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NEW ENGLAND

10 Best Things to Do in The Spring in New England

When flowers bloom and warm breezes flow, there's no shortage of fun ways to celebrate. Here's our curated list of all the best things to do in New England in the spring.

Katherine Keenan · February 15, 2023 · Add Comment

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Springtime often feels like a prize for surviving the months of gray. One unpredictable, magical day, color begins to speckle flower beds. Smoke unfurls from the rooftops of sugaring shacks, sap flows like water. Windows crack open and we shake out the dust of the colder months, wipe down our bicycles, and make lists for a gardening supply run. Springtime events and festivals coax people out of their hibernation all across the region. The birds return. And with all of this comes celebration: we made it through the winter.

The Bridge of Flowers in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, one of our favorite places to visit in every spring once the flowers begin to bloom.
Heather Marcus

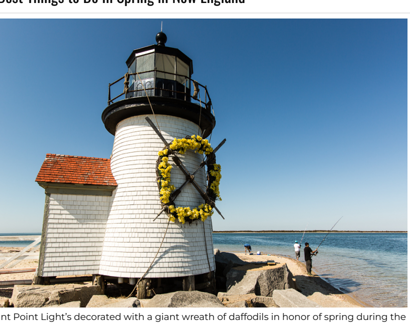
Meanwhile, long stretches of sand along the coastline remain sparsely dotted with dog walkers and springtime surfers, and paid parking still seems far away. Ski slopes still hold potential in the northern reaches of the region. Summertime crowds seem far away and reservations abound at the restaurants and hotels of New England's most bucket-list-worthy destinations.

For all these reasons, spring is an excellent time of year to explore New England. Whether you're planning a short visit or a year-round residency, be sure to gather some inspiration from our list of the best things to do in spring in New England before you hit the road.

What is the weather like in the spring in New England?

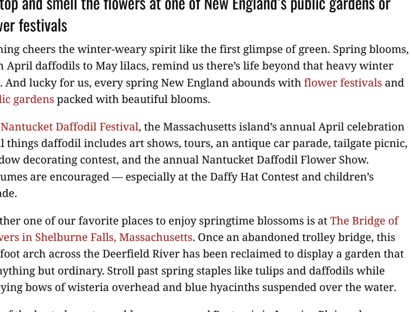
The short answer is: unpredictable. Spring in New England is often a rollercoaster, bringing both high and low temperatures, freak snowstorms, buckets of rain, and – usually at least once every year – a day or two of sunbathing weather.

Although spring technically begins in March, the average temperatures remain low and you'll almost certainly still spot some snow on the ground. Then comes the rainy month of April, which can be somewhat of a toss-up as to whether any given week will bring a snow flurries or a sunny spell. With that in mind, if you're looking for the best month to visit New England during the spring, bet on May and June. The flowers and the sunshine have emerged by then, and the rain will have subsided substantially. That said, don't blame us if your travels land on a rainy week – spring showers come with the territory. If you don't mind a little bit of rain, you'll be just fine.



A pathway on the Charles River Esplanade invites strolling beneath a canopy of blooms. See more photos of the Boston Public Garden in "Bloom Time."
Adam Detour

10 Best Things to Do In Spring in New England



Brant Point Light's decorated with a giant wreath of daffodils in honor of spring during the Nantucket Daffodil Festival.
Carl Tremblay

1. Stop and smell the flowers at one of New England's public gardens or flower festivals

Nothing cheers the winter-weary spirit like the first glimpse of green. Spring blooms, from April daffodils to May lilacs, remind us there's life beyond that heavy winter coat. And lucky for us, every spring New England abounds with flower festivals and public gardens packed with beautiful blooms.

The Nantucket Daffodil Festival, the Massachusetts island's annual April celebration of all things daffodil includes art shows, tours, an antique car parade, tailgate picnic, window decorating contest, and the annual Nantucket Daffodil Flower Show. Costumes are encouraged — especially at the Daffy Hat Contest and children's parade.

Another one of our favorite places to enjoy springtime blossoms is at The Bridge of Flowers in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts. Once an abandoned trolley bridge, this 400-foot arch across the Deerfield River has been reclaimed to display a garden that is anything but ordinary. Stroll past spring staples like tulips and daffodils while enjoying bows of wisteria overhead and blue hyacinths suspended over the water.

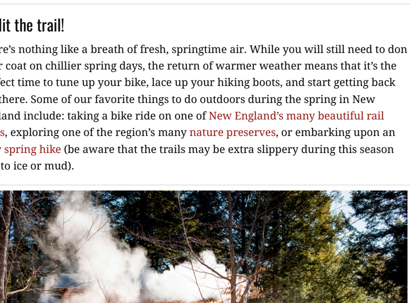
One of the best places to see blossoms around Boston is in Jamaica Plain, where every May the Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum showcases one of the most impressive collections of lilacs. Another great option is wandering through Boston Public Garden. The springtime display gets under way in March, as they begin planting pansies and other early perennials from the parks department's 13 greenhouses, and it becomes downright lavish by May, when 30,000 bulbs burst into life—the vast majority of them being tulips in the Public Garden, where they have been planted each year since the 1840s.

Here are a few the best public gardens in New England:

- **Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens | Boothbay, ME**
- **Elizabeth Park | West Hartford, CT**
- **Mount Desert Land & Garden Preserve | Seal Harbor, ME**
- **Harkness Memorial State Park | Waterford, CT**
- **Prescott Park | Portsmouth, NH**
- **Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park | Woodstock, VT**

Other favorite New England flower festivals include:

- **The Dogwood Festival | Fairfield, CT**
- **Daffodil Days at Blithewold Mansion | Bristol, RI**
- **Celebration of Peonies at Hildene | Manchester, VT**
- **Cherry Blossom Festival | New Haven, CT**



A springtime ride down West Shore Road on Isle La Motte comes with outstanding views of Lake Champlain and plenty of shoulder-season quiet. Read more in "Shifting Gears | Spring Cycling on Vermont's Champlain Islands."
Corey Hendrickson

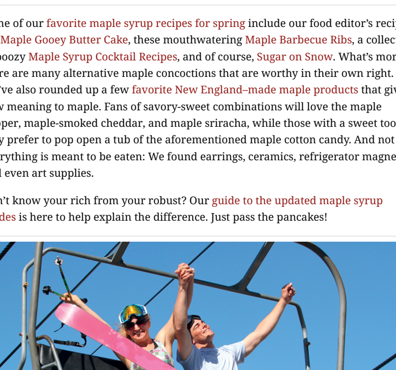
2. Hit the trail!

There's nothing like a breath of fresh, springtime air. While you will still need to don your coat on chillier spring days, the return of warmer weather means that it's the perfect time to tune up your bike, lace up your hiking boots, and start getting back out there. Some of our favorite things to do outdoors during the spring in New England include: taking a bike ride on one of New England's many beautiful rail trails, exploring one of the region's many nature preserves, or embarking upon an easy spring hike (be aware that the trails may be extra slippery during this season due to ice or mud).

In the Chichester woods, sap boiling gets under way at Matras Maple Farm, started 20 years ago by brothers Willie and Asa Matras. Read more in "8 Ways to Make the Most of Maple Season."
Jenn Bakos

3. Make the most of maple season

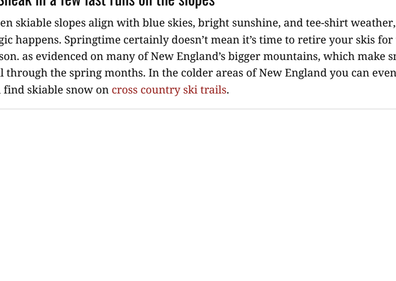
If autumn is New England's Mardi Gras, maple season is our Oktoberfest, a delicious celebration of regional heritage in liquid form. And as our tasty to-do list shows, syrup lovers from Connecticut to Quebec have plenty of inspired ways to drink it all in. You could visit a maple sugarhouse, pour it on at a pancake house like the iconic Polly's Pancake Parlor, or simply bring home a bottle and cook up some maple goodies in the kitchen.



Flapjacks at Polly's Pancake Parlor in the White Mountains of New Hampshire.
Polly's Pancake Parlor

Some of our favorite maple syrup recipes for spring include our food editor's recipe for Maple Gooey Butter Cake, these mouthwatering Maple Barbecue Ribs, a collection of boozy Maple Syrup Cocktail Recipes, and of course, Sugar on Snow. What's more, there are many alternative maple concoctions that are worthy in their own right. We've also rounded up a few favorite New England–made maple products that give new meaning to maple. Fans of savory-sweet combinations will love the maple pepper, maple-smoked cheddar, and maple sriracha, while those with a sweet tooth may prefer to pop open a tub of the aforementioned maple cotton candy. And not everything is meant to be eaten: We found earrings, ceramics, refrigerator magnets, and even art supplies.

Don't know your rich from your robust? Our guide to the updated maple syrup grades is here to help explain the difference. Just pass the pancakes!



Spring skiing at Sugarloaf Mountain in Maine. See more in "The Giddy Season."
Courtesy of Sugarloaf

4. Sneak in a few last runs on the slopes

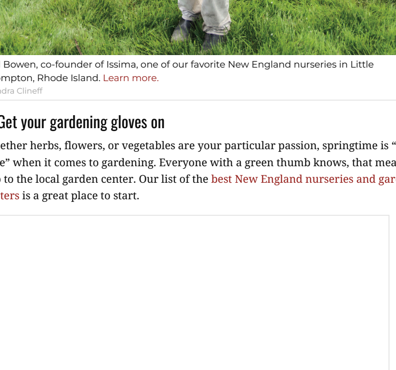
When skiable slopes align with blue skies, bright sunshine, and tee-shirt weather, magic happens. Springtime certainly doesn't mean it's time to retire your skis for the season. as evidenced on many of New England's bigger mountains, which make snow well through the spring months. In the colder areas of New England you can even still find skiable snow on cross country ski trails.

Strawberry Rhubarb Muffins
Aimee Tucker

5. Enjoy spring ingredients by making an in-season meal

April showers bring asparagus. That's how the saying goes…right? Rhubarb, radishes, fiddleheads, and asparagus are only a handful of the fresh foods to look forward to every spring. Here are some of our favorite easy spring recipes from the *Yankee* and NewEngland.com archives, which will help you make the most of fleeting, in-season foods:

- Asparagus Gouda Tart
- Maple Walnut Muffins
- Rhubarb Coffee Cake
- Sautéed Fiddleheads
- Spring Pea Salad
- Spring Chicken
- Strawberry-Rhubarb Crisp



Ed Bowen, co-founder of Issima, one of our favorite New England nurseries in Little Compton, Rhode Island. Learn more.
Kindra Clineff

6. Get your gardening gloves on

Whether herbs, flowers, or vegetables are your particular passion, springtime is "go time" when it comes to gardening. Everyone with a green thumb knows, that means a trip to the local garden center. Our list of the best New England nurseries and garden centers is a great place to start.

The sound and smoke of musket fire fills the air at the Patriots' Day reenactments in Concord and Lexington, one of the best spring events in New England.
Jonathan Kozowyk and Henry Hung

7. Attend a Patriot's Day reenactment

Where better to commemorate Patriots' Day, which marks the battles of Lexington and Concord and the start of the American Revolution, than on the very ground where so much history happened? Thousands of people visit Minuteman National Park during the annual Patriots' Day festivities, one of the best spring events in New England for history buffs. Show up early and you may have an opportunity to tip a pre-fight pint with British and colonial reenactors at Munroe Tavern. Beyond the battlefield, Lexington, Concord, and the surrounding towns serve up a weekend jam-packed with patriotic fun.

8. Browse antiques at the Brimfield Antique Fair

The largest outdoor antiques show in the country, with over 4,500 dealers and 130,000-plus visitors during the course of the week, kicks off the first of its three annual events each spring, making it a clear contender for the best spring events in New England. Running about a mile along Route 20 on both sides of the road and extending several hundred yards back, dealers show off their wares for pickers and collectors — both casual and ferocious. We dare you to leave empty-handed. (If you miss the spring show, make sure to mark your calendar for July or September.)

Sunset at Napatree Point in Westerly, Rhode Island. Learn more in "A Beach of One's Own | Spring Happiness at Napatree Point in Rhode Island."
Matt Andrew/Cavan Images

9. Take a springtime seaside stroll

Months before the sand becomes dotted with neon beach chairs, there is a haunting beauty to the beaches of New England. In shoulder season the beaches stay fairly quiet, save for dog walkers and winter surfers. It's a refreshing sight for those accustomed to summertime crowds, especially when temperatures warm up enough for a stroll along the coastline or on one of the region's many beaches. The next time there's a warm spell in the forecast, take this as a perfect excuse to plan a beach getaway (at off-season rates, no less)!

Some of our favorite New England coastal walks include:

- **Marginal Way | Ogunquit, ME**
- **Parker River National Refuge | Plum Island, MA**
- **Bluff Point State Park | Groton, CT**
- **Napatree Point Conservation Area | Watch Hill, RI**
- **Odiorne Point State Park | Rye, NH**

See our list of 11 Magical New England Coastal Walks for more ideas.

A baby sheep at the Hancock Shaker Village in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.
Bonnie Kittle/Unsplash

10. Spend some quality time with baby animals

Every April, farms and museums open their doors to the public to showcase some of New England's newest additions. One of our favorites is the Billings Museum Baby Farm Animal Celebration in charming Woodstock, Vermont, which offers visitors the opportunity to get up close with the farm's adorable baby animals, plant an heirloom seed, participate in fun craft activities, and more. We also love the springtime Family Farm Fest Weekends at Old Sturbridge Village (in fact, we think springtime is one of the best times to visit Old Sturbridge Village), as well as the baby animals at the Hancock Shaker Village.

BONUS | Honorable mentions

Looking for more New England springtime fun? Don't miss these iconic annual events:

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What's your favorite thing to do in the spring in New England? Let us know in the comments below!

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