

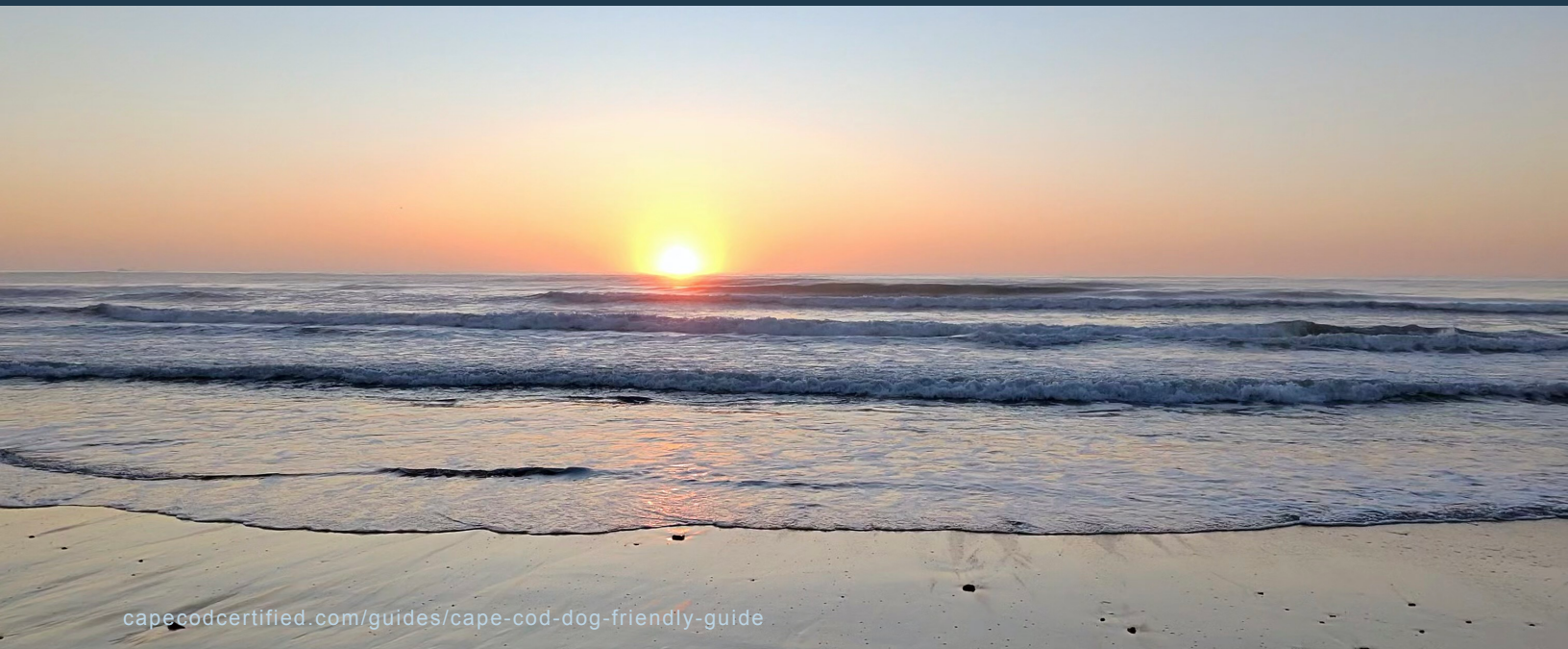


CAPE COD CERTIFIED

VISITING CAPE COD

Cape Cod with Dogs: The Complete Dog-Friendly Guide

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



capecodcertified.com/guides/cape-cod-dog-friendly-guide

Cape Cod is one of the best destinations on the East Coast for dog owners — if you know the rules. Beaches have seasonal restrictions, leash laws vary town by town, and some of the most scenic spots on the Outer Cape are also the most dog-restricted. This guide gives you everything you need to plan a summer trip with your dog, from sunrise swims at Nauset to sunset walks along the Bay side, without a single surprise.

Cape Cod Dog-Friendly Beaches: The Ground Rules

Most Cape Cod town beaches follow the same seasonal window: **dogs are prohibited on swimming beaches from May 15 through September 15 during peak hours**. The typical allowed window is **before 9am and after 6pm** during summer. Outside that window — and outside that date range — dogs are generally welcome on leash.

This rule applies to town-managed beaches. National Seashore beaches (managed by the Cape Cod National Seashore/NPS) have stricter rules, particularly in areas with protected piping plover nesting habitat. Always check current NPS regulations before heading to any National Seashore beach with your dog.

Dogs must be on a leash no longer than 6 feet on all town beaches during allowed hours. Cleaning up after your dog is mandatory at every beach on Cape Cod — no exceptions, no excuses.

Best Dog-Friendly Beaches by Town

Brewster: Flats Walking at Low Tide

Brewster's beaches on the Bay side (west/sunset side) are some of the most dramatic on Cape Cod at low tide — the water recedes up to a mile, leaving firm tidal flats ideal for walking with dogs during the early morning window.

Breakwater Beach and **Paines Creek Beach** are both popular with dog owners who arrive before 9am. The flat, shallow water is easy on older dogs and puppies alike.

Brewster has no ocean-facing (Atlantic/east/sunrise side) beaches of its own — all of its swimming areas face Cape Cod Bay.

Chatham: Lighthouse Beach and the Outer Bar

Chatham's **Lighthouse Beach** faces south toward the Atlantic and offers a long stretch of sand with dramatic views of the outer bar and Chatham Harbor. Dogs are welcome before 9am and after 6pm during summer. The early morning light here is striking — the sunrise comes up over the Atlantic to the east, making it one of the best spots on the Cape for an early dog walk with a camera.

Cockle Cove Beach on the south side of town is another solid option, with calmer water and a more local feel.

Falmouth: Old Silver and Surf Drive

Falmouth's **Old Silver Beach** on Buzzards Bay (west/sunset side) is one of the most beautiful Bay-side beaches on Cape Cod. The calm, warm water and long sandy shoreline make it popular with families and dogs alike during the early morning and evening windows. **Surf Drive Beach**, which faces Vineyard Sound, allows dogs before 9am and after 6pm during summer.

Falmouth also has several town conservation areas where dogs are welcome on leash year-round — a useful backup on crowded summer days.

Orleans: Skaket Beach (Bay Side) and Nauset Beach

Orleans sits at the elbow of Cape Cod and has access to beaches on both sides. **Skaket Beach** faces Cape Cod Bay (west/sunset side) and is beloved for its tidal flats and calm water — great for dogs who want to wade without fighting waves.

Nauset Beach is a different animal entirely. This iconic Atlantic-facing beach (east/sunrise side) runs for miles and is one of the most famous cape cod dog friendly beaches in all of New England. Dogs are allowed before 9am and after 6pm in summer. Arriving at 7am on a clear morning, with the sun rising over the Atlantic and the surf rolling in, is one of those Cape Cod experiences that stays with you.

Eastham: Coast Guard Beach

Coast Guard Beach in Eastham is part of the Cape Cod National Seashore and is one of the most photographed beaches on the entire Cape. It faces the Atlantic (east/sunrise side). NPS rules apply here: dogs must be on a 6-foot leash, and seasonal piping plover closures may affect access to certain sections. Arrive early — before 9am — for the best dog-walking window and the most dramatic morning light.

Eastham also has **First Encounter Beach** on the Bay side (west/sunset side), where tidal flats and calm water make for easy, shallow wading for dogs. Sunsets from this beach are spectacular.

Wellfleet: Cahoon Hollow and White Crest

Wellfleet's Atlantic-facing beaches (east/sunrise side) — **Cahoon Hollow Beach** and **White Crest Beach** — are among the most dramatic on the Outer Cape, with high dunes and strong surf. Dogs are allowed during the standard summer windows. Cahoon Hollow has the famous Beachcomber restaurant perched on the dunes above, with an outdoor deck that has historically been dog-friendly (confirm with the restaurant before your visit).

Mayo Beach on the harbor side is calm, dog-friendly, and has the bonus of being right in Wellfleet Village — easy to pair with a stop for coffee before your walk.

Provincetown: The Most Dog-Friendly Town on Cape Cod

Provincetown is in a category of its own. It is widely considered the **most dog-welcoming town on Cape Cod**, and the culture reflects that. Dogs are everywhere — on Commercial Street, on restaurant patios, in shops, and on the beaches.

Race Point Beach and **Herring Cove Beach** are both managed by the Cape Cod National Seashore, so standard NPS rules apply: dogs on leash, seasonal restrictions in nesting areas. Herring Cove faces west (Cape Cod Bay side/sunset side), making it one of the few places on the outer Cape where you can watch the sun set over water with your dog beside you.

The area near the **Pilgrim Monument** — including the streets and paths around the base of the monument — is walkable with dogs and gives sweeping views of the entire town and harbor. The monument itself does not allow dogs inside, but the grounds are perfectly suited for a walk.

Off-Leash Areas and Conservation Lands

Several towns maintain designated off-leash areas or conservation trails where dogs can run free. **Nickerson State Park** in Brewster allows leashed dogs on its trails and around its freshwater ponds — and those ponds are an excellent place to let your dog swim and cool off during a hot summer day. Eight ponds dot the park, most with easy access from the trails.

The **Cape Cod Rail Trail** runs 27 miles from Dennis to Wellfleet and passes through Brewster, Orleans, Eastham, and Wellfleet. Dogs are welcome on the Rail Trail on a 6-foot leash. It is flat, well-paved, and shaded in many

sections — a reliable option for a mid-day walk when beach hours are restricted. Bring water: the trail has minimal facilities outside of the towns it passes through.

Seal Colonies: Keep Dogs Leashed

Gray seals haul out on beaches throughout Chatham, Wellfleet, and the outer shores during summer. If your dog spots a seal on the beach, keep them on a tight leash and at a distance. Seals can be aggressive when approached, and a curious dog getting too close is a real risk. The **Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge** near Chatham is a critical seal and shorebird habitat — dogs are restricted in much of this area. Stick to the leash and give wildlife a wide berth.

Dog-Friendly Restaurants and Patios

Many Cape Cod restaurants with outdoor seating welcome leashed dogs on their patios. In Provincetown, this is practically the norm along Commercial Street. In Wellfleet, the Beachcomber's deck has a long history of dog visitors. In Chatham, several of the waterfront spots welcome well-behaved dogs at outdoor tables.

Always call ahead or check current policy before arriving with your dog — rules change seasonally and can vary by specific section of an outdoor space.

Dog-Friendly Lodging Tips

Many Cape Cod inns, motels, and vacation rentals are dog-friendly, but policies and fees vary widely. Expect a pet deposit or nightly pet fee at most properties. When booking, confirm the fee in writing and ask specifically about weight limits, the number of dogs allowed, and whether dogs can be left unattended in the room. Vacation rentals through VRBO and Airbnb often offer more flexibility than hotels and are worth searching first.

Whale Watching: Can You Bring Your Dog?

Short answer: no. The major Cape Cod whale watching operators departing from Provincetown — including the Dolphin Fleet and Portuguese Princess — do not allow dogs on their vessels. The trips run 3 to 4 hours offshore, and the decks are not safe or appropriate for dogs. Plan a dog-sitter or kennel stay for whale watch days.

Fresh Water for Dogs

Saltwater beaches are fun, but dogs need fresh water frequently — especially in summer heat. Nickerson State Park's ponds in Brewster are ideal. The freshwater kettle ponds throughout Wellfleet and Eastham (accessible via the Rail Trail) are another great option. Bring a collapsible bowl and your own supply of fresh water for any beach day; most beach parking areas have no water access.

Beach Day Packing List for Dogs

- Fresh water and a collapsible bowl (at least one liter per hour in summer heat)
- Poop bags (double what you think you need)

- 6-foot leash (required on all Cape Cod beaches)
- Dog-safe sunscreen for thin-coated or light-nosed breeds
- Shade tent or umbrella (dogs can overheat quickly in direct sun)
- Towel for rinsing paws and coat after saltwater
- Dog first-aid kit with tick removal tool (Lyme disease is endemic on Cape Cod)
- Proof of current rabies vaccination (required if your dog is questioned by a beach officer)

FAQ

Q: Are dogs allowed on Cape Cod National Seashore beaches?

Dogs are allowed on Cape Cod National Seashore beaches on a 6-foot leash, but with important caveats. During piping plover nesting season (roughly April through August), sections of beach may be fully closed to dogs to protect ground-nesting birds. Check the Cape Cod National Seashore website or call the Salt Pond Visitor Center in Eastham before your visit for current closures at specific beaches like Coast Guard Beach and Race Point.

Q: What time can I bring my dog to the beach in summer?

Most Cape Cod town beaches allow dogs before 9am and after 6pm from May 15 through September 15. Outside of that seasonal window — before May 15 and after September 15 — dogs are typically allowed all day on leash. Rules differ slightly by town and beach, so confirm with the specific town's parks department before assuming access.

Q: Is Provincetown really the most dog-friendly town on Cape Cod?

Yes. Provincetown has a deeply dog-welcoming culture that sets it apart from every other Cape Cod town. You will see dogs on Commercial Street, on restaurant patios, and throughout the town at all hours. While NPS rules still apply at Race Point and Herring Cove, the town itself treats dogs as welcome members of the community rather than afterthoughts.

Q: Can my dog swim in the freshwater ponds?

Yes. Many of the Cape's kettle ponds — including those in Nickerson State Park in Brewster and the ponds accessible from the Rail Trail in Wellfleet and Eastham — allow dogs to swim. This is often a better option than saltwater beaches during peak hours, as there are no time restrictions and the fresh water is easier on your dog's skin and coat.

Q: What should I do if my dog encounters a seal on the beach?

Keep your dog on a leash and move away from the seal immediately. Gray seals look docile but are wild animals and can bite severely. Do not allow your dog to approach, chase, or interact with any seal. In areas near Chatham and Wellfleet where seals are common, keep your dog on a short leash any time you are near the water's edge.



Headed to the Cape with friends? Share this guide.

Every share helps a real local business get found — and keeps Cape Cod guides free. Scan to send it along.

[Explore the Cape Cod Directory →](#)





FOR CAPE COD BUSINESSES

This is what being Cape Cod Certified looks like.

You just read a guide that travelers and locals download, keep, and share. The businesses inside it were chosen on merit — real vetting, real local knowledge, never pay-to-play.

Own a Cape Cod business? Get Certified and earn your place in guides like this one — in front of the exact people planning their trip and their spend.



Get Certified → capecodcertified.com/join