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Boston to Cape Cod Day Trip: The Practical Guide to Getting There, Where to Go & How Long It Takes

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



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A Boston to Cape Cod day trip is absolutely doable — and it can be one of the best day trips within reach of the city. But the logistics matter enormously, and the people who have a bad time are almost always the ones who underestimated the drive. The distance from Boston to the first Cape Cod town (Sandwich) is 70 miles and takes about 75 minutes in genuine off-peak conditions. On a summer Friday afternoon, that same drive can take three hours. Plan the logistics first, then plan the fun.

Here is everything you need to know before you go.

The Honest Reality of a Boston to Cape Cod Day Trip

Cape Cod is a peninsula, and there are only two bridges onto it: the Sagamore Bridge and the Bourne Bridge, both spanning the Cape Cod Canal. In the summer, those bridges are the single biggest variable in your day. On a Friday afternoon between 2pm and 8pm, backups of one to two hours on the approach roads are routine. On a Sunday afternoon, the return backup can be just as bad.

This does not mean you should skip the trip. It means you should plan around the bottleneck, not ignore it.

The golden rule for a summer day trip by car: Leave Boston no later than 7:30am on a weekend, or go on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday when traffic is dramatically lighter. If you leave Boston at 10am on a Saturday in July, expect to sit.

The further down the Cape you want to go, the more this calculus matters. Sandwich is 70 miles from Boston. Provincetown is 130 miles. That extra 60 miles through two-lane Route 6 adds 90 minutes to 2.5 hours each way depending on conditions.

Getting There by Car: Route and Timing

The route is straightforward: **I-93 South to Route 3 South, across the Sagamore Bridge, then Route 6 East** onto the Cape. There are no complicated turns. The Sagamore Bridge deposits you directly into Sandwich, the first Cape Cod town.

Realistic summer drive times from downtown Boston:

Destination	Off-Peak	Summer Midday	Summer Friday PM
Sandwich	1 hr 15 min	1 hr 45 min	2.5–3.5 hrs
Falmouth	1 hr 20 min	1 hr 50 min	3–4 hrs
Hyannis (Barnstable)	1 hr 30 min	2 hrs	3–4.5 hrs
Provincetown	2 hrs	3–3.5 hrs	4.5–6 hrs

Parking on the Cape in summer is its own project. Sandwich village has free town parking. Old Silver Beach in Falmouth fills by 9am on a summer weekend (fee lot). In Provincetown, town lots exist but are expensive and fill fast — if you’re driving to P’town, expect \$30–50/day in parking fees and a walk from wherever you find a spot [VERIFY 2026 lot rates].

The Best Option for Provincetown: Take the Ferry

If your goal is Provincetown, skip the drive entirely. The **Boston to Provincetown high-speed ferry** is the single best way to do this day trip, and it turns P'town from a grueling drive into a genuinely relaxed outing.

Operators serving the route include Bay State Cruise Company and Boston Harbor Cruises, departing from the Seaport/World Trade Center area [VERIFY which operators are running the 2026 season and exact terminal locations]. The crossing takes approximately 90 minutes each way and deposits you directly at **MacMillan Pier**, which puts you steps from Commercial Street, Provincetown's main strip.

A typical ferry day trip looks like this:

- Depart Boston 8:00–9:00am
- Arrive Provincetown 9:30–10:30am
- 6–7 hours in town: walk Commercial Street, eat a lobster roll, visit Pilgrim Monument, swim at Herring Cove Beach or Race Point, explore the galleries
- Board the return ferry late afternoon (typically 4:30–5:30pm departures [VERIFY 2026 schedule])
- Back in Boston by 6:00–7:00pm, no traffic, no parking, no Sagamore Bridge

Round-trip ferry tickets typically run **\$50–65 per person** [VERIFY 2026 fares]. Book in advance — summer sailings, especially on weekends, sell out. The ferry runs seasonally, approximately May through October [VERIFY exact 2026 start and end dates].

Provincetown on a summer day is one of the genuinely great experiences in New England. It is the most distinctive town on the Cape — an arts colony, an LGBTQ+ landmark, a National Seashore gateway, and a working fishing village all at once. The ferry makes it accessible without the drive-time penalty.

Getting There by Bus

Peter Pan Bus operates service from **South Station in Boston to Hyannis** year-round, with seasonal service extending to Provincetown [VERIFY the 2026 schedule and which routes are active]. The Hyannis run takes roughly 1.5 to 2 hours depending on traffic. The bus drops you at the Hyannis Transportation Center, which connects to the Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority (CCRTA) local bus network.

For a Provincetown-by-bus trip, you can connect from Hyannis on the Plymouth & Brockton bus or the FLEX bus line to P'town [VERIFY 2026 connections and schedule — service has changed in recent years]. This takes longer than the ferry but is the most affordable option and works well if you're flexible about timing.

Bus travel is most practical for Hyannis itself, which has walkable downtown streets, Kennedy family sites, and ferry connections to Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard.

Best Cape Cod Day Trip Destinations from Boston (Ranked by Practicality)

1. Sandwich — Best for a Short Drive + Real Cape Cod Village Experience

Sandwich is the oldest town on Cape Cod and the first one you hit crossing the Sagamore Bridge. It deserves more attention than it gets from day-trippers. The historic village center is walkable and genuinely charming. The **Sandwich Boardwalk** stretches through marsh to a bayside beach at Town Neck (free, modest parking lot). **Heritage Museums and Gardens** is a world-class attraction — 100 acres of gardens, a restored 1912 carousel, and antique automobile collection [VERIFY current hours and admission]. The town takes 3–4 hours to do properly and is realistic even on a compressed schedule.

2. Provincetown — Best Overall Day Trip (Take the Ferry)

Already covered above. If you take the ferry, this is the top choice, full stop.

3. Falmouth — Best for Beaches and the Shining Sea Bikeway

Falmouth is about 1 hour 20 minutes from Boston in good traffic. The draw here is **Old Silver Beach** on Buzzards Bay (calm water, bay-side, west-facing — great for afternoon light and sunsets), the **Shining Sea Bikeway** (10.7 miles of flat, scenic trail from Falmouth to Woods Hole), and the **Woods Hole** waterfront village, where the WHOI campus and the Martha’s Vineyard Steamship ferry dock are both located. If you want to add an MV ferry as a bonus day trip within a day trip, Falmouth is your staging point — the crossing takes about 45 minutes.

4. Hyannis (Barnstable) — Most Practical, Least Atmospheric

Hyannis is the commercial hub of the Cape — the most hotel inventory, the most restaurants, the ferry terminals for both Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard. As a destination in itself, it is functional rather than beautiful. But if you are day-tripping to Nantucket from Boston, Hyannis is the efficient connector: drive or bus to Hyannis, board the **Hy-Line or Steamship Authority fast ferry to Nantucket** (about 1 hour each way [VERIFY 2026 fares and schedule]), and you have 3–5 hours on Nantucket before the return. That is a full but very achievable day.

What Doesn’t Work as a Boston Day Trip

Be honest with yourself about distance. The following towns are genuinely too far for a casual car-based day trip from Boston in summer:

- **Chatham** — 95 miles, minimum 2.5 hours each way in summer; you’d spend more time driving than exploring
- **Wellfleet and Eastham** — similar problem; beautiful towns that deserve an overnight
- **Truro** — 110 miles, gateway to the Outer Cape; needs an overnight

If any of these towns are on your list, book a night on the Cape and make it a proper trip. The Cape Cod National Seashore alone — Nauset Beach, Coast Guard Beach, Marconi Beach, Race Point — justifies two nights.

Quick Facts

- **Distance, Boston to Sandwich:** 70 miles
- **Distance, Boston to Provincetown:** 130 miles
- **Best day trip route by car:** I-93 S → Route 3 S → Sagamore Bridge → Route 6 East
- **Biggest traffic bottleneck:** Sagamore and Bourne bridges (especially Friday afternoons and Sunday afternoons)
- **Best time to leave Boston by car:** 7:30am or earlier on summer weekends; any time mid-week
- **Ferry to Provincetown:** approximately 90 minutes, roughly \$50–65 RT [VERIFY 2026]
- **Bus from South Station to Hyannis:** Peter Pan, approximately 1.5–2 hours [VERIFY 2026]
- **Parking in Provincetown:** expensive and competitive; ferry is strongly recommended
- **Sharks:** Great Whites are documented near Outer Cape ocean beaches July–November; swim at lifeguarded beaches and follow posted flags

FAQ

How long does it take to drive from Boston to Cape Cod?

In genuine off-peak conditions, the drive from Boston to the Sagamore Bridge (the Cape Cod border) takes about 60–75 minutes. Add another 15–20 minutes to reach Sandwich or Falmouth. In summer peak traffic — Friday afternoons, holiday weekends — the same drive can take 2.5 to 3.5 hours. Go early or go mid-week.

Is the Boston to Provincetown ferry worth it?

For a day trip specifically targeting Provincetown, the ferry is not just worth it — it is the right answer. It eliminates 2.5 to 4 hours of summer driving each way, drops you in the center of town, and costs roughly what you would spend on gas and parking combined. Book in advance; summer sailings sell out.

Can you do a Cape Cod day trip without a car?

Yes. The ferry to Provincetown from Boston requires no car. Peter Pan Bus serves Hyannis from South Station. Once in Hyannis, the CCRTA bus network covers much of the Mid-Cape. Provincetown itself is extremely walkable. For beach towns like Sandwich or Falmouth, a car is much more practical.

Which Cape Cod town is closest to Boston?

Sandwich is the first Cape Cod town over the Sagamore Bridge and the closest to Boston — about 70 miles and 75 minutes in off-peak traffic. It is underrated as a day trip destination: the historic village, Heritage Museums and Gardens, and the Sandwich Boardwalk make for a full half-day without needing to drive further down the Cape.

Ready to plan your Cape Cod visit? Browse restaurants, beaches, experiences, and local businesses at capecodcertified.com/directory — the vetted local guide to the Cape, built by people who live here.

Certified Local Businesses in Sandwich

Cape Cod Certified recommends these verified local spots:

- **Lambert’s Farm Market** — 4.6★ (702 Google reviews)
- **Tomatoes Italian Grille & Bar** — 4.5★ (665 Google reviews)

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