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VISITING CAPE COD

It's Raining on the Cape — 20 Indoor Things to Do With Kids, Organized by Town

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



capecodcertified.com/guides/cape-cod-rainy-day/

Rain on Cape Cod has a way of turning vacation into a hostage situation. By 9 a.m. the parking lot at the Cape Cod Mall is full, every Heritage Museums timed-entry slot until 2 p.m. is gone, and the Google results for “indoor kids Cape Cod” are recycled listicles from 2017 still pointing at places that closed during the pandemic (RIP, ZooQuarium).

The real trick isn't finding *one* indoor thing to do — it's knowing what's actually open, what's worth the drive in summer rain, and what's a 10-minute walk from wherever you happen to be staying. This guide lists 20 indoor (or mostly-indoor) options, organized west to east from the Sagamore Bridge out to Provincetown, with current 2026 pricing, the ages they actually work for, and which ones locals quietly send their own kids to.

Before You Drive Anywhere: Rules of Thumb

A few things to internalize before you load the minivan:

- **Route 6 in the rain adds 30–50% to drive times.** A 25-minute clear-weather hop from Hyannis to Brewster can crawl to 45 in a steady downpour with summer traffic. Pick something close.
- **Many “indoor” attractions are mostly outdoor.** Heritage's gardens, the Brewster Natural History trails, and Wellfleet Bay's boardwalk are the real draws — confirm there is enough actual indoor square footage before committing.
- **Free admission days exist and aren't well-advertised.** The Cape Cod Museum of Natural History waives admission for Brewster residents on Wednesdays year-round; the Cape Cod Museum of Art runs a Free Family Sunday the first Sunday of every month.
- **Library children's rooms are the underrated MVP.** Snow Library in Orleans, Falmouth Public, and the Provincetown Public Library are essentially free indoor playgrounds with bathrooms.

Upper Cape: Sandwich, Falmouth, Mashpee

1. Heritage Museums & Gardens — Sandwich

The 1908 Loeff carousel is operational, included with admission, and the single best rainy-day asset on the entire Cape for kids 3–8. The Hidden Hollow indoor maker space next to the J.K. Lilly III Automobile Museum has rotating craft activities. Plan 2.5–3 hours. Book the timed-entry online the night before — they cap rainy-day capacity now.

2. Sandwich Glass Museum — Sandwich

A live glassblowing demo runs roughly every 30 minutes and is hypnotic for kids 6 and up (and bored adults). Small museum — 60–90 minutes is plenty — and it pairs well with a hot chocolate from the Brown Jug across the street.

3. Green Briar Nature Center & Jam Kitchen — East Sandwich

The 1903 jam kitchen still produces preserves you can watch them stir through a window. There's a small natural history room with mounted specimens, a discovery cart for kids, and trails that work even in light drizzle. Donation-based; under-12 free.

4. Woods Hole Science Aquarium — Falmouth

The oldest public aquarium in the country, run by NOAA, and **completely free**. Seal feedings at 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. are the highlight. Small (45–60 minutes), but you cannot beat the price. **Closed weekends** — this only works as a

Monday–Friday play.

5. Highfield Hall & Gardens — Falmouth

An 1878 mansion with rotating family programming on weekends. House admission is free; family art workshops typically run \$15–\$25. Best for kids who tolerate “quiet voices” environments.

6. Cape Cod Children’s Museum — Mashpee

Built for ages 1–8. Two-story pirate ship, small planetarium, water tables. The catch: it’s *crowded* by 10:30 a.m. on rainy days and now uses soft-cap capacity. Show up at the 10 a.m. open or arrive after 3 p.m.

Mid-Cape: Barnstable, Yarmouth, Dennis

7. JFK Hyannis Museum — Hyannis

Skip if your kids are under 8; they will not engage. For 9 and up, the Kennedy-era exhibits and the small theater showing home-movie footage of the family in Hyannis Port are quietly affecting. 60 minutes.

8. Cape Cod Maritime Museum — Hyannis

Hands-on knot-tying station, a working boat shop you can watch through glass, and a small kids’ discovery area. Free for kids under 16. It’s a 5-minute walk from the JFK Museum — pair them for a half-day in downtown Hyannis.

9. Cape Cod Mall + Regal Cinema — Hyannis

Yes, it’s a mall. But the Regal has \$6 morning matinees on weekdays through Labor Day, there’s a Build-A-Bear, and the soft-play structure near the food court is the only indoor play space between the bridges and Orleans that doesn’t cost \$30 a head. When everything else is full, this is the backstop.

10. Cape Cod Inflatable Park — West Yarmouth

A 25,000-square-foot warehouse of inflatables. Loud, chaotic, exhausting — in a good way. Two-hour sessions; **reserve online for rainy days** or you will be turned away at the door.

11. Ryan Family Amusements — South Yarmouth

Candlepin and ten-pin bowling, arcade, indoor mini-golf. Open until 11 p.m. on summer weekends. Bumper bowling solves the under-6 problem. The arcade prize wall is fair, not predatory.

12. Cape Cinema — Dennis

A 1930 art-deco movie house with a Rockwell Kent ceiling mural. Shows family classics and indie matinees in summer. Worth a stop even if the showtime is wrong — the building itself is the experience.

13. Cape Cod Museum of Art — Dennis

Small but seriously kid-friendly. Free Family Sundays first Sunday of every month with a make-and-take craft station. 45 minutes and you’re out.

Lower Cape: Brewster, Chatham, Orleans

14. Cape Cod Museum of Natural History — Brewster

Three working aquariums, a beehive behind glass, a 250-foot whale rib hanging from the ceiling. The marsh-trail boardwalk is functionally closed in heavy rain, but the indoor exhibits will hold curious kids 90 minutes to two hours.

15. Snow Library — Orleans

The children’s wing has a tree-house reading nook and weekly story hours. Quiet, free, bathroom-equipped, no admission, no time limit. The unsung MVP of Lower Cape rainy days, especially with kids 2–6.

16. Chatham Marconi Maritime Center — Chatham

Interactive Morse code stations, ham radio demos some Saturdays, a recreated wireless operator’s cabin. Best for ages 8+ — younger kids glaze over.

17. Atwood House Museum — Chatham

A 1752 home with a small kids’ [scavenger hunt](#) at the front desk. 45–60 minutes. Combine with a stop at the Chatham Squire for fish chowder when the rain breaks.

Outer Cape: Wellfleet, Provincetown

18. Mass Audubon Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary — South Wellfleet

The nature center has live native reptiles, a saltwater touch tank, and a kids’ discovery loft with microscopes. The 5-mile trail network is a wash in rain, but the building alone justifies the drive.

19. Pilgrim Monument & Provincetown Museum — Provincetown

The climb up the 252-foot granite monument is entirely indoors — 116 steps and 60 ramps — and the view at the top is genuinely more dramatic in fog than in sun. The museum at the base has a Mayflower diorama that fascinates the 5-to-10 crowd.

20. Provincetown Public Library — Provincetown

The half-scale model of the Rose Dorothea fishing schooner is permanently installed on the library’s second floor. Kids climb up to deck level. Free, weird, unforgettable. Library hours vary by season — call before driving up from anywhere south of Eastham.

Quick Comparison: What It Costs & Who It’s For

Place	Town	2026 Adult	Kid Price	Best Ages	Time Needed
Heritage Museums & Gardens	Sandwich	\$22	\$12 (3–17)	3–10	2.5–3 hrs
Sandwich Glass Museum	Sandwich	\$10	Free under 12	6+	60–90 min
Woods Hole Science Aquarium	Falmouth	Free	Free	All	45–60 min
Cape Cod Children’s Museum	Mashpee	\$12	\$12 (under 1 free)	1–8	2 hrs
JFK Hyannis Museum	Hyannis	\$15	\$7.50 (6–17)	9+	60 min
Cape Cod Inflatable Park	W. Yarmouth	\$32 / 2 hrs	\$32 / 2 hrs	3–13	2 hrs
Ryan Family Amusements	S. Yarmouth	~\$8 / game	~\$8 / game	4+	90 min
CC Museum of Natural History	Brewster	\$14	\$8 (3–12)	4–12	90 min–2 hrs
Pilgrim Monument	Provincetown	\$20	\$7 (4–14)	6+	60–90 min
Provincetown Library	Provincetown	Free	Free	All	30–45 min

Prices verified spring 2026; confirm on each site for current rates and timed-entry requirements.

Two Warnings and One Don't-Miss

Don't drive to Provincetown in the rain unless you're already on the Outer Cape. Route 6 east of Wellfleet floods at several known low spots and the drive from Hyannis can hit two hours with summer traffic. If you're staying in Eastham or north, go. If you're in Falmouth, pick something within 20 minutes of you.

Avoid the Cape Cod Children's Museum between 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. on rainy days. Capacity is real, and the museum now imposes timed-entry on heavy-rain forecasts. Book online the night before or arrive at the 10 a.m. open.

The one not to miss: Woods Hole Science Aquarium. It's free, it's the oldest in the country, it's open Monday through Friday, and the 11 a.m. seal feeding is the rare Cape attraction where the kids and the adults both want to stay for the whole thing. If you're anywhere on the Upper Cape when the sky opens up, point the car here first.

◆ THINGS TO DO

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Cap'n Kids Fishing Adventures

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