



## How to Spend One Day on Nantucket Island, Massachusetts

### Take the Ferry From Hyannis Port

You can get to Nantucket by air or ferry from Cape Cod, Boston, New Bedford, Martha's Vineyard, and even New York City and New Jersey. The most affordable and easiest option is taking the ferry from Cape Cod.

When leaving Cape Cod, there are two main ferry options, the Steamship Authority and Hy-Line Cruises. Both offer a standard ferry (about 2 hours) and a high-speed ferry (approximately 1 hour). You can also leave from either Harwich or Hyannis Port.

We decided to go with the [Steamship Authority](#) High-Speed Ferry departing from Hyannis Port (click on the link for updated pricing and timetables). When you book your ticket, you'll need to choose the time for your return trip as well. I recommend choosing the last trip of the day so that you can make the most of your time on the island. Be sure to book tickets in advance, especially during the busy summer months.

I was nervous about getting seasick, but it was a smooth ride despite being windy outside. There is concession stand and restrooms on the ship.

We chose to depart from Hyannis Port because we're fascinated by the Kennedy family, and Hyannis Port has been the family's long-time home. You can visit the JFK Museum and stop by sites such as the St. Francis Xavier Church where the Kennedy family worshipped. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Maria Shriver were also married in this church.

When you are cruising out of the port, keep an eye out and you can catch a glimpse of the Kennedy Compound built on the shores of Hyannis Harbor.

### Explore Downtown Nantucket

As you pull into Nantucket Harbor, you'll be greeted by weathered gray shingle homes and bobbing sailboats. It's exactly what you imagine when you think of Nantucket!

### Downtown Shops

Nantucket has a picturesque downtown area just steps away from the ferry terminal. Spend the morning strolling the historic cobblestone streets and window shopping at all of the cute shops. We all bought matching sweatshirts at a local boutique, which is a must on a girls' trip!

### Whaling Museum

Nantucket has a rich history in whaling. Infact, Melville's classic book *Moby Dick* was set on the island of Nantucket and is based on the whaling ship *Essex* which was tragically lost at sea.

It's worth stopping by the Whaling Museum to dive (no pun intended) into the island's rich maritime history. The museum features exhibits on Nantucket's whaling past and even features the skeleton of a massive sperm whale.

### First Congregational Church Tower

For one of the best views of the island, climb to the top of the First Congregational Church tower. It is generally open daily from 10 am- 2 pm and a \$5 donation is greatly appreciated.

### Hadwen House

We also love just wandering through the streets admiring the preserved 18th and 19th-century homes. The Hadwen House is a historic Greek Revival mansion that was built in 1846 by a prominent silver retailer and whaling merchant. The home is open seasonally for tours, and is the only mansion on the island that is open to visitors. Admission to the mansion includes entry to the Whaling Museum as well.

### Oldest House (Jethro Coffin House)

The Jethro Coffin House was built in 1686 and is known as the oldest residential home in Nantucket that is still standing on its original site. The home was built as a wedding gift for the son and daughter of two of the oldest families in Nantucket. The house is located at 16 Sunset Hill Lane and is open to visitors free of charge during seasonal hours.

### Lunch at Bartlett's Farm

In order to make the most of our time on Nantucket, we rented a car through the Turo app. You can also take [The Wave](#) public transportation bus with stops all around the island. Uber is also an option, but the prices tend to be higher and the wait times longer.

After picking up our car, we drove a few miles to Bartlett's Farm and enjoyed an outdoor lunch.

Bartlett's Farm is the oldest and largest family-run farm on Nantucket. It has been in the Bartlett family for 7 generations since it was first settled in the early 1800s!

You'll find a grocery store with a deli offering sandwiches, soups, salads, and pastries. Everything is made fresh with local ingredients, and we loved everything we ordered.

After ordering from the counter, you can enjoy a picnic on the outdoor tables. The farm is only a half-mile from the beach and you can see the ocean in the distance.

You can also browse the farm store for locally made jams, cheeses, and baked goods to take with you on the road.

## Walk the Sconset Bluff Trail

After lunch, head to the Sconset Bluff Trail to stretch your legs.

In 1873, Nantucket resident William Flagg obtained the title to a large tract of land along the coast. He petitioned the town to allow this tract of land to only ever be used as a public footpath.

To this day, that tract of land is still used as a footpath and it has been a favorite walking trail for residents and visitors alike for over 150 years. This scenic coastal trail once connected all the way to Sankaty Head Lighthouse, but much of the trail has been eroded. Today, the Sconset Bluff Trail runs for 1 mile along the eastern coast of Nantucket.

There isn't a designated parking lot, and the access points are a little tricky to find. There are 6 entrance/exit points along the trail. To reach the beginning of the trail on the south side, park at the Siconset Market then walk up Broadway and take a right on Front Street.

Follow Front Street until just before it curves into Broadway and you'll find a paved path on the right (just before the home on 27 Broadway) that will take you to the Sconset Bluff Trail.

If you look at the satellite view on your Google or Apple maps, you can see where the trail starts and ends.

The trail will take you along the ridge of the bluff overlooking the white sandy beach and the cobalt-blue Atlantic Ocean.

The path follows along the property line of some of the most beautiful homes on Nantucket, so you'll be able to admire the homes and the ocean views at the same time! It does feel like

you're trespassing, but the path is public. Just be respectful, keep your voices down, and stick to the path.

There are stairways leading down to the beach, but only access those that aren't marked as private.

The trail ends just after the home on 61 Baxter Road. You'll find a small public access trail leading to the street.

The path is one-way, so I recommend walking one direction along the bluff, then walking the other direction down the road so that you can admire the homes from the front.

The neighborhood is a gorgeous eclectic mix of sprawling estates, and cozy historic clapboard cottages dating back to the 1700s. We loved pulling up Zillow and seeing the astronomical prices of these homes. They say that Martha's Vineyard is the playground for celebrities, but Nantucket is where the real money is!

## Visit Sankaty Head Lighthouse

The striking red-and-white striped Sankaty Head Lighthouse is one of Nantucket's most iconic landmarks. There are 3 lighthouses on Nantucket Island and this is the most impressive.

The lighthouse was built in 1850 after a seaman wrote a letter to the *Boston Morning Post* petitioning for a lighthouse to be built on Sankaty Head. After surveying the area for 3 years, they observed that around 45,000 ships have passed through this area, so congress appropriated money for the construction of the lighthouse.

The lighthouse was in operation until around the 1980s and sat abandoned for years before being placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. It has since been restored and even relocated 405 feet further in from the coast to protect it from the eroding bluff.

It's definitely worth stopping and capturing a photo of this iconic lighthouse!

## Dinner in Town

Head back to the downtown area to return the car and grab dinner before catching the ferry back to Cape Cod.

Here are some of the best places to eat in Nantucket:

- **Sister Ship:** This cute restaurant is Instagram worthy and serves fresh seafood and Mediterranean dishes.
- **The Charlie Noble:** Grab a quick bite at this nautical-themed pub. Try the Lobster quesadillas, fish and chips, or oysters from the raw bar.

- **Or, The Whale:** The charming outdoor patio with twinkling lights creates a fun ambiance at this local spot. Try the Korean pork BBQ, duck carnitas, or tuna tostada.
- **The Nautilus:** This Tapas bar specializes in seafood. Try the meaty crab fried rice, shrimp toast, oyster tacos, or Peking duck.
- **Cisco Brewers:** This brewery is located about 4 miles from town, but it has a fun vibe with live music and a variety of food trucks.

For dessert, grab a scoop of ice cream in a waffle cone at The Juice Bar!

## A Few More Things to Do on Nantucket

If you have time and are looking for more things to do while visiting Nantucket, here are some more recommendations:

- **Rent bikes:** If you don't want to rent a car, one of the best ways to explore the town and surrounding area is by renting bikes. Young's Bike Shop is centrally located and we found it to be the most affordable.
- **Jetties Beach:** This beach is about one mile from downtown and is the closest beach to the ferry terminal. The waves are more calm here on the north shore, which makes it great for swimming.
- **Surfside Beach and Cisco Beach:** These popular beaches are both located on the south shore. They have great waves for surfing and a nice sandy beach to relax on.
- **Brant Point Lighthouse:** This lighthouse is located within walking distance of downtown. It has a large American flag painted on the side which is perfect for a photo!
- **Bike Tour:** Take a [guided bike tour](#) to see the main sites around Nantucket. If you would like to explore on your own, you can download a [self-guided biking or driving tour](#).

Conclusion:

Nantucket is one of the most charming places I've ever visited and it is worth taking a day trip! The island is small enough that you can see the main sites in one day. I don't think it's necessary to spend the night, unless you are seeking a relaxing beach vacation.

The best time to visit is from late spring to early fall as much of the island closes down during the winter months.

I hope this guide has helped you discover the best way to spend a day on Nantucket Island!