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Things to Do in Wellfleet, MA: Oysters, Art & Outer Cape Life

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



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Wellfleet earns its reputation. It's the kind of place where the fishing boats are real fishing boats, the oyster farmers are actually out in the harbor at dawn, and the art galleries on Main Street are showing serious work by artists who actually live here. The National Seashore wraps around both sides of town; the harbor faces Cape Cod Bay; and the Atlantic beaches on the other side are among the finest in the park. Wellfleet is the outer Cape's version of itself — authentic, a little rough at the edges, and entirely worth the drive.

Wellfleet Oysters: A World Standard

The “Wellfleet oyster” is a globally recognized brand, and for good reason — the harbor's clean cold waters, tidal flow, and salinity produce an oyster with a distinctive brine and clean finish that chefs around the world seek out. More than 100 shellfish farms operate in Wellfleet Harbor, making it one of the densest oyster aquaculture areas anywhere. You can buy oysters direct from the town pier when boats come in, find them at raw bars all over town, or in October attend the **Wellfleet OysterFest** — one of New England's great food festivals, drawing more than 20,000 visitors to a town with a year-round population of about 2,700. Arrive early; the crowds are real and the oysters go fast.

Cahoon Hollow Beach and The Beachcomber

Cahoon Hollow Beach is the local surf beach and one of the best settings on the entire outer Cape. The Atlantic beach sits at the base of a dramatic bluff, and above it on the cliff edge sits **The Beachcomber** — a bar and restaurant in a converted 1897 lifesaving station with one of the best outdoor patios in New England. Live music, cold beer, excellent fish tacos, and a view down to the surf below. It doesn't need to try hard because the bones are that good.

Art Galleries

Wellfleet has more than 20 art galleries packed into a small downtown area, a concentration that rivals Provincetown for quality per square mile. The galleries range from printmakers and photographers to painters working in the plein air tradition. Gallery Night in summer draws visitors from across the outer Cape. Several galleries represent nationally known artists who maintain studios in town.

Wellfleet Drive-In Theater

The Wellfleet Drive-In is one of the last remaining drive-in movie theaters in New England, and it runs Thursday through Sunday nights in summer. Bring lawn chairs and blankets for between films; the concession stand is old-school. It's genuinely fun in a way that few things that old can still manage to be.

The Beachside Trails: Great Island

The Great Island Trail in the National Seashore covers 8.5 miles of the outer Cape's most beautiful terrain — tidal flats, maritime forest, an ancient oyster-shell midden, and the exposed tip of Great Island at Jeremy Point, which disappears entirely at high tide. It's a serious hike with significant tidal considerations; check tide charts before you go and don't attempt Jeremy Point unless the tides are in your favor.

Where to Eat

Moby Dick's on Route 6 is the definitive outer Cape fried seafood experience — picnic tables, lobster rolls, fried clams done right, soft-serve, and lines that move faster than they look. **PB Boulangerie** is a French bakery that's become something of an outer Cape pilgrimage: exceptional pastries, fresh bread, and a raw oyster bar that runs until the oysters run out. It's somehow both unexpected and exactly right. **Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary** (Mass Audubon) runs guided kayak tours and birding programs out of their property on the bay side — excellent naturalist-led experiences.

Wellfleet Flea Market

On weekends from spring through fall, the Wellfleet Flea Market at the drive-in is one of the largest and most eclectic outdoor markets in New England — antiques, clothing, tools, curiosities, and a genuinely good people-watching experience.

Frequently Asked Questions

When is OysterFest? OysterFest is typically held the third weekend of October. Check the Wellfleet Chamber of Commerce for exact dates. Parking is limited — shuttles run from remote lots, and walking or biking from a nearby accommodation is the local strategy.

Are the National Seashore beaches in Wellfleet free? Beach access within the National Seashore requires a vehicle fee in season. The parking lot at Cahoon Hollow Beach fills very early on summer weekends — arrive before 9 am or plan to park on the road and walk.

Is Wellfleet family-friendly? Yes, with caveats. The ocean beaches have surf and require attention to rip currents. Wellfleet Town Beach on the harbor side is calmer and excellent for families. The flea market, drive-in, and OysterFest are all good family experiences.

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