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10 beaches you have to visit on a sunny day in New England

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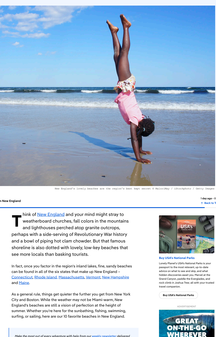

THE TRADITIONAL SANDY BEACHES AND THE FAULTS NEAR NEW BEDFORD'S BELLEVILLE STRUGGLEPOINT. | ANTHONY CRICKMAY

10 beaches you have to visit on a sunny day in New England

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Travel to the heart of New England and your mind might stray to weatherboard churches, fall colors in the mountains and lighthouses perched atop granite outcrops, perhaps with a side-serving of Revolutionary War history and a bowl of clam chowder. But that famous shoreline is also dotted with lovely, low-key beaches that see more locals than basking tourists.

In fact, once you factor in the region's inland lakes, fine, sandy beaches can be found in all of the states that make up New England: Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine.

As a general rule, things get quieter the further you get from New York City and Boston. While the weather may not be Maui, some New England's beaches are still a vision of perfection at the height of summer. Whether you're here for the sunbathing, fishing, swimming, surfing, or sailing, here are our 10 favorite beaches in New England.

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SAND BEACH, ACADIA NATIONAL PARK, MAINE | ANDREA SMITH

Sand Beach, Acadia National Park, Maine

Best for an extra beach day

With 343m of sand sprinkled between two pine-topped headlands, aptly named Sand Beach is one of the most popular spots on Maine's Mount Desert Island. It draws crowds of beachgoers on warm summer days, but it's a worthwhile stop at almost any time of year.

The beach is located in Newport Cove between granite mountains and rocky shores on the east side of Acadia National Park, the only national park in the whole of New England. One of the beach's big draws is its soft, pebble-white sand, comprised of tiny shell fragments ground to powder by the pounding surf.

There are many hiking trails around this pretty crescent of sand, including a trail that begins next to the beach and follows a loop around the perimeter of the Great Head headland. Those tackling the trail will be treated to gorgeous views of the beach below – it's a great way to add some exercise to a day on the sand.

Bradley Point Park and Beach, West Haven, Connecticut

Best beach for picnicking

Located in the city of West Haven in New Haven county, historic Bradley Point Park is where treading British troops landed in 1779 but today, it's better known for its wonderful, family-friendly beach. There are permanent posts for improvisedly volleyball games on the sandy shore, and a pier that's great for fishing, crabbing and taking in the sun. Adding to the package, the shoreline is located just minutes from downtown business and entertainment district.

Bradley Point Park is known as one of the best spots to picnic in Connecticut, with a pavilion and picnic tables overlooking the water just over the way. To help you work up an appetite, bicycle trails and a 0.5 mile walkway link Bradley with Morse Beach and Sandy Point to the northeast, with views of the Long Island Sound always en route.

SANDY NECK BEACH IS A GREAT SPOT TO SPOT SEALS | CAPE COD & THE BEACHES | ANDREA SMITH

Sandy Neck Beach, Cape Cod, Massachusetts

Best beach for campers

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Cape Cod is home to many fabulous beaches, and Sandy Neck Beach in Barnstable is one of its true stars. It extends for 6.5 miles along Cape Cod's Atlantic coastline and is backed by a wonderful salt marsh and marshes. Sandy Neck is a popular destination for all sorts of recreational activities, including brisk summer swimming, year-round hiking and saltwater fishing.

The dunes reach heights of 60ft, and they provide a habitat for red foxes, shorebirds and wildflowers. As an added plus, the beach is part of Sandy Neck Beach Park and there's plenty of room for camping, with dedicated sites catering to campers in tents and RVs. There is plenty to see on foot, as hiking trails run inland over the dunes to a path skirting the salt marsh from four points along the beach.

Silver Sands State Park, Gold Coast, Connecticut

Best beach for tortoise

The beach at Silver Sands State Park in Milford is a top stop for nature-lovers and bird watchers, accessible via a long boardwalk that stretches across the marshes and tidal flats of Silver Sands Bay. It's a wonderful spot and simple to sandpiper, the squelching mud-strip is also a popular spot for sunbathing and water activities, with dozens of cairns piled up along the beach. There's also an all-weather boardwalk flanking the beach for easy strolling.

A 'tombolo' or sandbar emerges from the water twice daily with the tides, connecting the beach to nearby Charles Island, situated about half a mile from the mainland. Beware of the tides if you make the trip: crossing to the island is not permitted from May 1 through September 9 to protect the nesting seabird population.

PLENTY OF SPACE ALONG OGUNQUIT BEACH, YORK COUNTY, MAINE | ANDREA SMITH

Ogunquit Beach, York County, Maine

Best beach for water sports

A jewel on a sublime stretch of coastline, Ogunquit Beach takes over three miles of the York County seafront, with gleaming white sand and a backdrop of pine trees and rocky headlands. Nicknamed 'the beach', it's family-friendly resort town with a thriving arts and LGBTQ+ scene. Named by the Abenaki people, Ogunquit means 'the beautiful place by the sea' and its scenery has long been an inspiration for artists from all backgrounds.

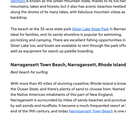
The warm beach vibe waters make the beach an idyllic setting for sunbathers, swimmers, beachcombers and bodysurfers, and the coast here is known for deep sea fishing, whale watching, sailing and sea kayaking. The beach fronts Ogunquit Bay to the south and the warmer waters of the Atlantic Ocean to the north and east. Ogunquit Beach has you have a choice of swimming locations. Footbridge Beach lies north to the north, is actually the northern extension of Ogunquit Beach and it offers a quieter alternative to the popular main beach.

Katama Beach, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts

Best beach for young people

Katama Beach, also known as South Beach, is located on the south shore of Martha's Vineyard. Stretching for 3.5 miles and backed by dunes in a natural state, this barrier island beach is one of the most popular beaches in the area, with three sweet miles of sand. The rugged surf on the Atlantic side of the island will please surfers, but many families and families prefer the protected, wave-free salt ponds on the island shore.

Flying kites and playing beach games are popular ways to pass time on the beach, which is popular with a younger crowd and is kept famously clean by beachgoers. There's plenty of free public parking around the beach, and if you're looking for a place to stay near the beach in Edgartown, if you fancy a partner to cozy inns, chef-driven restaurants and local farms shops.



HAMPTON BEACH IS A GREAT SPOT FOR SPECTATORS IN THE SUMMER | ANDREA SMITH

Hampton Beach, Hampton, New Hampshire

Best beach for children

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New Hampshire only has 13 miles of coastline but it squeezes in some enticing beaches, and Hampton Beach is the biggest and most popular of the lot. Hampton Beach boasts a wide range of amusements, stores and restaurants, and sunny days fill the sandy beach with families and fun. There's also an impressive fenced beach playground for children, complete with slides, climbers and swings.

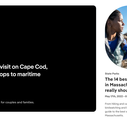
Prime season at the beach runs from Memorial Day to Labor Day, with live music, public fireworks displays and special events that draw plenty of locals and visitors to the beach town. Highlights include the annual sand sculpting competition in June, which features master sand-sculpting artists from around the world.

Echo Lake Beach, Grafton County, New Hampshire

Best beach for enjoying the scenery

Gorgeous Echo Lake Beach is a top pick among New England's many lake beaches. Located in Franconia Notch State Park in the heart of the White Mountain National Forest, it's a great place to pass an afternoon swimming, fishing or canoeing in crystal-clear waters, which you can enjoy at the Lodge Inside Facility. There's an entry fee for visitors, but it's worth it for the lovely setting.

Photography fans will be in their element, as the beach offers spectacular views of the Franconia Ridge and Cannon Mountain and the natural scenery makes for beautiful pictures. There's plenty to do and see in the park for those looking beyond the beach, including the Old Man of the Mountain Museum, which pays tribute to the famous rock formation which collapsed in 2003 but remains the state's beloved symbol.



SILVER LAKE STATE PARK, BARNARD, VERMONT | ANDREA SMITH

Silver Lake State Park, Barnard, Vermont

Best beach for fishing

Vermont is known as the Green Mountain State, thanks to its full hand of mountains, lakes and forests, but it also has scenic beaches nestled among the forests of its many lakes, with fabulous mountain vistas as a backdrop.

The beach at the 35-acre state park Silver Lake State Park in Barnard is ideal for families, and its sandy shoreline is popular for swimming, picnicking and camping. There are excellent fishing opportunities in Silver Lake too, and boats are available to rent through the park office, as well as equipment for stand-up paddle boarding.

Narragansett Town Beach, Narragansett, Rhode Island

Best beach for surfing

With more than 40 miles of stunning coastline, Rhode Island is known as the Ocean State, and there's plenty of sand to choose from. Named after the Narragansett Indians who lived in the area, the town of Narragansett is surrounded by miles of sandy beaches and punctuated by salt ponds and mudflats. It became a much-frequented resort at the end of the 19th century, and today Narragansett Town Beach is one of the most popular surf beaches in New England.

The mile-long stretch of beach tends to get busy because it's an easy walk from Narragansett Pier. It's popular with surfers thanks to its soft, curling waves that can get tall but tend to be quite spaced out – ideal for people who are new to the sport. For non-surfers, the beach features lifeguards and a full-time surf school and it's a great location for walking, bird-watching and fishing.

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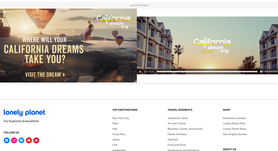

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