

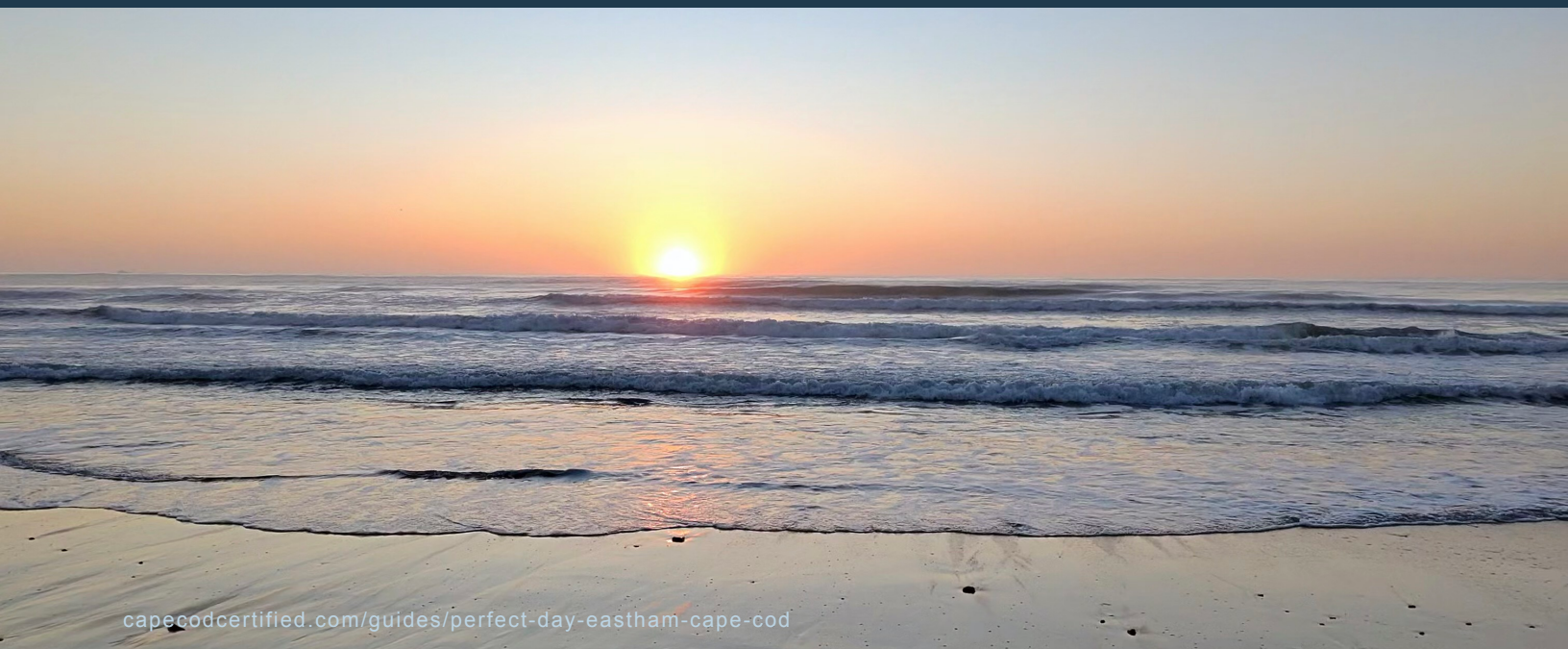


CAPE COD CERTIFIED

VISITING CAPE COD

A Perfect Day in Eastham, Cape Cod: Fort Hill, Coast Guard Beach & the Outer Cape

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



capecodcertified.com/guides/perfect-day-eastham-cape-cod

Eastham is where Cape Cod stops pretending to be a resort town and becomes something wilder. It's the southern gateway to the Cape Cod National Seashore, which means the federal government has protected most of its Atlantic coastline from development since 1961.

Morning: Fort Hill and Nauset Marsh

Start at Fort Hill before 9 a.m. if you can. The overlook at the top of the hill looks out over Nauset Marsh and Nauset Bay — a sweeping patchwork of salt marsh, tidal creeks, and open water that shifts color by the hour depending on tide and light.

The **Fort Hill Trail** is a moderate 1.5-mile loop that drops through red maple swamp, skirts the marsh edge, and connects to the Buttonbush Trail. After the hike, drive to the **Salt Pond Visitor Center** on Route 6 — the best visitor center in the Cape Cod National Seashore system.

Midday: Coast Guard Beach

Coast Guard Beach is the main event. The surf here has real power — this is genuine Atlantic beach swimming. Lifeguards are on duty in summer. The **Coast Guard Beach** lot itself fills by 8 a.m. in July and August. The practical solution is the Little Creek parking area on Doane Road — a free shuttle runs from there to the beach all summer. Bring lunch. There are no concession stands on this beach.

Afternoon: First Encounter Beach and the Rail Trail

First Encounter Beach on the bay side is a completely different experience. The beach faces Cape Cod Bay to the west, which means flat, warm-ish water and tidal flats that stretch hundreds of yards at low tide. The granite marker at the parking lot notes the 1620 encounter — the first hostile meeting between the Mayflower party and the Wampanoag.

Check the tide chart before you go: at low tide the flats are spectacular; at high tide the beach narrows considerably.

Evening: Sunset Over the Bay

For the end of the day, come back to the bay side. First Encounter Beach faces west and gives you a direct sunset over Cape Cod Bay. Get there about 45 minutes before sundown.

Practical Notes

- **Parking at Coast Guard Beach:** The beach lot fills before 8 a.m. in peak summer. Use the Little Creek lot on Doane Road and take the free National Seashore shuttle.
- **National Seashore fee:** America the Beautiful passes accepted.
- **Tides matter:** First Encounter Beach's tidal flats are best 2 hours before and after low tide.
- **Best season:** July and August for full beach and shuttle service; late June and September for smaller crowds.
- **Kids note:** Fort Hill Buttonbush Trail is stroller-accessible on the boardwalk section.

Certified Local Businesses in Eastham

Cape Cod Certified recommends these verified local spots:

- **Fairway Restaurant & Pizzeria** — 4.4★ (778 Google reviews)
- **Hole in One Bakery & Coffee Shop** — 4.5★ (688 Google reviews)

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