



CAPE COD CERTIFIED

CAPE COD PURSUITS

Kayaking & Paddleboarding on Cape Cod: Best Spots & Where to Rent

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



capecodcertified.com/guides/kayaking-paddleboarding

Cape Cod is one of the best paddling destinations in New England — and it earns that reputation not just because it is surrounded by water, but because of the extraordinary variety of water it offers.

Why Cape Cod Is Built for Paddling

The Cape's hook shape creates a protected inner shore along Cape Cod Bay where morning conditions are often glassy. In between are dozens of tidal rivers through salt marshes, plus more than 350 freshwater kettle ponds — clear, calm, and perfect for families.

Best Spots by Type

Calm Flatwater — Beginner and Family Friendly

Pleasant Bay (Chatham/Orleans): The crown jewel of Cape Cod paddling. Roughly 2,000 acres of protected, crystal-clear water. Launch from Ryder's Cove in Chatham or Town Cove ramp in Orleans.

Bass River (Yarmouth/Dennis): A classic tidal river paddle through salt marsh. Wind, egrets, great blue herons at every bend. Excellent sunset paddle.

Wellfleet Harbor: Small, calm, and easy to navigate with striking views back toward the town's iconic church steeple.

Nickerson State Park Ponds (Brewster): Eight freshwater kettle ponds surrounded by pitch-pine forest. Motorized boats restricted. The park rents canoes and kayaks directly at the ponds.

Open Bay and Tidal Marsh — Intermediate and Up

Nauset Marsh (Orleans/Eastham): The Outer Cape's most spectacular paddling environment. A labyrinth of tidal channels. Guided tours from Nauset Kayak are the best introduction.

Herring River (Wellfleet): One of the most beautiful tidal creeks on the Cape. Sits within the Cape Cod National Seashore.

Cape Cod Bay: Dramatic open-water scenery. Plan for early morning and watch the marine forecast carefully.

Rentals and Tours

- **Chatham Water Sports:** Kayak and paddleboard rentals for Pleasant Bay.
 - **Nauset Kayak (Orleans):** Go-to for Nauset Marsh access. Guided sunrise, sunset, and moonlight paddles.
 - **Nickerson State Park Boat Rentals (Brewster):** Most convenient freshwater option.
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What to Bring

PFD (required by law for children), water, sunscreen, waterproof bag, water shoes, and always check the NOAA marine forecast before open-water paddles.

Best Time to Paddle

Early morning is consistently best. Wind is lightest, wildlife is most active, and the light on the water is extraordinary. July and August offer warmest temperatures; early June and September are best for experienced paddlers.

◆ THINGS TO DO

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