



CAPE COD CERTIFIED

VISITING CAPE COD

Cape Cod from New York: Drive Times, Best Routes & How to Plan a NYC Weekend Trip

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



capecodcertified.com/guides/cape-cod-from-new-york-city

The drive from New York City to Cape Cod is approximately 4.5 to 5.5 hours in optimal conditions — but in peak summer, the last 60 miles of Massachusetts highway can add two or more hours on Friday afternoons. Understanding the route, the timing, and the logistics is the difference between a great Cape Cod weekend and a traffic nightmare. New York City is the second-largest feeder market for Cape Cod visitors (after Boston), which means tens of thousands of NYC-area drivers make this run every summer. This guide covers everything they wish someone had told them before the first trip.

The Route: What You're Actually Driving

Cape Cod from New York is essentially one highway for the bulk of the journey. You'll take **I-95 North** through Connecticut and Rhode Island, then split onto **I-195 East** toward New Bedford and Wareham. From there, Route 25 East leads to the Bourne Bridge, and Route 3 South from the greater Boston area leads to the Sagamore Bridge.

GPS distance from Midtown Manhattan: approximately **260–290 miles** depending on your final Cape Cod destination. Google Maps will show 4:15–4:45 in clear conditions. That is a realistic number on a weekday morning in May or September. In summer Friday traffic, add 1–2 hours minimum for the Providence-to-Wareham stretch and another 60–90 minutes at the bridge approach. Plan for 6.5–7 hours on a peak Friday afternoon departure.

A few landmarks that tell you how far you have come:

- **Hartford, CT** (~115 miles from NYC): roughly halfway to Cape Cod
- **Providence, RI** (~180 miles): where summer traffic starts to bite; the I-95/I-195 split is critical here — stay right for I-195 East toward Cape Cod
- **Wareham, MA** (~240 miles): the final stretch before the bridges; this is where “almost there” becomes genuinely true, and also where Friday afternoon traffic can bring everything to a standstill

Do not trust real-time GPS on a summer Friday after 2pm. The apps update constantly, but the fundamental bottleneck — the Sagamore or Bourne Bridge approach — does not disappear because Waze found a slightly different local road. You are waiting for a physical funnel point.

The Two Bridge Options

There is no way onto Cape Cod by land except through the **Bourne Bridge** or the **Sagamore Bridge**. Both cross the Cape Cod Canal. Both get backed up in summer. Choosing the right one for your destination saves time and confusion.

Sagamore Bridge (Route 3 / Route 6 East): The eastern option. Faster access to **Sandwich, Barnstable/Hyannis**, and every town on the Mid, Lower, and Outer Cape — including Brewster, Chatham, Orleans, Wellfleet, and Provincetown. The vast majority of NYC visitors heading to the Cape's most-visited destinations should use the Sagamore.

Bourne Bridge (Route 25 East): The western option. Better access to **Falmouth, Woods Hole, Mashpee**, and the towns in the Upper Cape's western corridor. If you're taking a ferry to Martha's Vineyard from Woods Hole, the Bourne Bridge saves you backtracking.

Quick decision guide: - **Chatham, Brewster, Orleans, Wellfleet, Provincetown** → Sagamore Bridge - **Falmouth, Woods Hole, Mashpee, Bourne** → Bourne Bridge - **Sandwich, Barnstable, Hyannis** → either works; Sagamore is more direct

One tactical note: if the Sagamore approach is backed up badly on a Friday, some drivers exit early and try to pick up Route 6 via the Bourne Bridge instead. It rarely saves more than 15–20 minutes and often costs more. Commit to one bridge and wait it out.

Timing Strategy: The Single Most Important Decision

The timing of your departure matters more than your route choice, your GPS app, or any shortcut you have read about online.

The worst time to leave NYC for the Cape: Friday afternoon between 1pm and 6pm. The I-95 corridor through Connecticut begins backing up by midday, and the Sagamore Bridge approach on summer Fridays routinely sees waits of 45–90 minutes at the bridge itself. By 4pm, you are potentially looking at a 7-plus hour trip from Midtown.

The best departure windows from NYC: - **Thursday evening (any time):** Arrive Thursday night, avoid all Friday traffic, and you have essentially added half a day to your Cape Cod weekend. Hotels often cost slightly less Thursday night than Friday. - **Friday before noon:** Get out of the city by 10–11am and you will beat the main crush in Connecticut and the bottleneck at the bridges. - **Friday very late (after 9pm):** Most of the weekend rush has moved through; the drive becomes straightforward again. - **Saturday morning:** Significantly better than Friday afternoon; you've missed the Friday surge entirely.

The Sunday return: Leave before 2pm Sunday or consider staying until Monday morning. The Sunday evening northbound backup from the Sagamore toward Boston — and then the I-95 corridor through Rhode Island — builds through the afternoon and peaks between 4–7pm. A Monday morning departure beats all of it. If your job allows remote work on Mondays, a Cape Cod Monday morning is one of the better arguments for making the drive.

Where to Stay for a NYC Weekend Trip

For a 3-night trip from New York City, these are the most practical bases, matched to what each town actually offers:

Chatham is roughly 5 hours from NYC and worth every minute. This is the most complete Cape Cod village for a weekend — the Fish Pier, the lighthouse overlook with seals hauling out on the bars below, Main Street with real restaurants and shops in walking distance. **Chatham Bars Inn** (297 Shore Road) is the prestige address on the Cape, a 70-acre oceanfront resort; rooms in summer run [VERIFY current 2026 peak rates, historically \$500–\$900/night]. Smaller inns along Main Street offer more moderate options without sacrificing the village access.

Falmouth lands closer to 4.5 hours via the Bourne Bridge and gives you quick access to **Woods Hole**, where the Steamship Authority ferry to Martha's Vineyard departs. **Sea Crest Beach Hotel** in North Falmouth sits on a north-facing Bay beach [VERIFY current operation and availability]. Falmouth's downtown has a walkable Main Street with genuine year-round character — unusual for a Cape Cod town.

Brewster, via the Sagamore Bridge, runs about 5 hours. **Ocean Edge Resort** on the Bay has a pool complex, golf, and direct access to the tidal flats — at low tide you can walk close to a mile out on the exposed sand, with hermit crabs and tidal pools underfoot. **Nickerson State Park** is adjacent for campers. Brewster also sits 20–25 minutes from Chatham and right on the Cape Cod Rail Trail.

Provincetown adds at least 30 minutes beyond most other Cape destinations — expect 5.5 hours or more on a peak weekend. But P'town is genuinely unlike any other stop on the Cape: Commercial Street, the art galleries, the LGBTQ+ community, the dunes of the Province Lands, Race Point Beach with its lighthouse and both sunrise and sunset views. For a first P'town experience, the extra half hour is not a question. Stay on the West End for quiet; stay closer to the center of Commercial Street for access to everything.

Sandwich, right at the Sagamore Bridge, is the shortest drive from NYC — potentially 4.5 hours on a good day. It is a quiet, historic town with the Sandwich Glass Museum, the Boardwalk Beach on Cape Cod Bay, and a beautifully

preserved town center. Not a nightlife destination, but an excellent first-night stop before moving further onto the Cape the next morning, or a right base for families who want calm water and short drives to other towns.

Alternatives to Driving

The drive is the default, but it is not always the best answer.

Bus: FlixBus and Peter Pan [VERIFY 2026 routes and schedules for direct NYC-to-Hyannis service] both run from New York City to Hyannis, the main commercial hub on the Cape. Journey time is approximately 5–6 hours. This works best for those without a car or who want to skip the driving stress entirely, though having a car on the Cape substantially expands your flexibility — beaches, restaurants, and most points of interest require driving.

Train plus fast ferry (best option for Provincetown): Take Amtrak Acela from Penn Station or Moynihan Train Hall to Boston’s South Station [VERIFY 2026 schedules and fares; Acela runs roughly 3.5 hours]. Then connect to the **Bay State Cruise Company fast ferry** from Boston’s Seaport District to Provincetown [VERIFY 2026 schedules and fares; approximately 90-minute crossing]. This combination works exceptionally well for a P’town-only weekend — you arrive in the harbor by boat with the town unfolding in front of you, which is about as good as first impressions get. Planning the Amtrak and ferry times together in advance is the main logistical step, and neither leg is complicated.

How to Structure a Cape Cod Weekend from NYC

A realistic 3-night Cape Cod weekend from New York City:

Thursday evening: Depart after 7pm, arrive by midnight. Check in and sleep. The drive is easy; nothing is closed.

Friday: Wake up already on Cape Cod. This is the point. Coffee at a local spot, a morning walk on the harbor or beach, getting oriented. Do not over-plan Friday — the decompression from the city is part of the experience.

Saturday: The signature beach day. If you are based on the Lower Cape, Nauset Beach in Orleans or a National Seashore beach — Coast Guard Beach in Eastham, Marconi Beach in Wellfleet — gives you the full Atlantic experience: surf, wide open sand, and the scale that makes Cape Cod beaches different from the Jersey Shore or Long Island.

Sunday: The second-experience day. Drive Route 6A (the Old King’s Highway) west through Brewster and Dennis for farm stands, antique shops, and the slower Mid-Cape pace. Or take a day trip to Provincetown for the afternoon — park once, walk Commercial Street end to end, see the harbor, have lunch, and head back before the late-afternoon sun dip.

Monday morning: Leave by 8am. You will drive home through a quiet Connecticut highway with a summer Cape Cod weekend behind you. That is a significantly better Monday than most.

Quick Reference

Drive distance from NYC	260–290 miles depending on destination
Drive time (optimal)	4.5–5.5 hours
Drive time (peak summer Friday)	6–7.5 hours
Best departure windows	Thursday evening or Friday before noon
Bridge for Mid/Outer/Lower Cape	Sagamore Bridge (Route 3)

Bridge for Falmouth/Upper Cape west	Bourne Bridge (Route 25)
Bus option	FlixBus / Peter Pan to Hyannis [VERIFY 2026 schedules]
Train + ferry for Provincetown	Amtrak to Boston + Bay State fast ferry (~5 hours total) [VERIFY 2026]
Closest Cape town to NYC	Sandwich or Bourne (just over the Sagamore Bridge)

Frequently Asked Questions

How far is Cape Cod from New York City? Cape Cod from New York City is approximately 260–290 miles depending on your destination. The Sagamore Bridge is roughly 230 miles from Midtown Manhattan. Add your Cape destination’s distance from the bridge: Sandwich is right at the bridge, Hyannis is about 20 miles further, Chatham about 45 miles further, and Provincetown about 65 miles past the bridge.

What is the best way to get to Cape Cod from New York? For most visitors, driving is the most practical option because a car on the Cape gives you flexibility that public transit cannot match. The best exception: if you are going specifically to Provincetown, the Amtrak Acela to Boston plus the Bay State fast ferry to P’town is genuinely excellent — roughly the same total journey time as driving on a good day, and you arrive by water. For a Hyannis-area trip without a car, the bus is a workable option [VERIFY 2026 routes].

How bad is summer traffic from NYC to the Cape? On a Friday afternoon departure in July or August, add 1.5–2.5 hours to your baseline GPS estimate. The worst bottleneck is typically the Sagamore Bridge approach, where stopped or near-stopped traffic can last 45–90 minutes. Thursday evening or Friday morning departures eliminate most of this. The Sunday return is similarly heavy; leave before 2pm or wait until Monday morning to avoid the worst of it.

Is it worth renting a car for a Cape Cod trip from NYC? Yes, for nearly every itinerary. On the Cape, beaches, restaurants, and points of interest in neighboring towns all require a car — public transit is minimal. The one exception is a Provincetown-only trip, where you can arrive by fast ferry from Boston and navigate Commercial Street and the village entirely on foot or by bike for 2–3 days without ever needing a car.

Ready to plan your Cape Cod trip from New York? **Browse the Cape Cod Certified local directory** for vetted restaurants, lodging, and experiences across every town on the Cape — real picks from people who live here year-round, not aggregator rankings.

◆ THINGS TO DO

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