



CAPE COD CERTIFIED

VISITING CAPE COD

Cape Cod Without a Car: Ferries, Bikes, Buses & How to Pull It Off

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



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Visiting Cape Cod without a car is possible — but only if you go in with accurate expectations. Most Cape Cod towns were built around the automobile, and the Mid-Cape in particular (Hyannis, Yarmouth, Dennis, Brewster) is nearly car-dependent outside of the Rail Trail corridor. That said, there are genuine sweet spots where arriving without a car is not just doable but arguably better. Provincetown is the standout example. Falmouth rewards cyclists. The Cape Cod Rail Trail unlocks 22 miles of connected towns for anyone who can rent a bike. This guide lays out what works, what doesn't, and how to actually get here.

The Honest Truth About Car-Free Cape Cod

Most travel content will tell you the Cape is bikeable and transit-friendly. The fuller picture: the Cape has two distinct personalities. The Outer Cape — Truro, Wellfleet, and especially Provincetown — is compact, walkable, and accessible by fast ferry from Boston. The Mid-Cape is sprawling Route 28 strip-mall geography where distances between anything interesting run 3 to 8 miles with no sidewalks and limited bus frequency.

Before you book, ask yourself three questions. Where on the Cape do you actually want to go? What do you plan to do there — beaches, restaurants, hiking, whale watching? And how much are you willing to rely on rideshare to fill the gaps? Honest answers to those questions will tell you whether you need a car.

The good news: if Provincetown is your destination, you can have a complete summer trip without ever renting a car. If you want to explore from Falmouth to Wellfleet in the same weekend, you almost certainly need one.

Provincetown: The Best Car-Free Destination on the Cape

Provincetown is the clearest argument for car-free travel on Cape Cod. The town occupies the tip of the Cape, and its entire commercial and cultural life runs along Commercial Street — a 1.5-mile stretch you can walk end-to-end in under 30 minutes. Parking in Provincetown in summer is expensive, genuinely scarce, and a source of daily stress for drivers. Leaving the car behind is not a compromise here; it is the right call.

Getting to Provincetown without a car is straightforward from Boston. Bay State Cruise Company and Boston Harbor Cruises [VERIFY 2026 operators and current schedule] both run fast ferries from Boston's Seaport District to MacMillan Pier in Provincetown. The trip takes roughly 90 minutes and costs approximately \$50–65 per person round-trip [VERIFY 2026 fares]. Service runs seasonally, typically May through October [VERIFY 2026 season start and end dates]. Book early — these ferries sell out on summer weekends and the schedule is the first thing to check.

Once you arrive at the pier, the whole town is within a short walk. Whale watching boats depart from the same dock. The beaches — Herring Cove and Race Point — are reachable by bike or the seasonal Province Lands shuttle [VERIFY 2026 shuttle schedule and fare]. Province Lands has a well-maintained paved bike trail looping through the dunes. Multiple rental shops on Commercial Street offer bikes, e-bikes, and scooters [VERIFY current operators]. You will not miss your car.

Falmouth and the Shining Sea Bikeway

Falmouth is the most bike-accessible town on the Upper Cape, thanks to the Shining Sea Bikeway. This paved, off-road path runs approximately 10 miles [VERIFY exact current mileage] from North Falmouth through Falmouth village, along the Vineyard Sound shoreline, and down to the Woods Hole ferry terminal — which connects to the Steamship Authority ferry for Martha's Vineyard if you want to extend your car-free trip.

Getting to Falmouth without a car from Boston requires some planning: commuter rail toward Providence, then the Plymouth & Brockton bus to Hyannis, then the CCRTA B-Bus from Hyannis to Falmouth [VERIFY 2026 B-Bus route, frequency, and schedule]. A direct seasonal ferry from Boston to Falmouth or Woods Hole has been discussed [VERIFY whether this route was operating in summer 2026]. The connections are real — build travel time into your itinerary.

Once you arrive in Falmouth, bike rentals are available in the village center. From the Bikeway, you can reach Falmouth Heights Beach, Surf Drive Beach, and the center of town without touching a road. Woods Hole itself is a compact, walkable village worth several hours: the Oceanographic Institution, the aquarium, and the ferry dock are all within easy walking distance.

Getting to the Cape Without a Car

Plymouth & Brockton Bus runs year-round from Boston’s South Station to Hyannis, with stops in Sandwich, Sagamore, and Barnstable [VERIFY 2026 stops and schedule]. Round-trip fares are approximately \$25–35 [VERIFY 2026 pricing]. This is the most reliable overland connection to the Cape, and Hyannis is the transit hub that everything else radiates from. If your destination is the Mid-Cape, this is your primary arrival point.

Peter Pan Bus also serves the Boston–Hyannis corridor and offers a seasonal extension to Provincetown [VERIFY 2026 Provincetown service dates]. If you prefer a direct bus to the Outer Cape over the ferry, check their schedule.

CCRTA (Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority) is the local bus system connecting towns once you are on the Cape. The H2O Line runs between Hyannis and Orleans with stops in Yarmouth, Dennis, and Harwich [VERIFY 2026 H2O Line route, stops, and frequency — CCRTA has adjusted routes in recent years]. The B-Bus connects Hyannis and Falmouth [VERIFY]. Service frequency is limited — often one bus per hour or less, with reduced Sunday service. CCRTA offers real-time tracking via app [VERIFY current app availability]. Fares are low, typically \$2–4 per ride [VERIFY].

Uber and Lyft are available throughout the Cape in summer but expect surge pricing on weekend afternoons and evenings. In Wellfleet, Truro, and the outer reaches of Provincetown, driver availability drops significantly. Do not count on rideshare arriving within 10 minutes at the Outer Cape.

The Cape Cod Rail Trail: 22 Miles of Connected Towns

The Cape Cod Rail Trail is a paved, off-road bike path running approximately 22 miles from Dennis to Wellfleet, passing through Harwich, Brewster, Orleans, and Eastham. This is the backbone of car-free access through the Mid and Lower Cape. Trailheads with parking and nearby bike rentals are located in Dennis, Harwich, and Orleans.

From the Rail Trail you can reach: Nickerson State Park in Brewster for pond swimming and camping, the restaurants and shops of downtown Orleans, Brewster town center and the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History, and — via the connecting Nauset Bike Trail in Eastham — the pathway toward Coast Guard Beach. The trail is well-maintained, mostly flat, and accessible to riders at most fitness levels.

Bike rental shops operate at several trailhead towns [VERIFY current operators in Orleans and Dennis for 2026]. E-bike rentals have become increasingly common along the corridor and make the full 22-mile route genuinely accessible [VERIFY current e-bike availability at trail rental shops]. If you arrive by bus to Hyannis and want to access the Rail Trail, you will need the CCRTA H2O Line to Dennis or a rideshare to a trailhead — plan this connection before you arrive.

Where Car-Free Travel Gets Difficult

Be realistic about the following situations:

Chatham is a beautiful town but its best draws — Chatham Lighthouse Beach, Stage Harbor, the fish pier, the seals visible from shore — are spread across a geography that does not cluster around any transit stop. Without a bike and a plan, you will spend heavily on rideshare.

Wellfleet has the Rail Trail passing through, but the town center, the oyster shacks on the harbor, and the bay beaches require either a bike or a car. Distances between points are real.

Beach gear logistics are the hidden challenge of car-free Cape travel. Carrying an umbrella, a cooler, and chairs on a bike or bus is possible but genuinely inconvenient. Traveling light or renting gear locally from a beach outfitter solves this cleanly.

Grocery shopping in Mid-Cape towns without a car is difficult. Hyannis has a Stop & Shop within walking distance of the bus terminal. Outside Hyannis, plan to eat at restaurants, farm stands, and farmers markets reachable by bike — and budget accordingly.

Quick Facts

Detail	Info
Best car-free destination	Provincetown
Fast ferry from Boston	~90 min, ~\$50–65 RT [VERIFY 2026]
Main bus from Boston	Plymouth & Brockton, South Station → Hyannis
Local bus system	CCRTA — limited frequency, plan ahead
Best bike corridor	Cape Cod Rail Trail (22 miles, Dennis to Wellfleet)
Falmouth bike path	Shining Sea Bikeway (~10 miles) [VERIFY mileage]
Rideshare availability	Good in Hyannis and P’town; limited Outer Cape
E-bike rentals	P’town, Falmouth, Orleans — verify current operators
Ferry season	Roughly May–October [VERIFY 2026 dates]

Frequently Asked Questions

Can you visit Cape Cod without a car? Yes, but the experience depends heavily on where you go. Provincetown is genuinely car-free friendly — the fast ferry from Boston puts you steps from town, and everything worth doing is within walking or biking distance. The Mid-Cape (Hyannis, Yarmouth, Dennis, Brewster) is significantly harder without your own transportation. Audit your actual itinerary before you decide to go car-free.

What is the best way to get to Provincetown without a car? The Boston-to-Provincetown fast ferry is the best option. Bay State Cruise Company and Boston Harbor Cruises [VERIFY current 2026 operators] run seasonal service from Boston’s Seaport, arriving at MacMillan Pier in roughly 90 minutes. Book tickets in advance for summer weekends — these boats fill up, and last-minute seats can disappear entirely.

Is the Cape Cod Rail Trail accessible by public transit? Partially. The CCRTA H2O Line serves Dennis, which has a Rail Trail trailhead [VERIFY current H2O Line stops for 2026]. From there you can bike the full 22-mile trail east toward Wellfleet. If you arrive by bus to Hyannis, you need the CCRTA or a rideshare to reach a trailhead. It is doable with planning but not seamless — gaps exist.

How do I get from Hyannis to Provincetown without a car? The cleanest answer is to take the fast ferry directly from Boston and skip Hyannis entirely. If you are already in Hyannis, Peter Pan Bus offers seasonal service toward the Outer Cape [VERIFY 2026 Provincetown stop]. Rideshare from Hyannis to Provincetown runs 45–60

minutes and can cost \$50–80 or more with summer surge pricing. A bus-to-Provincetown connection may require a transfer — verify current CCRTA options before you travel.

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