



CAPE COD CERTIFIED

VISITING CAPE COD

Things to Do in Chatham, MA: Cape Cod's Most Elegant Town

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



Chatham occupies one of the most dramatic perches on Cape Cod — the very elbow where the peninsula bends sharply south before dissolving into a string of barrier beaches and open Atlantic. It's the town that feels the most finished, the most deliberate, and the most proud of what it is. The village center is all white clapboard and window boxes, Main Street boutiques carry art and antiques that are actually worth buying, and the fish pier is genuine working waterfront rather than a postcard set-piece. If you visit one Cape town and want it to feel truly *Cape Cod*, come here.

Explore Main Street and the Village Center

Main Street, Chatham is a rare thing: a New England village center that's beautiful without being artificial. You'll find independent galleries, jewelry shops, clothing boutiques, bookstores, and ice cream spots all within easy walking distance. It's worth an unhurried morning. On Friday nights from July through August, the Chatham Band performs free concerts on the village green — families spread blankets, kids dance in front of the bandstand, and locals bring lawn chairs they've been bringing for decades. The concerts start at 8 pm and draw hundreds of people; arrive by 7:30 to get a good spot.

Chatham Lighthouse and the 1987 Inlet Break

Chatham Light stands on a bluff at the end of Main Street with a sweeping view of the outer barrier beach and the Atlantic beyond. The lighthouse itself is active and occasionally open for tours, but the real drama is the geography below it. In January 1987, a powerful nor'easter broke through the barrier beach, creating a new inlet that fundamentally changed the currents and beaches south of town. The break is still visible from the overlook — a reminder that Cape Cod is a living geological feature, not a fixed landscape.

Chatham Fish Pier

Walk out to the fish pier in the afternoon when the draggers return, and you'll get one of the most authentic scenes on Cape Cod. Commercial fishermen unload their catch — fluke, striped bass, scallops in season — while gray seals bob in the harbor water directly below, waiting for scraps. It's free, it's real, and it's the kind of thing you'll talk about when you get home.

Gray Seals, Monomoy Island, and the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy

The gray seal colony south of Chatham is one of the largest in the world — some estimates put it at 50,000 animals on Monomoy Island and the surrounding shoals. Several local operators run boat tours to Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge, where you can observe seals hauled out on the beach from close range. The healthy seal population has also attracted great white sharks to the outer Cape every summer; the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy, headquartered in Chatham, tracks tagged sharks in real time and their app (Sharktivity) is essential for swimmers and surfers on outer beaches.

Where to Eat and Stay

Impudent Oyster on Chatham Bars Ave is the local favorite — a warm, unhurried dining room with excellent raw bar and fresh fish done simply. **Chatham Bars Inn** is the grand resort of the Cape: a 1914 historic property with 25 acres on the water, a private beach, multiple restaurants, and the feel of an earlier, more gracious era of Cape Cod summers. It's a splurge, but worth knowing about even if you just stop for a drink on the lawn.

Events

- **Friday Night Band Concerts** — July and August, Village Green, 8 pm, free
 - **Chatham Seafest** — October, downtown, celebrates the working waterfront
-

Frequently Asked Questions

When is the best time to visit Chatham? July and August are peak season with band concerts, full boat tour schedules, and the fish pier most active. September is less crowded and still beautiful — the seal colony is year-round.

Can I see great white sharks from shore? Monomoy Island and the outer beaches have shark activity in summer, but sightings from shore are rare. Download the Sharktivity app from the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy to track tagged sharks in real time, and follow all posted beach flags.

Is Chatham good for families? Very much so. The fish pier, lighthouse overlook, seal boat tours, and band concerts are all family-friendly. Harding's Beach on the south shore is calm and excellent for kids.

◆ THINGS TO DO

Make a day of it

Bookable experiences that pair perfectly with this guide. Scan any code to reserve.

BOOK · FROM \$500/PERSON

Atlantic White Shark Conservancy — Shark Research Cruise

Atlantic White Shark Conservancy · Chatham

A hand-picked Cape Cod experience to pair with this guide — book direct.



Scan to book

BOOK · ~\$90-\$110

Chatham Walking Food Tour

Chatham Food Tours · Chatham

A hand-picked Cape Cod experience to pair with this guide — book direct.



Scan to book

BOOK · FROM \$79

Chatham Bites and Sights Walking Guided Food Tasting Tour

Cape Cod Food Tours · Chatham

A hand-picked Cape Cod experience to pair with this guide — book direct.



Scan to book



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 Cape Cod Certified →](#)



Cape Cod Certified · capecodcertified.com/guides/things-to-do-chatham-guide · Real guides, real local knowledge. Verify seasonal details before you go.



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