



CAPE COD CERTIFIED

CAPE COD CELEBRATIONS

Cape Cod Fall Festivals: Cranberry Harvest, Oyster Week & the Best Events September Through November

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



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Here’s what most visitors get wrong about Cape Cod: they think it ends on Labor Day. In reality, the best season on the Cape is the one nobody’s told to come for. September through November is when the crowds thin, the water’s still warm from summer, the light goes long and gold — and the calendar fills with the festivals locals actually plan their fall around. Cranberry bogs flood crimson, oyster shacks throw their biggest party of the year, and every town seems to have a harvest fair.

This is the guide to Cape Cod’s fall festival season, month by month.

Why fall is the Cape’s secret season

Two things happen at once in the fall: the summer infrastructure is still open (restaurants, tours, ferries) but the summer *crowds* are gone. Add cranberry harvest — the Cape and nearby Plymouth County are cranberry country — and a shellfishing tradition that peaks when the water cools, and you get a festival season with genuine local roots, not manufactured tourist events.

The fall festival calendar

Event	Where	When (typical)	What it’s about
Wellfleet OysterFest	Wellfleet	Mid-October	The Cape’s biggest fall party — oysters, shucking contests, ~20,000 people
Cranberry Harvest Celebration	Wareham/Plymouth area	Columbus Day weekend (Oct)	Bog tours, wet harvest, food, family activities
Bourne Scallop Fest	Buzzards Bay (Bourne)	Early September	Fried scallops, carnival, live music on the canal
Yarmouth Seaside Festival	South Yarmouth	Columbus Day weekend	Parade, crafts, fireworks, classic Cape town fair
Harwich Cranberry Arts & Music Festival	Harwich	Mid-September	Cranberry theme, arts, music, family fun
Truro Treasures	Truro	Late September	Small-town Outer Cape weekend, dune tours, art

Dates shift year to year, so confirm before you build a trip around one — but the rhythm is reliable.

The two you plan a trip around

Wellfleet OysterFest (mid-October) is the marquee event. Wellfleet oysters are famous for a reason — the town’s tidal flats grow some of the best in the world — and OysterFest turns the whole town center into a two-day celebration of them, complete with the shuck-off (a competitive oyster-shucking contest that’s genuinely fun to watch). It’s popular enough that **lodging books months out** and parking means a shuttle. Go anyway.

The Cranberry Harvest Celebration (Columbus Day weekend) is the one that photographs like a dream. This is when growers “wet harvest” the bogs — flooding them so the crimson berries float to the surface in a sea of red. Bog tours, helicopter rides over the harvest, food, and the kind of New England autumn scene people drive hours for.

How to do a fall festival weekend right

- **Book lodging early for OysterFest and Columbus Day weekend** — these are the two busiest fall dates and they sell out.
- **Come midweek if you can.** The festivals are weekends, but the shoulder-season Cape midweek in October — empty beaches, warm afternoons, open restaurants — is arguably the best deal of the whole year.
- **Chase the bogs even without a festival.** Cranberry harvest runs roughly mid-September into November; a drive along the back roads of the Upper Cape and toward Plymouth will turn up flooded bogs glowing red with no ticket required.

Don't miss: the light. Locals will tell you September and October have the best light on Cape Cod all year — low, warm, and long. Bring a camera and stay for a sunset over the marsh.

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