

Getting Started

There's something for everyone in the Cape and Islands, and perhaps that's why generations of holidaymakers – both families and couples – have come here. Some planning is in order if you're traveling in summer, but in general you'll find it pretty easy both to get here and stay here. While it couldn't hurt to have your own wheels, public transit is decent (more decent on the Vineyard and Nantucket). With a car, everywhere on the Cape is within day-tripping distance of everywhere else.

WHEN TO GO

The Cape and Islands are all about summer. The weather's at its best (sunny and warm, though sometimes humid and with rainy patches); town greens turn into open-air concert venues; there are festivals, art shows or theater pretty much any day you choose; and, of course, the region lives for the beach. The biggest disadvantage is lots of other visitors come at the same time, with the attendant congestion (although city folk may wonder 'what congestion?') and higher prices.

School vacation period (mid-June through the Labor Day holiday in early September) is generally considered peak season, although depending on the establishment those dates can shift by a few weeks in either direction. Prices during the 'shoulder season' (just outside of the peak) and into spring and autumn are cheaper, and the weather can be fine too. Throughout the region but especially in the Lower Cape and on the Islands, many establishments close completely between the Columbus Day holiday (mid-October) and April. (For more on hours, see p212).

A winter visit can also have its charms. If you don't mind New England's legendary blustery weather, you'll basically have the run of the place and some prime snuggle time. Plus, hotel rates can be as little as one-quarter of those in high season.

COSTS & MONEY

Ah, the downside of a vacation in a resort region. Costs on the Cape are somewhat reasonable, but unless you're used to New York City or San Francisco prices you'll probably find Martha's Vineyard and especially Nantucket pretty steep. In season, campers shopping in supermarkets

TIP!

If you're planning to take your car aboard the ferries to Martha's Vineyard or Nantucket, make reservations as early as possible.

See Climate Chart (p213) for more information.

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- Swimsuit
- Insect repellent
- Your bike, unless you plan to rent
- Your bike helmet, though bike-rental shops have them on hand. Helmets are required for children under 12 throughout Massachusetts (and for all riders on Nantucket), and even if you're a grownup, a helmet can save your life.
- Light-colored long pants if you plan to hike. You don't want to tangle with ticks.
- Neat, but not fancy, clothing. Most restaurants are casual – some more than others – but you won't need a dress or jacket and tie in any but the fanciest of restaurants.
- The kids. The Cape, especially, is a natural place for them.

TIP!

In season many lodgings on the Cape and Islands have minimum stay requirements, anywhere from two nights during the regular work week, to five nights on busy holiday weekends like July 4th

HOW MUCH?

Liter of bottled water: \$1.29
Ice cream cone: \$2.50
Gallon of gasoline: \$2.50
Bottle of Samuel Adams beer: \$3
Round of miniature golf: \$7.50
Souvenir t-shirt: \$10
Beach parking: day/season \$10/30
Cabaret show, Provincetown: \$17
Whale-watch: \$24-32
Catered clambake: \$40 per person

and doing their own cooking should be able to get by on about \$30 per person per day, and beds in one of the Cape and Islands' four hostels start at around \$20 per night. For more privacy and climate control, motels are a good option. The least expensive motels (about \$45 per night) are along MA 28 in the Mid-Cape, though generally quality corresponds to price. Other motels are more expensive but tend to be very well kept. On the Lower Cape, motel prices are comparable to those of other lodgings.

Motels are generally kid-friendly, and families should not overlook the all-inclusive resorts: the sticker price may be steep (\$200 plus per night) but they offer loads of children's activities.

For couples especially, bed and breakfasts are a fine option – and are very Cape Cod. In peak season you can expect to pay between \$100 and \$250 per room per night in a B&B. Many B&Bs don't allow younger children, which may appeal to some travelers and not to others.

Wherever you go, always ask for special packages.

TRAVEL LITERATURE

This list is designed to get you excited for your visit to the Cape and Islands. Some works are humorous, some serious – take your pick!

Moby Dick, by Herman Melville – This is the classic tale of whalers, whaling being the profession that provided the Cape and Islands with much of their wealth for much of the 18th and 19th centuries.

How to Speak like a Cape Codder, by George B Higgins, edited by Greg O'Brien – You'll learn that there's only one canal (it's called 'the Canal') and that the proper pronunciation of 'fog' is 'faag.'

Cape Encounters, by Dan Gordon and Gary Joseph – The incidents in these humorous ghost stories about contemporary Cape Cod involve real people.

The House at Dangerfield, by Paul Giambarba – This children's book describes the lighthouse at Truro, Cape Cod, and is beautifully illustrated.

Cape Cod Companion, by Jim Coogan and Jack Sheedy – Full of fun and easy-to-read history and lore of the Cape.

Fresh Air Fiend, by Paul Theroux – This collection culled from 15 years of writings by this noted travel writer contains reflections on his home turf of Cape Cod. It might also motivate you to see the rest of the world.

INTERNET RESOURCES

See destination chapters for local online listings.

Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce (www.capecodchamber.com) Thorough resource for lodging, food and activities.

Cape Cod National Seashore (www.nps.gov/caco) Official National Parks Service (NPS) site detailing news and activities of one of New England's finest natural resources.

Cape Cod Times (www.capecodtimes.com) The Cape's leading newspaper, with up-to-the minute news and weather for the region.

Cape Cod & Islands Visitor Information Network Service (www.capecodvisit.com) With links to other important sites and resources around Massachusetts.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Don't forget to visit the Thorn Tree for updates from fellow LP readers and fans.

Martha's Vineyard Chamber of Commerce (www.mvy.com) Ferries to lighthouses to weddings. Start your journey here.

Nantucket Chamber of Commerce (www.nantucketchamber.org) The official site of the island, with valuable links.

TOP TENS

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The Cape and Islands host many festivals; here are some of our favorites:

- Barnstable County Fair (p63), Falmouth, Cape Cod
- Christmas Stroll (p160), Nantucket
- Cranberry Festival (p98), Harwich, Cape Cod
- Daffodil Days (p159), Nantucket
- Gay Pride Carnival (p135), Provincetown, Cape Cod
- Grand Illumination Night (p188), Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard
- Holly Folly (p135), Provincetown, Cape Cod
- Nantucket Wine Festival (p159)
- Possible Dreams Auction (p195), Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard
- Wellfleet Oyster Festival (p117), Cape Cod

BEST CAPE & ISLANDS ACTIVITIES

While basking in the sun is always a good vacation bet, the Cape and Islands have a wealth of activities for folks looking to escape the beach chair for a spell.

- Antiquing – happy hunting ground along Rte 6A (the Old King's Hwy)
- Arts – professional theater as well as classes in ceramics, painting, sculpture, photography and more
- Bird-watching – sanctuaries throughout the region
- Cycling – the awesome, 22.2-mile Cape Cod Rail Trail, to name only one of many
- Eating – more than just fried seafood!
- Gallery-hopping – more than 100 galleries featuring local and national artists
- Golfing – from mini-golf to dune courses
- Hiking – from short nature walks to daytrips
- Sandbar-walking – on the tidal flats of Cape Cod Bay
- Shopping – crafts, clothing and souvenirs – everywhere you look

TOP CAPE & ISLANDS ECCENTRICITIES

Every place has its quirks. Here are some of this region's best:

- Cookie-cutter guest cottages (p121) of North Truro, Cape Cod
- Driftwood Zoo (p88), Dennis, Cape Cod
- Fish and shellfish hatcheries
- Food specialties: wineries, breweries, lavender farms
- Ghost stories
- The entire town of Provincetown (p123), Cape Cod
- Used bookstores, including Isaiah Thomas (Barnstable, p75); Oceans of Books (Wellfleet, p115) and Tim's Used Books (Wellfleet, p115 and Provincetown, p128)
- Saltwater taffy – hypertensives rejoice: there's no salt water in it at all!
- Shipwrecks
- The way the main routes through the Cape indicate that they're headed south when you're actually heading east or north

Cycling & Walking Tours

CLASSIC ROUTES

This former rail bed (freight was hauled here as late as the 1960s) is now one of America's classic biking routes, stretching 22.2 miles from Dennis to Wellfleet.

CAPE COD RAIL TRAIL

Three–four hours one-way

The Cape Cod Rail Trail begins in **Dennis** (p87), near the Patriot Square shopping center on MA 134. Head east, and you'll pass some ponds en route to the Harwich Rotary. Continue north from the rotary toward **Brewster** (p92), passing a few more ponds along the way. The path takes you right through **Orleans** center, a natural place for a lunch break (p109). Once you leave Orleans, it's pretty much a straight shot through Eastham into **Wellfleet** (p115). The trail ends in the south part of town, by Lecount Hollow Rd, where you'll find easy access to much-needed dips at Lecount Hollow and Marconi beaches.

Worthwhile diversions:

- At the Harwich Rotary, head off toward the Chatham Rail Trail Extension, toward **Chatham** (p99). Once you reach town, there's an attractive loop, although it's on city streets.
- In Brewster, take the turnoff into **Nickerson State Park** (p93), one of the Cape's most beautiful, set around Cliff Pond. There are 8 miles of mountain-biking trails here (stop at the visitors center for a map).
- In Eastham, take a right and cross US 6 to reach **Coast Guard Beach** (p113).



THE VINEYARD'S BIG THREE

Three hours

Heading away from the Steamship Authority terminal (Water St), make a left onto Beach Rd from the Five Corner Intersection. While it does get some heavy traffic (this is the only portion of the route that does), it does have some nice views of **Vineyard Haven Harbor** (p177). After the hospital, the road veers to the right and then left again, depositing you on New York Ave; this becomes Lake Ave when it hits the center of **Oak Bluffs** (p185).

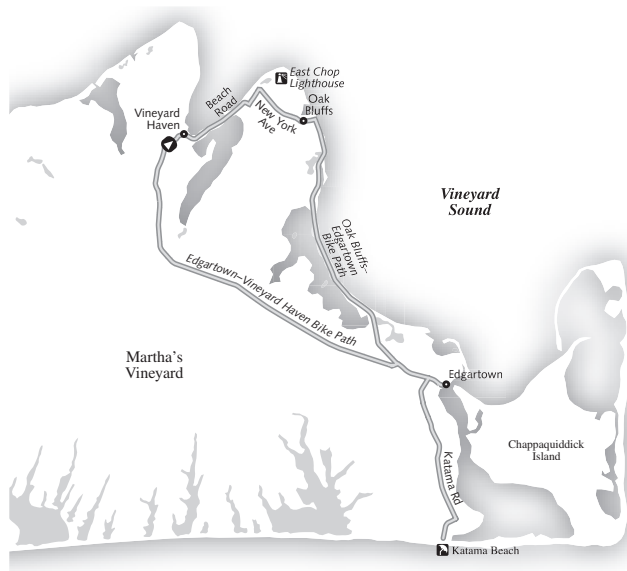
Just before Oak Bluffs Harbor, you can make a left-hand turn onto East Chop Rd to see the town's **lighthouse** (p186), or continue straight into town to explore the Vineyard's liveliest center (see the Gingerbread Walk tour, p14). If you can't wait to reach Edgartown, head through town to Beach Rd.

Beach Rd leads to the proper, more established Oak Bluffs–Edgartown bike path and right into central **Edgartown** (p192). It parallels Main St in town until Pease's Point Way, where cyclists need to turn left rather than heading into central Edgartown by bike. Stop at the **visitor center** (p193) on Church St and the **Old Whaling Church** (p193), then take the ferry to **Chappaquiddick** (p199) or detour to **Katama** (p200).

When you're done, head back along Main St to another excellent bike path through countryside along the Vineyard Haven–Edgartown Rd. In Vineyard Haven, Skiff Ave leads you to Lagoon Pond Rd and the Five Corners.

Hint: if you don't feel like cycling for any part of this route, you can always hop on a **VTA bus** (p208); there are racks for your bikes.

A great way to reach the island's major towns in one fell swoop. You can do it straight through, but give yourself time to take breaks and enjoy.



GINGERBREAD WALK**30 minutes without stops**

Take a leisurely stroll amid the architecture that makes Oak Bluffs Oak Bluffs.

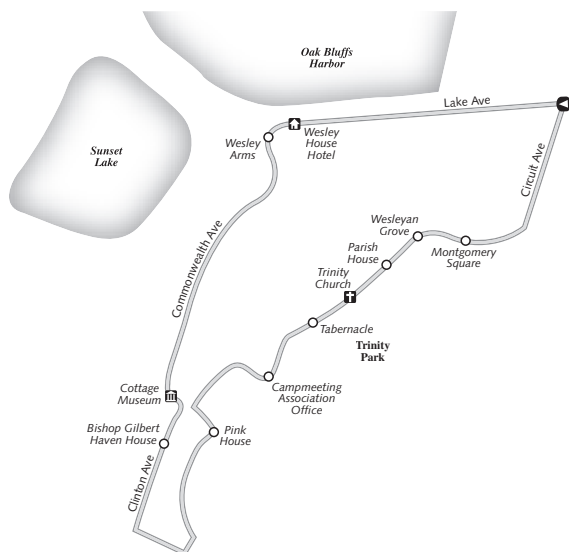
Stroll Lake Ave (across from Oak Bluffs Harbor) to the Wesley House Hotel and turn left between the hotel and the Wesley Arms. Turn right onto Commonwealth Ave, one of neighborhood's busier streets (though that's not saying much). Make a left at Jordan Crossing for the **Cottage Museum** (p186) on stately Trinity Park.

From the museum, turn right through the turnstile to the gentle, pedestrian Clinton Ave. President Ulysses S Grant stayed at the **Bishop Gilbert Haven House** (left). At Faith Ave (the next major crossing), take a left to reach the small but pretty Victorian Park, and bear to the left again on Butler Ave: the 'Pink House' at the corner of Butler Ave and Jordan Crossing is the campground's most photographed – all sugar and spice, hearts and flowers.

A quick switchback down Jordan Crossing and to the right will bring you to the **Campmeeting Association Office** (p186) on Trinity Park, where you can pick up history and other information about this historic society. Or just head for the **massive tabernacle** (p186) itself.

Exit the tabernacle opposite the stage, pass Trinity Church, and to the right of the Parish House, and you'll find yourself on **Wesleyan Grove** (p186), perhaps the Vineyard's most beautiful spot (architecturally, at least) for its homes with their flower-festooned porches and grounds.

From here, turn right onto the (grandiosely named) **Montgomery Square** to return to Circuit Ave and, reluctantly, the modern world.



THE WHALER'S PATH THROUGH OLD NANTUCKET

One hour

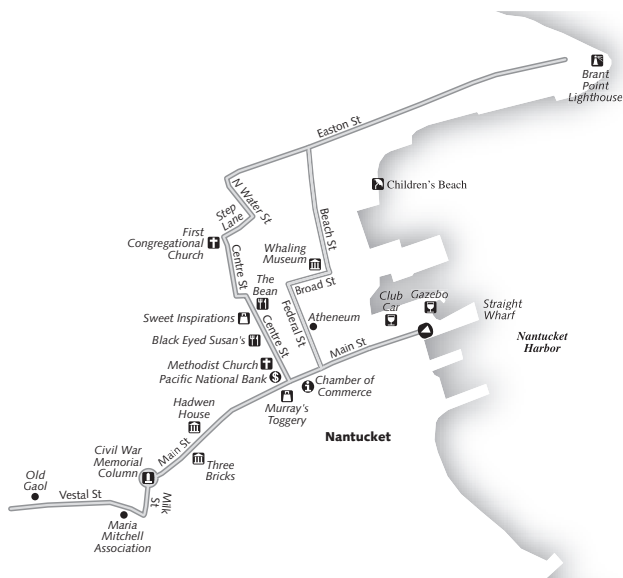
That first step off Straight Wharf onto Main St offers one of your most colorful visions of one of New England's most picturesque towns. Head up the gentle hill past the Chamber of Commerce offices and ritzy shops, including **Murray's Toggery** (p166), en route to the historic homes, the 'Two Greeks' and the 'Three Bricks' – take the tour of the **Hadwen House** (p153).

Continuing up Main St, turn left at the **Civil War Memorial column** (p157) onto Milk St and right again on Vestal St for the main buildings of the **Maria Mitchell Association** (p155) and the **Old Gaol** (p154). Double back to Main St, and turn left at Centre St for the **Pacific National Bank Building** (p147), **Methodist Church** (p157) and the row of shops known as 'Petticoat Lane' (p149). Stop for coffee at the **Bean** (p165), for candies at **Sweet Inspirations** (p167) or, if you're really hungry, for a late breakfast at **Black Eyed Susan's** (p163). You'll want some fortification to climb the tower of the **First Congregational Church** (p156), up Centre St.

Head down the hill on Step Lane to N Water St, the town's guesthouse row, and turn left. At Easton St, turn right and follow it to the **Brant Point Lighthouse** (p157). On your way back, turn left onto Beach St: tiny **Children's Beach** (p157) gives you a taste of the island's famous beaches.

Continue on Beach St to the excellent **Whaling Museum** (p152). Exiting the museum, continue right along Broad St, and cross the street to Federal St. At the corner of Pearl St, commune with history at Nantucket's legendary **Atheneum** (p156). Federal St continues to Main St, where a left turn will take you back to Straight Wharf. Browse those shops that caught your eye, or stop for a well-earned cocktail at the **Club Car** (p166) or the **Gazebo** (p166).

An ideal journey for day-trippers who want to get a good taste of Nantucket before catching the boat back to the Cape.



TAILORED TRIPS

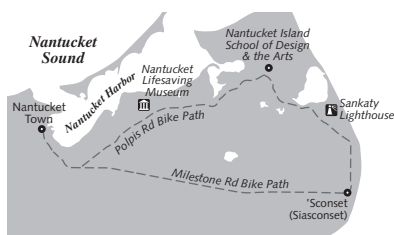
'SCONSET SCAMPER

1.5 hours

From Straight Wharf, walk your bike (don't try to ride on the cobblestones!) up Main St to quiet Pleasant St, then turn left to join the route to the bike paths. Follow Pleasant St to W Creek Rd (turn left) and then take a right toward the Rotary. If you need a sandwich, **Nantucket Bagel Co** (p165) or the **Rotary Restaurant** (p165) are good, casual bets. Follow the signs to the 'Sconset Bike Path, but don't go too far: you'll want to join the Polpis Bike Path, a short jaunt up on your left.

The route will take you past bogs and marshes, and by the **Nantucket Lifesaving Museum** (p169). If you like, detour to Wauwinet Rd to the **Nantucket Island School of Design and the Arts** (p170), though note that it's partially a dirt road. Polpis Rd leads to Sankaty Rd and views of the **Sankaty Lighthouse** (p168), or just head straight into town, dismount and park your bike to grab lunch at the **'Sconset Café** (p168), **Siasconset Market** (p168), **Claudette's** (p169) or, for something fancy and poolside, the **Summer House** (p169). The whole village is easily explored on foot: take in the **lovely old homes** (p168) and the **Siasconset Casino** (p168).

Siasconset's Main St becomes Milestone Rd, where you pick up the bike path again; it's almost a straight shot back to Nantucket Town.



SHINING SEA BIKE PATH

One hour

Like the Cape Cod Rail Trail, the Shining Sea Bike Path follows an old rail bed. But unlike the Rail Trail, it also provides views of local ponds and the open water of Vineyard Sound.

The route starts just to the west of **Falmouth Village** (p60) off MA 28 (park by the Falmouth Ice Skating Rink). You'll ride parallel to Palmer Ave for a short distance, crossing Depot Ave and Locust St, and the path heads between Salt Pond and Oyster Pond before running parallel to Vineyard Sound. You can detour at Oyster Pond Rd to visit **Spohr Gardens** (p61). When the path crosses Nobska Rd, you can detour to visit the **Nobska Lighthouse** (p69).

The route continues through the woods of **Woods Hole** (p67) and deposits you at the Steamship Authority terminal. If you're not taking a ferry, be sure to check out the town, especially the **Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution** (p69).



Snapshot

FAST FACTS

Miles of Cape Cod shore-line: more than 550

Most expensive housing in Massachusetts:

Aquinnah, Martha's Vineyard (\$767,900, as of the 2000 census)

Percentage of homes occupied year-round:

Barnstable County (Cape Cod): 64.5%; Dukes County (Martha's Vineyard): 43.3%; Nantucket County: 40.2%

Population growth on Nantucket since 1970: about 300%

Number of lighthouses on Cape Cod: 10

Cape Cod Baseball League alumni in the major leagues (2003): 190

Seal population off Monomoy Island: approx 3000

Town population of Chatham: approx 6650

Is there such a thing as too much success?

Certainly the Cape and Islands have boomed as tourist destinations, and that's just great. But on the other hand, costs have skyrocketed, wreaking havoc on the local economies – or rather, on the economies of the locals.

Take Nantucket. Housing here is virtually out of reach to seasonal workers, so the small hotels and restaurants where they work have taken to providing lodging for them. Residents complain that it's impossible to get a contractor to return your calls, and when the job begins, construction crews must commute by Cape Air from Hyannis, since they can't afford to live locally. Doctors and nurses need a housing allowance just to pay rent.

On the Cape, formerly wooded enclaves from Buzzards Bay to Pleasant Bay are being planted with McMansions, and homes that looked patrician a generation ago now look like servants' quarters. And anyone who still thinks of Provincetown as a quaint fishing village obviously hasn't been paying attention.

While there are a great many small inns on the Cape and Islands, there are a great many fewer than there used to be. Recent years have seen a number of innkeepers close up shop, and who could blame them? If someone were offering you millions so that they could turn your place into a private home, wouldn't you at least consider it?

'What's wrong with this, really?' you might ask. 'Isn't it all just progress? The hotel and construction workers have jobs, and the innkeeper who bought low can sell high and buy her dream home. So what harm is being done?'

The harm is not that the world adores tradition and abhors change, though that may also be the case. Besides, the old-timers of the Cape and Islands have seen and survived worse. Rather, the problem, according to the innkeeper, is that the region is in danger of pricing itself out of the market. Guests who once stayed for a week now stay for only a weekend. And if the Cape and Islands continue to be ever more expensive, visitors might well spend their hard-earned vacation dollars somewhere where they'll go further. Maine, after all, is not so far away.

And then where will the Cape and Islands be?

The Author



ANDREW BENDER

Yet another Lonely Planet author with an MBA, Andy left the business world to do what every MBA secretly dreams of: travel and write about it. His work has since appeared in *Travel + Leisure*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Men's Journal* and *Fortune*. After living in Los Angeles for more than a decade and covering destinations from Amsterdam to Taiwan for LP, this native New Englander was thrilled to finally get an assignment in the place where he vacationed as a child. He dedicates this book to the Extend-a-Bender Family Class of 2004: Emory, Jack, Mark, Oliver, Rebecca and Shai. Andy hopes that they'll grow up to find the Cape and Islands as magical as he does.

My Cape Cod

To put myself in a Cape and Islands mood, Edgartown (p192), Martha's Vineyard makes a fine start. Just one look around, and you really know you're somewhere else, and there's great access for biking, beaching and dining. A trip Up Island to art galleries (p202) and the Clay Cliffs of Aquinnah (p206), or across the harbor to Chappaquiddick Island (p199) puts it all in perspective, and soon I'm ready to move on to Nantucket (p145). Shopping and dining are powerful lures, but I also love the history and the Old New England look of Nantucket Town (p149).

The Cape awaits. Starting in the Old-World-meets-New-World port of Hyannis (p75), I might detour to Falmouth (p60) and Woods Hole (p67), walk on the tidal flats in Brewster (p92), take in the historical museum or a seal watch in Chatham (p99) and then dogleg up to the Cape Cod National Seashore (p110). Bayside or ocean side, Wellfleet (p115) is a charmer, and at night there's only one place to be: Provincetown (p123). Stay for a whale watch, hit the beach, learn about the painters and authors who continue to summer here, and go home satisfied.

CONTRIBUTING AUTHOR

Mara Vorhees wrote the Outdoors chapter (p37). Mara is a freelance travel writer living in Somerville, Massachusetts. For a bit of sadistic fun, she participates in sprint and Olympic-distance triathlons around New England. She also spends as much time as possible on Cape Cod, where she enjoys bike riding, bird watching and boogey boarding (usually followed by devouring a lobster roll). Her travel articles have appeared in the *Boston Globe* and she is co-author of Lonely Planet's *New England*.

David Goldberg MD wrote the Health Chapter (p222). Dr Goldberg completed his training in internal medicine and infectious diseases at Columbia–Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City, where he has also served as voluntary faculty. At present, he is an infectious diseases specialist in Scarsdale NY and the editor-in-chief of the website MDTravelHealth.com.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'