

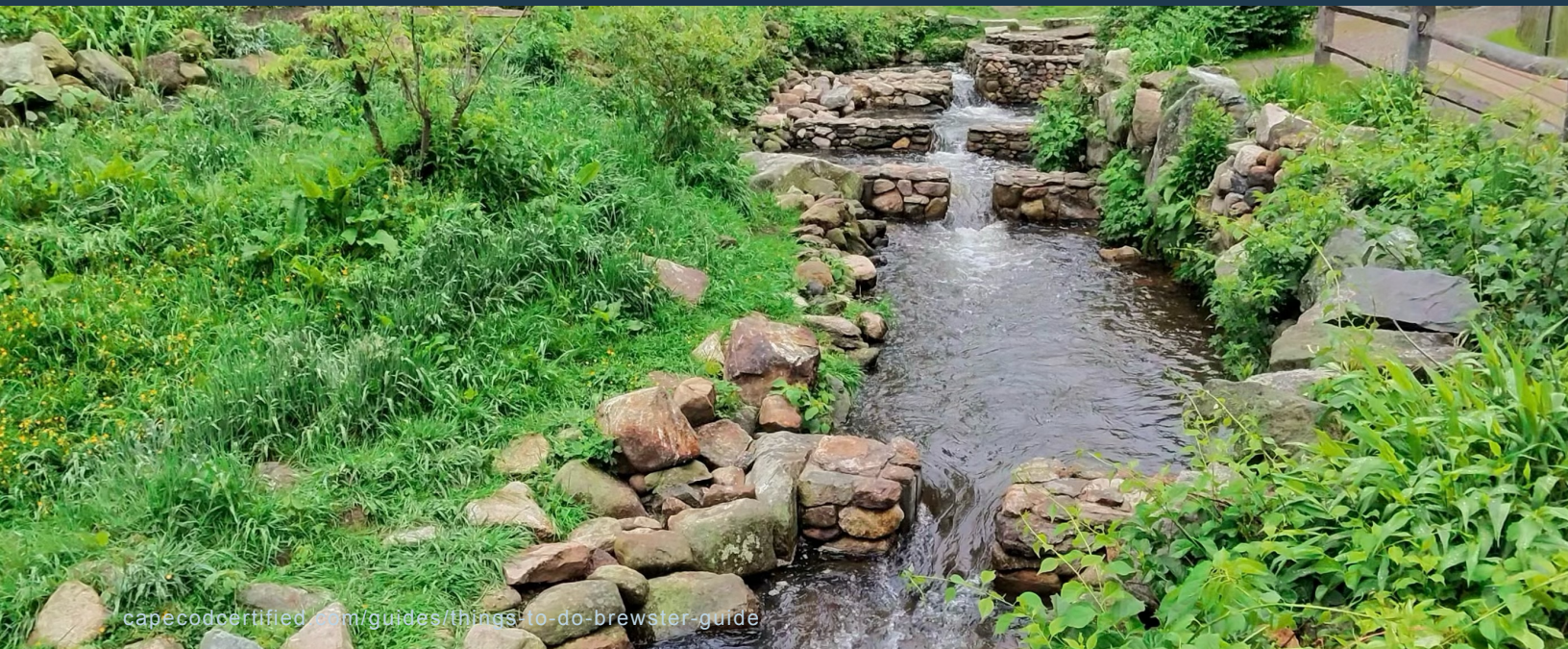


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VISITING CAPE COD

Things to Do in Brewster, MA: Cape Cod's Most Family-Friendly Town

A free field guide from the people who actually live here.



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Ask Cape Cod families where they keep coming back to, and Brewster comes up again and again. It's a town built for the kind of summer vacation that involves low-tide walking, kettle pond swimming, bike rides through pine forest, and evenings on a porch with nothing urgent to do. Route 6A through Brewster is one of the most beautiful roads in Massachusetts — canopied by old oaks, lined with antique shops, historic sea captains' homes, and farm stands that sell tomatoes that actually taste like tomatoes. There's more to do here than a single trip can cover.

The Tidal Flats: Brewster's Most Extraordinary Feature

At low tide, the water along Brewster's bay beaches recedes up to two miles, exposing vast tidal flats that stretch toward the horizon. It's one of the most remarkable natural phenomena in New England, and it happens twice a day. Families spend hours out on the flats — clamming, exploring tide pools, spotting horseshoe crabs and shorebirds, and walking further than seems possible before the tide turns. Breakwater Beach, Paines Creek Beach, and Linnell Landing are the main access points. Check the tide chart before you go — you want to arrive 2–3 hours before low tide to maximize your time on the flats.

Nickerson State Park

Nickerson State Park covers more than 1,900 acres and is one of the finest state parks in Massachusetts. Eight kettle ponds — formed by retreating glaciers thousands of years ago — dot the landscape; you can swim in them, kayak across them, or fish for trout and bass. There are over 400 campsites, making it one of the most popular campgrounds on the Cape (reservations open months in advance). Jack's Boat Rental operates out of Flax Pond inside the park, renting kayaks, canoes, stand-up paddleboards, and bikes. The park's internal trail network connects to the Cape Cod Rail Trail — you can ride from inside Nickerson all the way to Wellfleet without touching a road.

Route 6A and the Old King's Highway

Route 6A through Brewster is designated a National Scenic Byway and earns the designation. Dozens of antique shops and galleries line the road, ranging from serious dealers in American furniture to casual multi-dealer shops where you might find anything. The Brewster Store — a general store that's been operating since 1866 — is an institution: penny candy from the old-fashioned display case, local newspapers, and the feeling that not everything has changed. Farm stands appear along 6A through late fall.

Cape Cod Museum of Natural History

The Cape Cod Museum of Natural History sits on 80+ acres of salt marsh and upland trails along 6A, and it's one of the best small natural history museums in New England. Exhibits cover Cape Cod's geology, ecology, and marine life in ways that work for adults and kids both. Behind the museum, trails lead through marsh and forest to Wing Island with views of Cape Cod Bay. Ranger programs and summer camps keep it genuinely educational rather than just decorative.

Stony Brook Grist Mill and the Herring Run

Each spring — typically late March through April — thousands of alewife herring return from the ocean to spawn in the freshwater ponds above Stony Brook. They swim up a fish ladder beside the historic grist mill, and on peak days

the stream is thick with fish. It's free, easy to see, and the kind of natural spectacle that children remember for years. The mill itself is one of the oldest working mills in the United States and occasionally demonstrates traditional grain grinding.

Ocean Edge Resort

Ocean Edge Resort in Brewster is the large-scale resort option on the mid-Cape — a sprawling property with a private beach, multiple pools, a golf course, and tennis courts. It's particularly well set up for family groups and extended stays. Even if you're not staying there, the restaurant is worth knowing about.

Frequently Asked Questions

What time should I arrive for the Brewster tidal flats? Aim to arrive 2–3 hours before low tide. This gives you time to walk out on the flats, explore, and return before the tide comes back in. The tide comes in faster than it looks — always keep track of time and distance.

Is Nickerson State Park camping reservable in advance? Yes, and you should book as early as possible — sites fill up months ahead for July and August. Reservations open through the Massachusetts state park reservation system. Some sites are held for walk-ins, but don't count on availability in peak season.

Is Brewster good for year-round visits? More than almost any other Cape town. Nickerson State Park, the tidal flats, Route 6A shops, and the Museum of Natural History are all compelling in fall and even winter. The herring run in March-April is one of the best off-season reasons to visit.

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