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CAPE COD PURSUITS

The Cape Cod Rail Trail: A Complete Guide to the Cape's Best Bike Path

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



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Few things feel more like Cape Cod in summer than rolling through a corridor of pitch pine and oak on a bicycle, salt air coming through the trees, a kettle pond shimmering just off the path. The Cape Cod Rail Trail delivers that experience better than any road on the peninsula — 25 miles of smooth, flat, paved path that connects six towns from South Dennis to South Wellfleet.

The Rail Trail at a Glance

- **Total length:** 25 miles, one way
- **Surface:** Paved asphalt, wide enough for two-way traffic
- **Terrain:** Flat to gently rolling
- **Suitable for:** All fitness levels, young children, adaptive bikes, e-bikes
- **Dogs:** Welcome on leash

The Full Route

The trail begins at Route 134, South Dennis. It passes through Harwich, then Brewster (where the stretch near Nickerson State Park is particularly beautiful), then Orleans (the most convenient mid-point), then Eastham (where the Cape Cod National Seashore begins), and ends at Lecount Hollow Road in South Wellfleet.

Doing It in Sections

Nickerson to Orleans (~6 miles): Most popular shorter ride. Nickerson end has pond swimming, Orleans end has restaurants.

Orleans to Salt Pond (~8–9 miles with Nauset spur): Great half-day family route.

Full trail with shuttle: 25 miles one way. Several bike shops handle shuttle logistics.

Best Trailhead Access Points

- **South Dennis (Route 134):** Southern terminus. Free parking.
- **Nickerson State Park, Brewster:** Most scenic entry. Free parking inside the park.
- **Orleans (near Stop & Shop):** Most practical mid-point.
- **Salt Pond Visitor Center, Eastham:** Free parking, restrooms, water.

Bike Rentals Near the Trail

- **Rail Trail Bike Shop, Brewster:** Directly on the trail. Carries tandems, tag-alongs, and trail-a-bikes.
- **Orleans Outdoor Center, Orleans:** Bikes, kayaks, and paddleboards.
- **Dennis Cycle Center, Dennis:** Near the southern terminus.

Swimming Along the Way

- **Nickerson State Park ponds, Brewster:** Cliff Pond, Flax Pond — clearest swimming on the Cape.
- **Nauset Beach via Nauset Trail spur:** Salt water, Atlantic surf.

Safety Notes

Helmets required by MA law for riders under 16. Slow down at road crossings. Yield to pedestrians. Carry more water than you think you need.

◆ THINGS TO DO

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