



CAPE COD CERTIFIED

VISITING CAPE COD

Cape Cod Traffic: How to Beat Sunday Exit Traffic & Get Home Without Losing Your Mind

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

Every summer weekend, roughly 500,000 people share this 70-mile peninsula. When Sunday afternoon arrives, they all need to leave through the same two bottlenecks: the **Sagamore Bridge** on Route 6 and the **Bourne Bridge** on Route 28. There is no secret shortcut. There is no back road that bypasses the bridges. What there is, is a window.

The Window to Avoid: Sunday 1pm–6pm

In July and August, the 1pm–6pm window on Sunday afternoons is when every family, every day-tripper, and every weekend renter tries to leave simultaneously. Both bridge approaches back up for miles. The Sagamore typically sees the heavier traffic load. By 7pm things begin to ease. By 8pm travel time often drops dramatically. By 9pm the bridges are effectively clear.

Your Two Options: Leave Early or Leave Late

Leave Before 11am — Get Ahead of the Wave. The exodus begins in earnest around noon. On the road before 11am, you are ahead of it. Best for: families with young kids, anyone driving more than three hours home, early risers.

Leave After 7pm — Let It Clear, Then Go. Stay. Eat a late lunch. Have dinner at a waterfront restaurant. By the time your check arrives around 7:30–8pm, the backup has largely dissolved. Best for: couples, second-home owners without school schedule constraints, anyone who would rather wait it out in comfort.

The Middle: 1pm–6pm. Expect a backup. May be 45 minutes. May be two hours. On a holiday Sunday, expect the worst.

Sagamore Bridge vs. Bourne Bridge

Sagamore Bridge — Route 6. Go here if heading to Boston, Route 3 North, Route 93, Eastern Massachusetts. MassDOT typically implements a **reverse lane system** on Route 6 on peak summer Sundays — converting additional lanes to the outbound direction. Check before you leave.

Bourne Bridge — Route 28 / Route 25. Go here if heading to Providence, New York via I-195, southwestern Massachusetts. Puts you directly onto Route 25 connecting to I-195 West. Secondary roads feeding the Bourne: Route 130 from Forestdale, Route 28A from Cataumet.

MassDOT Reverse Lanes

Deployed on high-volume summer Sundays based on observed conditions — not automatic every Sunday. When active, it helps. **Check:** Call MassDOT 511, check their website, or open Google Maps before you are already in the backup.

The Canal Service Roads: Do Not Do It

The service roads alongside the Cape Cod Canal look like parallel escape routes on a map. They are not public through roads. They dead-end. Do not be that person.

Real-Time Tools Worth Using

- **Google Maps** — live traffic updates; check bridge approach before leaving home
- **Waze** — community-sourced incident reports; good for knowing about bridge breakdowns that can add 30–45 minutes
- **MassDOT 511** — authoritative source for reverse-lane activation status on Route 6
- **Cape Cod Times** — occasional social media updates on major traffic events

Before You Join the Queue

Once you are in the backup, you are in it. Do these before you approach either bridge — in Falmouth, Sandwich, or Barnstable.

- **Fuel up** — gas stations near bridges have their own lines on peak Sundays
- **Use the bathroom** — no good options once stopped on Route 6 a mile from the Sagamore
- **Download entertainment** — cell signal in a bridge backup can be patchy
- **Set your navigation** — decide Sagamore or Bourne before leaving home; switching routes mid-backup rarely saves time

The Bottom Line

There is no clever workaround to Sunday Cape Cod traffic. The bridges are the bridges. Leave before 11am or after 7pm, check MassDOT 511 for reverse-lane status, and look at Google Maps before you pull out of your driveway.

◆ THINGS TO DO

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