

Cape Cod gets ready for socially distant summer visitors



JUNE 04, 2020 – Cape Cod is getting ready for visitors to take in its natural beauty and tranquil spots. Getty Images

By [Moirá McCarthy](#) |

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As we roll into Phase 2 of the state’s reopening plan and glimpse Phase 3 on the horizon, who isn’t champing at the bit to just travel already? And while a true jet-to-the-far-corners-of-the-globe trip is probably still a distant dream, a spot that people around the world dream of visiting is just a car ride away for New Englanders.

With Gov. Charlie Baker’s plan allowing for sidewalk/outdoor dining and more business openings, Cape Cod is getting ready for guests. But how we behave as visitors will very much influence our ability to enjoy a Cape escape.



JUNE 04, 2020 – The Provincetown skyline at sunset . Getty Images

“A key piece to all of this working well is personal responsibility,” said state Sen. Julian Cyr, who represents the Cape and Islands, and who heads up the region’s Cape Cod Reopening Task Force (reopeningcapecod.org). “We hope people will be thoughtful and intentional about when and how they come to visit.”

Cyr said the task force anticipates that the weekend of June 13 will mark the first semi-busy week for the Cape. But with restrictions still in place and many “classic Cape Cod moments” like parades and fireworks cancelled, it will be a different experience than in the past, he said. Cyr points out, though, that what makes the Cape a world-class destination — beaches, marshlands, bogs and nature — are still there.

“You can still experience the core components of the Cape in the summer,” he said. “But we all have to work together to make this work.”

Cyr advises Cape-hungry travelers to consider when they want to come, and then have a plan for visiting. He suggests not rushing to be there during the first days, and instead, choosing days in the near future. “We’re going to have a long and successful summer, we hope, so there’s no rush.”



Cycling along a beach trail is a great sunny summer excursion for Cape Cod visitors, Getty Images



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JUNE 04, 2020 - Wendy Northcross, CEO of the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, right with the director of Heritage Museums Anne Scott-Putney left on opening weekend. Photo courtesy Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce

Wendy Northcross, CEO of the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, suggests Cape visitors think ahead, have a plan and be ready for last minute changes in that plan and, most of all, “Pack your patience.”

“Be ready to wait a little extra time in the ice cream line or on your way down to the beach,” she said. “There’s going to be a little different cadence this summer.”

JUNE 04, 2020 - Wendy Northcross, CEO of the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, right with the director of Heritage Museums Anne Scott-Putney left on opening weekend. Photo courtesy Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce

Northcross is hoping visitors will not flock only to the best-known beaches but discover some of the other things the Cape offers as well. It offers the most miles of bike paths and trails of any region in the state. The Cape Cod Rail Trail and the Shining Sea Bike Trail both have lots of

space to pedal along and see bogs, marshes, beaches, little Cape towns and more. Mountain bike enthusiasts can find trail maps at capecodchamber.org.

As for the beaches, Northcross said with 1,000 miles of beach, there is a spot for everyone. And even at the more popular beaches, adjusting how you visit might just give you the space you need to revel in the experience while social distancing.

“Arrive in the afternoon and bring a picnic dinner,” she suggested. “It’s quieter and truly quite lovely.” And since you are on Cape Cod, you can pick a beach with a sunset just as easily as one with a sunrise.

Northcross and Cyr both ask visitors to remember the basics: Wear a mask, social distance, wash your hands a lot and, if you feel sick, reschedule your visit for another time and just stay home.

She suggests researching dining spots ahead of time, calling and finding out good times to visit, and making reservations when allowed. With only outdoor seating at tables six feet apart, seating may involve waiting. Even for takeout, she says, plan ahead.



Provincetown is a New England town located at the extreme tip of Cape Cod in , in the United States. A small coastal resort town with a year-round population of just under 3,000 .

Some good news: Some towns, such as Provincetown, Hyannis and Chatham, are planning to close streets to make more room for dining and shopping and just strolling around, a fun and new experience for the Cape. Most are creating extra open space, such as Falmouth, which has placed

picnic tables in front of its library. Grab a meal from one of the many dining spots and then a table for an old-time Cape Cod picnic.

Hotels are working at reopening as well. Northcross advises you call ahead and find out their opening dates as well as any rules they want you to adhere to. For now, she said, they expect mostly day traffic (“But not as much as we usually see”), along with the many who have settled into the Cape long term during this time.



Edgartown Lighthouse, on Martha’s Vineyard in Massachusetts – wide angle view.

On Nantucket, ferry service is now operating at 50% capacity (which means while the island is often packed at this time of year, it will feel quieter, a bonus). Masks are required on the ferry and if you feel uncomfortable with groups, you can bring your car and stay in it while on the ferry.

Nantucket, too, plans on closing off a street for outdoor dining and shopping, and a whopping 50% of the island is conservation land, meaning there is plenty of room to social distance while savoring it all.

The White Elephant Hotel group (whiteelephantresorts.com) has announced the reopening dates of its six properties, including the famed White Elephant and the Jared Coffin House. Dates range from June 16 to July 1, and each hotel can share its sanitation plans. A few even have private entrances.

And so, the Cape is about to open. As hungry as we are for adventure, visitors will play a role in the success. Visit Cape Cod, with your mask, your love of the sea and a little patience. It can be your first adventure in our new reality.

As Northcross said, “We’re not just trying to save lives. We’re trying to save livelihoods.”