

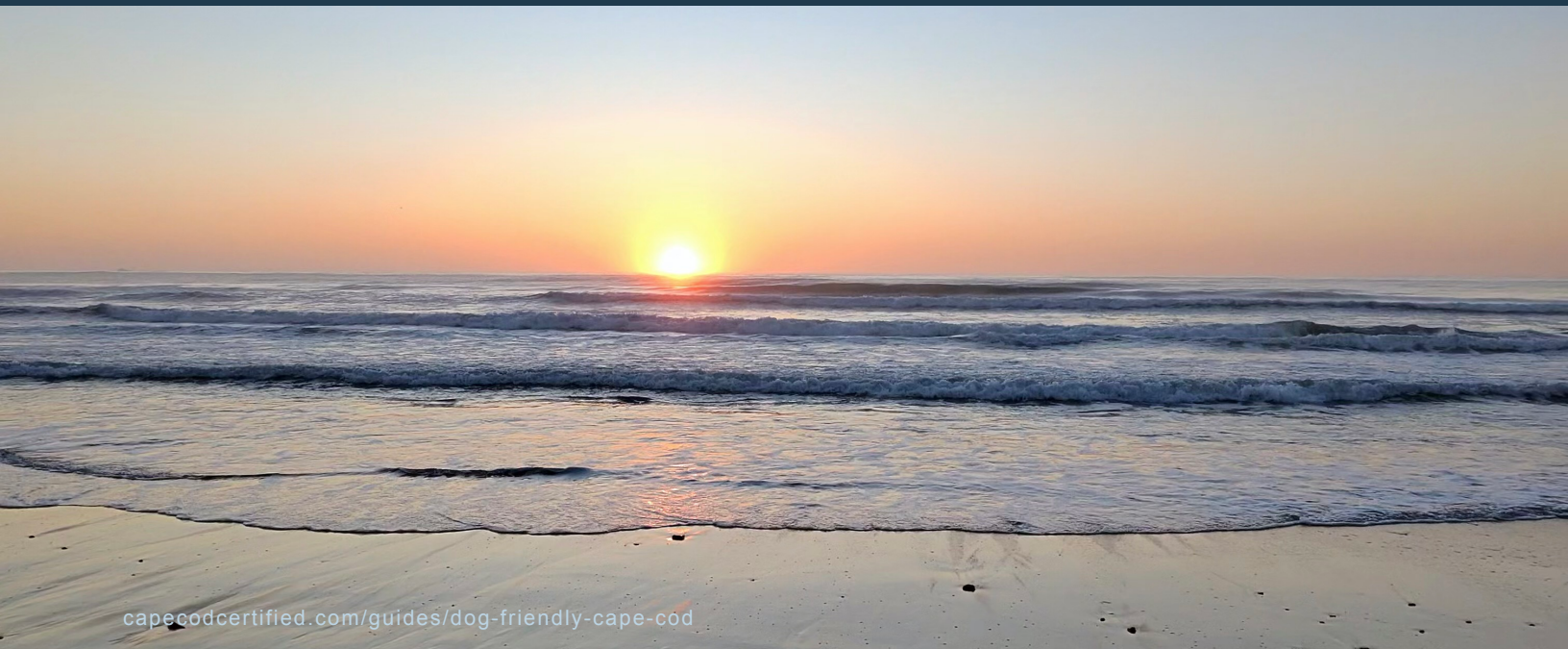


CAPE COD CERTIFIED

VISITING CAPE COD

Dog-Friendly Cape Cod: Beaches, Restaurants, Parks & Tips for a Cape Trip with Your Dog

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



capecodcertified.com/guides/dog-friendly-cape-cod

Cape Cod is one of the best places on the East Coast to travel with a dog — salt air, miles of trails through pine and scrub oak, and a culture that genuinely welcomes four-legged visitors. But the rules change by town, by season, and by beach, and getting them wrong can mean a \$50 fine and a miserable afternoon.

The Single Most Important Rule: Know the Beach Season

Most Cape Cod town beaches prohibit dogs from June 15 through September 15. This is enforced. Fines are real.

Outside that window — before June 15 and after September 15 — most of those same beaches reopen to leashed dogs. Shoulder season is one of the best times to bring a dog to Cape Cod.

Dog-Friendly Beaches by Town

Barnstable. Sandy Neck Beach conservation area open to leashed dogs year-round. Town beaches (Kalmus, Craigville, Millway) follow June 15–September 15 restriction. Verify current rules with Town of Barnstable before visiting.

Brewster. Bay beaches (Breakwater, Linnell Landing, Paines Creek) follow county-standard summer prohibition. Outside that window, leashed dogs welcome. Nickerson State Park trails open year-round.

Falmouth. Follows June 15–September 15 rule. Check posted signage directly — Surf Drive, Old Silver, and Menauhant each have specific rules that can differ.

Eastham and the Outer Cape. Cape Cod National Seashore beaches: **dogs NOT allowed on federally managed ocean beaches** regardless of season. This applies to Coast Guard, Nauset Light, Marconi, Head of the Meadow, Race Point, and Herring Cove. CCNS trails (Fort Hill in Eastham, Great Island in Wellfleet) welcome leashed dogs year-round.

Wellfleet. Town beaches follow June 15–September 15 restriction. Great Island Trail (4–8 miles) is one of the best long dog walks on the Cape — bring water, none available on trail.

Parks and Trails Year-Round

Nickerson State Park, Brewster. 1,900 acres of pine forest and kettle ponds. Dogs on leash on all trails. Not permitted in swimming areas. Some campsites accept dogs (confirm with DCR).

Punkhorn Parklands, Brewster. Over 800 acres through pitch pine, scrub oak, and kettle ponds. Dogs on leash throughout. Thin crowds even in summer.

Sandy Neck Conservation Area, Barnstable. Miles of trails through coastal plain and barrier beach dunes. Almost no foot traffic on interior paths.

Beebe Woods, Falmouth. Old-growth beech and oak forest with easy soft trails. Dogs on leash welcome.

Cape Cod National Seashore Trails. Dogs on leash permitted on most CCNS trails but NOT on CCNS beaches. Fort Hill area trail (Eastham), Buttonbush Trail (Eastham), Great Island Trail (Wellfleet) all allow dogs.

Dog-Friendly Restaurants

Cape Cod outdoor dining has become genuinely welcoming to dogs. Always ask before assuming — policies can change between seasons. Bring water for your dog. Position away from foot traffic. Most towns have outdoor patios known for welcoming well-behaved dogs — current online reviews are the most reliable source.

Dog-Friendly Accommodations

Pet fees: Expect \$25–75 per night or a flat deposit. Get confirmed in writing.

Vacation rentals (VRBO, Airbnb): Often the most dog-friendly option — yards and outdoor space. Read individual listing rules for size limits, breed restrictions, crating requirements.

Inns and B&Bs: Call directly rather than relying on platform filters. Some limit dogs to specific rooms.

Campgrounds: Nickerson State Park accepts dogs at campsites on leash.

Heat and Water Safety

Never leave your dog in a parked car. Massachusetts law prohibits it, and summer heat inside a parked car can be fatal within minutes.

Bring water everywhere. A collapsible bowl adds no weight and makes every outing safer.

Watch the pavement. If you cannot hold the back of your hand against pavement for five seconds, it is too hot for your dog to walk on.

Ocean currents. Bay is generally calm and safe. Ocean side can have significant surf and rip currents — know your dog swimming ability.

Tick Prevention

Not optional. The Outer Cape is a documented high-tick area. Use veterinarian-recommended tick preventive. Do a full tick check after every trail walk — ears, armpits, between toes, around the collar, under the tail. Talk to your vet about Lyme vaccination.

Shark Awareness for Outer Cape Dog Owners

Great whites are present, drawn by the gray seal recovery. If seals are visible near an Outer Cape beach, keep your dog on leash and close. Dogs that chase seals create unpredictable situations near water where sharks are actively present. Download the SharkTivity app.

Planning Checklist

- Confirm accommodation pet policy in writing
- Verify beach and trail dog rules for each location with the managing town or CCNS
- Current on tick prevention
- Download SharkTivity for Outer Cape beaches
- Save a Cape Cod vet phone number
- Pack: collapsible bowl, water, leash, waste bags, any medications

- Know the season: June 15–September 15 = town beaches off-limits

◆ THINGS TO DO

Make a day of it

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