



CAPE COD CERTIFIED

LIVING ON CAPE COD

Working on Cape Cod: Jobs, Remote Work & Making a Living Year-Round

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

Cape Cod has one of the most unusual labor markets in New England — intensely seasonal, geographically isolated, and increasingly shaped by the remote work revolution. If you're considering a move, already living here and thinking about a career change, or just trying to understand how the economy actually works, this is what you need to know.

The Seasonal Reality

The defining feature of the Cape's economy is its seasonality. From roughly Memorial Day through Labor Day, the population swells from around 200,000 year-round residents to more than **500,000 people**, and spending explodes across tourism, hospitality, retail, and recreation. Then the bridges clear, and winter arrives.

For many Cape residents, this creates a **feast-or-famine earning cycle**. Working two or three jobs during summer — restaurant server, retail associate, charter boat mate — while banking enough to carry through a quieter winter is a completely normal financial strategy. It's not a failure; it's how the economy is structured.

Major Employers

Cape Cod Healthcare is the Cape's largest single employer, with Cape Cod Hospital in Hyannis anchoring a network of clinics, specialty practices, and care facilities. Healthcare is one of the most recession-resistant and year-round sectors on the peninsula.

Hospitality and tourism drive summer employment — restaurants, hotels, vacation rental management, whale watch boats, recreational outfitters — but most of these jobs are seasonal or dramatically reduced in the off-season. Managers and ownership tend to be year-round; front-line staff often are not.

The building trades — plumbing, electrical, HVAC, roofing, carpentry — are genuinely year-round and among the most in-demand occupations on the Cape. The combination of aging housing stock, high rates of second-home ownership, and Title 5 septic work creates a constant pipeline of work. Skilled tradespeople with a Home Improvement Contractor (HIC) license or Journeyman certification are rarely without work.

Education provides stable year-round employment through the Cape's public school districts, with relative job security, though salaries are constrained and housing costs make the math difficult for new teachers.

Real estate and property services — agents, property managers, home inspectors, landscapers — are year-round but with a clear summer peak. Good real estate agents on the Cape can earn very well given median sale prices above \$600,000.

Fishing and aquaculture — the Cape's traditional economy — remains a real industry. Oyster farming in particular has grown substantially over the past decade, with operations across Wellfleet, Chatham, Barnstable, and Orleans. It's hard, physical, outdoor work, but meaningful and local.

The Remote Work Shift

The COVID-19 pandemic permanently changed who lives on Cape Cod year-round. Remote workers — software engineers, consultants, marketers, financial analysts, writers — discovered that they could live in Brewster or Sandwich and commute by Zoom rather than the Sagamore Bridge.

This has had a measurable effect on the year-round economy. Off-season businesses that once relied on shoulder-season locals now have a larger, higher-earning year-round population to serve. Coffee shops, gyms, co-working spaces, and restaurants that would have closed November through April now find twelve-month viability.

The flip side: remote workers have intensified housing competition and pushed prices higher, making it harder for service workers to afford to live near their jobs.

The H-2B Reality

Many seasonal hospitality employers on the Cape rely on the **H-2B visa program** to import workers from other countries — primarily Jamaica, Guatemala, and Mexico — for the summer season. This is not a side note; it's a structural feature of how the Cape staffs its summer economy. Without H-2B workers, many restaurants and hotels could not operate at summer capacity.

The Honest Bottom Line

Cape Cod is genuinely hard to make work financially unless you're in the trades, healthcare, remote work, real estate, or run your own business. Many people who work in hospitality, retail, and service industries commute from Bourne, Wareham, and towns further inland because they cannot afford to live on the Cape.

If you're considering a move here, go in with a clear-eyed plan — and ideally, a job that travels with you.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the most in-demand year-round jobs on Cape Cod? The building trades (plumbing, electrical, HVAC, carpentry), healthcare (nursing, allied health, administration), and property management are among the most reliably year-round sectors. Licensed tradespeople are consistently in high demand and can earn well above median wages.

Is remote work viable on Cape Cod? Yes — broadband internet access has improved significantly across most of the Cape. Fiber or cable service is available in most towns, and even rural areas have improved connectivity. Many remote workers have relocated here successfully since 2020.

What is the average salary on Cape Cod? Median household income on the Cape is below the Massachusetts state median but living costs — especially housing — often exceed what you'd find in higher-income areas. The gap between wages and housing costs is the defining economic tension for year-round residents.



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