



CAPE COD CERTIFIED

VISITING CAPE COD

A Perfect Day in Chatham, Cape Cod: Lighthouse, Outer Beach & Main Street

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



Chatham sits at the elbow of Cape Cod, where the land hooks sharply south and the Atlantic makes clear it is in charge. A single storm in 1987 punched a new inlet through the barrier beach here, reshaping the harbor overnight and leaving a raw, dramatic coastline that still looks like it happened last week.

Morning: Chatham Lighthouse and the Fish Pier

Start at [Chatham Lighthouse](#) on Bridge Street before 9am. From the bluff you can see the Chatham Break, Stage Harbor, and on any clear morning, the Atlantic stretching uninterrupted toward Portugal. The gray seal colony hauled out on the sandbars below is the only mainland-accessible one in the United States. Bring binoculars.

From the lighthouse, drive or walk down Shore Road about a half-mile to Chatham Fish Pier. The public observation deck overlooks one of the last working fishing fleets on the Cape. Boats come in mid-morning most days, and the unloading is not a performance for tourists — it is just what happens here.

Midday: Main Street and Lunch

Chatham's Main Street is the most walkable village center on Cape Cod. No chain stores, no outlet shopping, no miniature golf. Independent galleries, independent booksellers, independent clothiers. Give yourself an hour to walk it slowly, from the rotary end down toward Kate Gould Park.

Afternoon: Harding's Beach or the Outer Beach by Boat

Chatham's bay-side and sound-side beaches are some of the calmest swimming on the outer Cape. [Harding's Beach](#) off Harding's Beach Road is a long barrier beach on Nantucket Sound — shallow, warm-ish water by July standards, and far less crowded than anything on the National Seashore side.

If you want the defining Chatham experience and you planned ahead, book a water taxi or charter to the [Outer Beach](#). It is one of the most remote and least-visited beaches in southern New England.

Evening: Band Concert or Dinner at Sunset

If you are here on a Friday between mid-June and Labor Day, the Chatham Band Concert at Kate Gould Park is not optional. The town band has been playing these free concerts for over a century. People bring lawn chairs and blankets and their kids and their dogs and they show up early to get a spot.

Practical Notes

- **Parking at the lighthouse:** The small lot on Bridge Street fills by 9am in July and August.
- **Fish Pier timing:** Boats typically unload mid-morning, but there is no guaranteed schedule.
- **Band concerts:** Kate Gould Park, Friday evenings, mid-June through Labor Day. Free. Get there 30-45 minutes early.
- **Best season:** July through early September for swimming and full concert season.
- **Outer Beach boat access:** Multiple outfitters in Chatham offer water taxi service to the outer beach in summer. Book in advance.

Certified Local Businesses in Chatham

Cape Cod Certified recommends these verified local spots:

- **The Black Dog General Store Chatham** — 4.4★ (105 Google reviews)
- **Cape Cod Coffee — Chatham** — 4.4★ (242 Google reviews)

◆ THINGS TO DO

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