies! You can also pick up snacks and local goods to take on the road with you.

Explore Downtown Chatham

Downtown Chatham is a charming place to wander around. There are cute boutique shops where you can find unique Cape Cod-inspired gifts and souvenirs.

You'll also want to stop by the First Congregational Church in Chatham. Every fall, they transform the lawn into a giant pumpkin patch and it's a fun place to stop for a photo.

Head over to the Chatham Pier Fish Market to watch the fishing boats bringing in their daily catch. There are also seals lazing in the sun that are fun to watch. If you're hungry, stop by the kitchen and order a fresh lobster roll or delicious fish and chips to eat on the waterfront.

Take a scenic drive or walk along Shore Road near Chatham Bars Inn where you'll find the most historic stately homes on Cape Cod. In the fall, many of them are decorated with pumpkins and elaborate autumn decor.

Stay in a Cozy Cottage

To get the full Cape Cod experience, you need to stay in one of their charming cedar shingle houses! We stayed in this [cozy cottage](#) and it was the perfect home base for exploring Cape Cod.

It can sleep up to 8 people with 3 spacious bedrooms, perfect for families or a girls weekend. It has a big yard with a fire pit and outdoor seating. The location is great, within 1 mile of downtown Chatham.

The best part about visiting in the fall is that the cost of hotels and vacation rentals is

significantly cheaper than in the summer.

Here are a few more of the best places to stay in Cape Cod:

- [Chatham Bars Inn](#): A beautiful oceanfront hotel.
- [Wequassett Resort](#): A waterfront resort with a golf course.
- [Pelham House Resort](#): A charming resort with a private beach.

Take a Ferry to Nantucket

Nantucket is the perfect day trip from Cape Cod. The ferry ride from Hyannis Port to Nantucket is about an hour long and you'll be greeted with cobblestone streets, cozy cafes, historic homes, and beautiful quiet beaches without the summer crowds.

While in Nantucket, grab a bite to eat at Bartlett's Farm, walk the Sconset Bluff Trail, visit the Sankaty Head Lighthouse, browse the shops in downtown Nantucket, and enjoy the peaceful, post-summer atmosphere.

For more information and recommendations, see our guide [The Best Things to Do on a Day Trip to Nantucket Island](#).

Visit the Cape Cod National Seashore & Coast Guard Beach

The Cape Cod National Seashore was established in 1961 by JFK who has a home on the cape. It encompasses about 40 miles of beautiful coastline from Eastham to Provincetown and is dotted with historical and recreational sites.

It's interesting to note that the journey of the Mayflower took the ship right along this very coast!

There are countless beaches along the National Seashore, but Coast Guard Beach is one of the most scenic and is often listed as one of the top beaches in the US.

We loved visiting this beach in the fall. Although it's too cold to swim or lay out, you'll be treated with an empty beach, dramatic waves, crisp sea air, rolling dunes, and migrating birds making their way south.

I especially love the Coast Guard Building that is perched on a bluff above the beach. It is the epitome of Cape Cod charm and I wish I could move right in!

Take a Day Trip to Plymouth

Plymouth, Massachusetts, is one of the most historically significant towns in the United States. It is known as "America's Hometown" and is where the Pilgrims landed in 1620, making it the first permanent European settlement in New England.

It is located about 30 minutes inland from Cape Cod and is worth stopping by on your way to or from the cape.

Here, you can see Plymouth Rock, a symbol of the Pilgrims' landing. The rock itself is smaller than expected and a little anti-climatic but it holds important historical significance and is worth a quick stop.

You can also tour the Mayflower II, a full-scale replica of the original Mayflower ship. It's also smaller than I had expected and it's crazy to think that 132 people sailed on this ship for 66 days across the Atlantic from Plymouth, England to Cape Cod!

The Pilgrim Hall Museum is a great place to learn more about the history of Plymouth and the Mayflower. It was established in 1824 and is the oldest continuously operating public museum in the U.S. It houses artifacts from the Mayflower Pilgrims, including William Bradford's Bible and Myles Standish's sword.

It's also worth stopping by the Plimoth Patuxet Museum. This is a living history museum that recreates what life was like for both the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag people in the 1600s. You'll have a chance to walk through a 17th-century English village, meet costumed interpreters, and learn about the Wampanoag Homesite.

You can also walk up to Burial Hill, the final resting place of many early settlers, including Governor William Bradford.

For a unique experience, take a scenic harbor cruise aboard the [Pilgrim Belle](#), a classic paddlewheel boat. On the tour, you'll enjoy views of Plymouth Harbor while learning about its history.

Before you leave, take time to stroll along the Plymouth Waterfront and grab some fresh seafood and souvenirs. Wood's Seafood is known for its fresh lobster and clam chowder!

A Few More of the Best Things to Do in Cape Cod in the Fall

There is so much to do in Cape Cod, we were only there for 3 days and didn't have time to fit it all in! If you have time, here are some more recommended things to do in Cape Cod in the fall:

- **Brewster Flats:** Brewster Flats is the largest tidal flats in North America. At low tide, you can walk over a mile on the sandy flats, collecting shells and searching for sea creatures in the tidal pools.
- **Godfrey's Windmill:** Godfrey's Windmill is one of Cape Cod's hidden gems. This beautifully restored historic windmill dates back to 1797 and gives a glimpse into Cape Cod's colonial past. It is only open for tours in the summer, but it's still worth stopping by to grab a photo.

- **Lighthouse Beach & Chatham Lighthouse:** Lighthouse Beach in Chatham is one of the most scenic spots on the Cape, with soft sand, rolling dunes, and a working lighthouse. Chatham Lighthouse is one of the few lighthouses in the US that still operates 24 hours a day and has been guiding ships since 1808.
- **Atwood House & Museum:** For history lovers, the Atwood House & Museum in Chatham offers a fascinating look at Cape Cod's past. The museum is housed in an 18th-century home and features exhibits on local maritime history, antique furnishings, artifacts from the 18th and 19th centuries, and a stunning mural room showcasing the Cape's heritage.
- **Kennedy Legacy Trail:** For a mix of history and scenic walks, explore the Kennedy Legacy Trail in Hyannis. This [self-guided walking tour](#) takes you through sites important to the Kennedy family, including the John F. Kennedy Museum, St. Francis Xavier Church, and the Kennedy Memorial overlooking Lewis Bay.
- **Cape Cod Central Railroad:** Take a scenic train ride on the Cape Cod Central Railroad, which offers special fall foliage tours. The ride takes you through salt marshes, woodlands, and cranberry bogs, providing a unique way to see the autumn colors of Cape Cod.
- **Taylor Bray Farm:** Taylor Bray Farm is a historic working farm in Dennis. Each year, they host a fall festival with farm activities and fresh apple cider. The Revolutionary War-era farmhouse is open for tours seasonally as well.
- **Route 6A The Old King's Highway:** Historic Route 6A, also known as Old King's Highway, is one of the most scenic drives in New England. It winds through historic villages, past colonial homes, and centuries-old churches. In the fall, the trees lining the road burst into shades of orange, red, and gold. Stop at antique shops, art galleries, and cozy cafés along the way.
- **Red Maple Swamp Trail:** The Red Maple Swamp Trail is located in the Fort Hill area of the Cape Cod National Seashore. It is a beautiful boardwalk path that takes you through a vibrant red maple forest in the fall.
- **Art's Dune Tour:** Explore the windswept dunes of Provincetown with a [guided tour](#) that combines scenic beauty, history, and adventure!
- **Sandwich:** Sandwich is the oldest town on Cape Cod and was incorporated 1639! Stop by the Dexter Grist Mill (one of the oldest water mill sites in the US), and the Hoxie House which is one of the oldest houses on the cape. Pick some apples at Crow Farm, a 50 acre family farm founded in 1916. While in Sandwich, you also have to try an award winning sandwich at Café Chew!
- **Gray's Beach Boardwalk:** The Bass Hole Boardwalk at Gray's Beach is a .25 mile wooden boardwalk that stretches over a picturesque salt marsh with panoramic views. It is especially beautiful at golden hour and sunset.
- **Lighthouse Harbor Tour:** Take a [narrated boat tour](#) around Hyannis Harbor to see historic lighthouses and even catch a glimpse of the Kennedy Compound.
- **Atlantic White Cedar Swamp Trail:** The Atlantic White Cedar Swamp Trail in Wellfleet features a boardwalk path leading through a secluded swamp forest. The easy 1 mile trail also passes by a beach, a freshwater marsh, and a salt plain.

- **Kayaking:** Take a [kayak tour](#) along the Scorton Creek tidal flat located within the Great Marsh eco-system. The Swan River in Dennis is also a popular place to kayak through the marshes.
- **Scargo Tower:** This 30-foot tower was built in 1901 at the top of the tallest hill on the cape and offers panoramic views of Cape Cod.
- **Harwich Port:** This cute port town was named one of the "Happiest Seaside Villages in the US".
- **Eat Apple Cider Donuts:** Apple cider donuts are a quintessential New England Fall treat! Some of the best places to them are Captain Baker Donuts, Cape Cod Donuts, the Downyflake, or Micheal's Donuts at Falmouth Farmer's Market.

I hope this guide will help you discover the best things to do in Cape Cod in the fall!