THINGS TO DO

10 Best Summer Road Trips in New England

Dreaming of a New England road trip? From back roads and small towns to coastal spots, these are the best summer road trips in New England.

Tracey Minkin • July 7, 2021 • Read Comments (41)

3.34 avg. rating (66% score) - 91 votes

Please note that businesses, attractions, and events throughout New England have been modified, closed, and/or canceled in response to COVID-19. Please check with individual businesses and organizations before making travel plans.

Dreaming about a New England road trip? This region was practically made for summer road trips. We've got great back roads, fascinating small towns, endless natural splendor, and the ability to hit several states in one day (if that's your thing). When the time is right, grab your sunglasses, buckle up, and check out these ten tremendous rambles that we think qualify as the best summer road trips in New England.

Get ready for a summer road trip! Here are the 10 Best Summer Road Trips in New England.
Flickr/MA Office of Tourism

10 Best Summer Road Trips in New England

Rangeley Lakes Scenic Byway
Maine

This New England road trip will have you going to go from Mexico to Madrid, Maine-style, on ME routes 17 and 4 as they traverse the pristine lakes and mountains of this wild section of northern New England. Don't miss the panorama at the Height of Land pullout, and keep an eye peeled the whole way for moose, bear, and bobcats. **Distance:** 50 miles.

Park Loop Road in Acadia National Park, Maine. | 10 Best Summer Road Trips in New England
Dreamstime

Mount Desert Island Loop
Acadia National Park, Maine

Make charming Bar Harbor your base, and take a relaxed circumnavigation of Acadia National Park via the Mount Desert Island Loop Road. This rugged, spectacular island is the second-largest in the New England. Bring a picnic, and make time for the Hulls Cove Visitors Center.

Topics

TRAVEL
FOOD
LIVING

Free Guides

Yankee Magazine's Best of New England: Outdoors Edition

Yankee Magazine's Ultimate Guide to Autumn in New England

Yankee Magazine's Ultimate New England Winter Guide

Yankee Magazine's Ultimate Holiday Guide

Best New England Vacations: Things to Do in Boston, Maine Vacations, Things to Do in New Hampshire, Things to Do in Rhode Island and More

Yankee Magazine's Ultimate New England Summer Guide

63 Reasons Why We Love the Cape & Islands

Best of New England in the Fall: Fall Foliage, Great Hikes, Apple Picking and More!

Best of New England Fall Travel: Best Places to See Foliage in New England, Best Fall Drives in New England, Things To Do In Maine, Things To Do in the Berkshires, Things To Do in Vermont, and More!

Best Apple Recipes: Easy Desserts with Apples, Best Apples for Apple Pie, Our Favorite Apple Turnover Recipe, and More!

Best of New England Seafood Recipes: How to Cook Scallops, How to Make Clam Chowder, Cooking Lobster Tails, Cod Fillet Recipes, Haddock Recipes and More.

Lost and Vintage Recipes: Breakfasts and Breads from the Editors of Yankee Magazine

Distance: 27 miles round-trip.

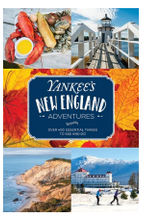
Brown's Lobster Pound in Seabrook, New Hampshire. | 10 Best Summer Road Trips in New England
Aimee Tucker

Coastal Crossing
New Hampshire

Here's a short, summer delight of a New England road trip—take in the length of the New Hampshire coastline, from Seabrook Beach to Portsmouth in a breezy half-day. It's only 18 miles, but full of great places to stop, including funky Hampton Beach, Fort Constitution, and charming New Castle, home of the elegant Wentworth by the Sea Hotel.
Distance: 18 miles.

Green Mountain Ribbon
Vermont

Vermont's Route 100 is a road-tripper's dream: long, straight, and flanked the entire way by the beautiful Green Mountains. While the road runs the entire north-south length of the state, a great section begins in Ludlow and ends in Waterbury. Must-stop: the charming villages of neighboring Warren and Waitsfield.
Distance: 90 miles.



Yankee's New England Adventures

Over 400 Essential Things to See and Do! *Yankee's New England Adventures* is your go-to source for in-depth travel information, with the same stunning photography and practical know-how *Yankee* brings to you every month.

BUY NOW

Alpine Drama
Vermont

With this New England road trip, you'll think you're in the Alps, as VT108 climbs steeply from Stowe toward Smugglers' Notch in the Green Mountains, tightening into a blacktop corkscrew past boulders and cliffs. Get ready to have your breath taken, and Instagram all those photos on the other side, over a meal in tiny Jeffersonville.
Distance: 18 miles.

The Bridge of Flowers can be found along the Mohawk Trail in Massachusetts. | 10 Best Summer Road Trips in New England
Heather Marcus

Mohawk Trail
Massachusetts

Famous at foliage time, but equally splendid in the summer, this historic scenic highway winds along northern Massachusetts via MA2, among the rolling hills of the Berkshires, combining art museums like Mass MoCA with classic roadside Americana (like the Shelburne Fall "Big Indian") and great vistas.
Distance: 63 miles.

Housatonic Valley
Connecticut

On this New England road trip, following Route 7 along the Housatonic River from New Milford to Canaan reveals the green beauty of Western Connecticut. There's a covered bridge and waterfalls.
Distance: 35 miles.

Popular Articles

- Prettiest Beaches in New England
- What Is Nantucket Red?
- 10 Best Summer Road Trips in New England
- Best Camping in New England | *Yankee* Favorites
- 25 Best New England Seafood Shacks

The Quiet Corner
Connecticut

Travel back in history for bucolic tranquility on quiet CT169 from Old Norwich to Woodstock, meandering past colonial homesteads and stone walls, farmers' fields, and quaint town greens.
Distance: 40 miles.

Narragansett, Rhode Island | 10 Best Summer Road Trips in New England
Flickr/Jed Scattergood

Shore of Dreams
Rhode Island

The perfect New England road trip for beach lovers, this route follows US 1 from RI's funky surf town of Narragansett along Narragansett Bay and the Atlantic Ocean to historic Westerly (and veranda cocktails at Ocean House). With beaches this good, this might take you a week.
Distance: 25 miles.

Kingly Cape Cod
Massachusetts

Winding, historic, green and dotted with extraordinary vistas out to Cape Cod Bay, this glorious trip along MA6A, or the Old King's Highway, is a showcase of New England village life from Sandwich to Orleans. Plus, great book shopping and antiquing.
Distance: 34 miles.

Have a great idea for a New England road trip? Share your best summer road trips in New England picks below!

This post was first published in 2014 and has been updated.

SEE MORE:
10 Prettiest Coastal Towns in New England
The 25 Best Beach Towns in New England
10 Best Seaside Inns in New England

Related Articles

New England Castles | Where to Find Them

The Most Beautiful Cemeteries in New England

Notable New England Film Locations

Tags

acadia, acadia national, acadia national park, acadia national park maine, bar harbor, beach, berkshires, bridge of flowers, cape cod, connecticut, fall, farmers, foliage, hampton beach, historic, History, Home, Instagram, lobster, maine, mass moca, massachusetts, mohawk trail, mount desert, mount desert island, mountains, narragansett, narragansett bay, new england, new england road trip, new hampshire, new hampshire coastline, park, park loop road, Portsmouth, rhode island, road trips, route 100, shopping, smugglers notch, stowe, summer, the berkshires, the green mountains, the new england, vermont, wentworth by the sea, woodstock.

Comments

Cathy C. July 7, 2021
Been to about all of these places when I was younger, great memory's.
Reply

Aaron B. July 7, 2021
I must be confused but I didn't see any actual descriptions of the routes of each road trip?
Reply

Reader L. July 7, 2021
How could you not mention Ocean Drive in Newport, RI?
Brenda, Westerly RI
Reply

Gary B. May 12, 2021
Quite a few good road trips mentioned here, but some are far too busy. Several of my favourites aren't listed either and I'm not sharing them so that they'll remain so.
Reply

Toby G. August 8, 2020
The Big Indian statue is in Charlemont, not Shelburne Falls.
Reply

Maryanne L. May 25, 2021
The correct name of the Native American statue is "Hail to the Sunrise."
Maryanne
Reply

Reader L. August 4, 2020
I love VT but make a road trip that takes you through Franconia Notch and Crawford Notch and then throw in Kancamagus .
Reply

Karen S. August 25, 2020
Thank you. They should get their facts straight.
Reply

Karen S. August 25, 2020
This reply should be under the Big Indian statue. Sorry about that.
Reply

Reader L. August 4, 2020
How do you not include the Kanc ?
Reply

Harvey L. September 13, 2019
I am from North Carolina. we want to travel To New England this Sept. Can you send me some good info on a road trip coming from NC
Reply

Reader L. April 23, 2019
My husband and I have done a great road trip to the Warwick/Providence area. We started at Tilted Barn and then Proclomation Brewing and then went to Providence. We went to Long Live Beerworks, the Terrace Lookout and grabbed lunch. Then we went to Warwick and spent some time at the beach before making our way to Chelo's on the Water for dinner and drinks by the fire!
Reply

Frank Almeida I. August 18, 2020
That's awesome glad you enjoyed the view from prospect terrace and chelos on the water
Reply

Loralin P. September 19, 2018
I totally agree with (Biplab) , I was at Brenton Woods with my family and my Dtr. in law was not able to ski that day so she said "lets do the tree top canopy zip line tour" first thought was ? 3 hours, maybe! Next thought was just do it. We did and it was awesome . Glad I did it while I'm young enough 71. Next adventure was a 4 day trip to Alaska from Boston, another ? but it was a blast with 2 co-workers only had that amt. of time. I fell in love with Alaska and will go back in a heartbeat. So just do it or just maybe you never will.
Reply

Biplab P. August 27, 2018
Thanks for sharing this. Your tips are very helpful. I am a travel freak and travel a lot. Next year Alaska is on my card.Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow mindedness., and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Next year I definitely want to explore Albany.
People often have a theme that they base their worldly travels on, but how about a mental mantra for your travel? Out of a cheerleading event that consisted of our family shouting supportive words at our daughter who was attempting to kill a rather monstrous spider that the rest of us were too chicken to get close to, came this great quote, "If you don't think, and you just do….then it's done!"
This quote came back to haunt me when on vacation in Seattle. I thought it would be a great idea to take the kids on the Seattle Great Wheel, the ferris wheel overlooking the ocean, but as we approached it, I realized how high it went and immediately panicked! Just as I had decided to put the kids on it on their own, my daughter says, "Come on dad…If you don't think, and you just do….then it's done!" What could I do at that point?! She was telling me to stop thinking and creating more fear about the situation and just get on the thing!
"If you don't think, and you just do, then it's done!" We all now keep this quote in our back pocket, ready to whip out at any time to push one of us forward into an adventure we know they won't regret. No hesitations, don't allow any time for fear to set in, and be prepared for your kids to turn your life advice back on you
Reply

Audrey T. May 15, 2021
What a great mantra
Reply

AMY G. May 19, 2018
Growing up in Maine, and going to college in RI, we would take so many of the beautiful drives for granted. I loved going from Bristol, RI to Newport, and working our way to Watch Hill, RI. Loved the carousel on the beach, and the beautiful summer homes. Wonderful memories.
Reply

Brian N. May 17, 2018
Living on Cape Cod, I agree that the Old Kings Highway, Route 6A, is fantastic. The houses along this route are some of the oldest in the northeast, since a number of the early Plymouth Colony moved south to the Cape for more room. It can be busy during summer, of course. A less known and less traveled part of Cape Cod include the coastal roads on the western shore of the Cape along Buzzards Bay between the Bourne Bridge and Woods Hole. I do not mean Route 28 between the bridge in Falmouth; the local roads closer to the Buzzards Bay shoreline. Much less traveled with quiet villages reminding people more of what Cape Cod was like fifty years or more ago. The reward? Woods Hole, the village where fishing village meets college town. So many people blow by Woods Hole to take the ferry to Martha's Vineyard. Not a bad choice at all, but an hour or so strolling around Woods Hole is very rewarding. Also, close by, is Nobska Point Light, one of the few publicly accessible lighthouses on Cape Cod.
Reply

michael May 17, 2018
Favorite area to get lost in is that 4 town coastal borderland that takes in Westport&Dartmouth Ma plus Tiverton & Little Compton RI....another world,sloightly unreal- like a dream.....
Reply

> Aleric May 19, 2018
> I totally agree! Pay attention to the stone walls along the roads. In its uni1ue way, it is one of the most beautiful sections of the Unites States. For an interesting sideline, don't miss the gravesite of the first colonial girl born in the Northeast, at Little Compton center .
> Reply

Betty March 11, 2017
Driving the winding, stone-walled road (lots of granite) through the beautifully wooded little town of Mason, just over the border from Massachusetts, you'll be pleasantly surprised to come across the home of Uncle Sam. Yes, he was a real person! Read the true history of this young man ...fascinating. Would love to see an article in Yankee Magazine about Sam Wilson, his family and his home in Mason. My grandmother was born -and later married- in the house next door, which Sam's nephew built.
Reply

Neal May 4, 2016
I lived on Rt 169 in Woodstock CT—Had an old 200 year old farm house–all summer and fall people would stop and take pictures–especially in the fall when my maple trees turned colors.
Reply

Bill April 13, 2016
I think the Writer may have confused Vermont's Route 100 with I91 and I85. If you took the parts of Route 100 that are straight and level, you could do it on roller skates in about three minutes.
If you choose this very beautiful route, plan on making frequent stops. The driver will be very busy driving.
See for yourself.
https://youtu.be/IS2at-yx8cQ
Reply

Pat July 28, 2015
I am with Larz and Edwin!
Reply

Carolyn May 24, 2015
For Cape Cod, the scenic highway there is called the Old King's Highway, not the King's Old Highway.
Reply

danielle May 13, 2015
Wow, you East Coasters are an angry bunch. This young girl was just doing her job, Back off a little.
Reply

> Lisa G. August 4, 2016
> I don't believe any of the commenters are being harsh. The comments I have seen are in response to the last sentence of the article:
> "What are your picks for the best summer road trips in New England?"
> All other comments were directed as choices made lead Yankee Magazine editors. New Englanders are wonderful people, who like to read about & share experiences with other people.
> Reply

Edwin May 9, 2015
I have to agree with several of the comments. There are far better routes out there, just get off the beaten path and you'll fine so much more. Larz had a comment that is so true, bring back the old Yankee format. Human stories, real people. The one on the farmers losing their land, hard working, and old traditions was one of the most outstanding, exceptional issue I've ever read. Get those authors/reporters back!
Reply

Linda May 7, 2015
Personally I think that this is a great presentation of some terrific New England scenic road trips (especially as I live along Route 169 in Canterbury, Connecticut and get to enjoy some of that scenery every time I make the drive from home to work in Norwich. Not so great in the winter but absolutely a glorious drive in fall and spring!
As for the Kanc – yes, it's an absolutely beautiful route but it's more of a "scenic drive" and not necessarily a "road trip" in and of itself and I can fully understand why it was left off of this list. It was nice to see a few lesser known routes highlighted for a change. Kudos!
Reply

Russ May 5, 2015
How could you leave out the Kancamagus Highway, NH Rte 112, through the White Mountains??
Reply

Debra M. October 4, 2017
Agree! Me and mine will drive the 4.5 hours to get there just to spend one day on it, have lunch, then drive back home. Its breathtaking.
Reply

Donna May 4, 2015
I live in Lincoln NH and I can't believe they aren't on the list either nor the ride to Sugar Hill.
Reply

Kristie May 13, 2021
As I read comments and said..I love the loop that includes driving through Crawford Notch in the Whites, I love route 100 through Vermont, but have you ever drove the back roads through Sugar Hill, NH? So beautiful and I live 10 hrs away in WNY
Reply

CHESTER August 8, 2014
Boring.
Reply

C A. August 1, 2014
Agree with the other posters. This is not a list of the "10 Best Summer Road Trips in New England", but, if you were to take the word "Best" out of there the title suits it fine.
YT, please go back to in depth quality research.
Reply

Coralie T. July 31, 2014
I feel you only touched the tip of the iceberg in not going any further north than Narragansett, RI and then continuing over the Jamestown and Newport Bridges, onto the cape and all the way to Provincetown. Take the ferry to the Islands. And yes I agree about the characters along the way but this is summertime and people are out on the highways, perhaps Route a1a, god I love that road. Not to digress, NE has so much to offer.
Reply

Chris July 30, 2014
That is driving that route from the east or the west, great both ways, eh-yah.
Reply

Chris July 30, 2014
While your choices are good, born and bred in New England, from the east or west my favorite is the Kancamagus Highway, NH Rte 112, through the White Mountains of New Hampshire with it's White Birches and views of Mount Chocorua (also great views of the mountain from NH Rte 16) on through to Conway, NH and Fryeberg, Maine, through Bridgton and the lakes then up to Ocean Point and Booth Bay, Maine.
Reply

Larz July 29, 2014
Bring back the old Yankee concept — really good stories about quaint New England characters. I've had enough of the "tour guide' concept. Your biggest competitor? My collection of 40 years of old Yankee magazines. I can always find a good story there.
Reply

Nathan July 29, 2014
As a former NH native, I feel it's poorly represented by only an 18 mile stretch. And, arguably, the Kancamagus Scenic Byway and White Mountain Trail rival the Coastal Crossing in both its history and scenic vistas.
Reply

Lisa G. August 4, 2016
Many roads & byways in the White Mountains far surpass some of these choices. To enjoy NH coastline, start just north of Hampton Beach & head up.
Reply

Leave a Comment

Logged in as Fotoula Pantazopoulos. Log out »

Comment

SUBMIT COMMENT

Yankee Publishing, Inc.
An Employee-Owned Company
PO Box 520
Dublin, NH 03444
(800) 288-4284

© 2022 Yankee Publishing, Inc., An Employee-Owned Company, all rights reserved.

EMPLOYEE-OWNED ®
EO
CERTIFIED

NH Magazine

NH Business

Yankee Custo

Marketing

Our Partners

New Engl
Inns &
SIN

Review

om

land
Resorts
NCE 1907