

New England



New Englanders like to think this is where it all began. They did, after all, set off the American Revolution. Today Boston, the self-proclaimed 'Hub' of the region, still packs a wallop with history and culture aplenty, and is the perfect place to start your explorations. No place in New England is more than a day's drive from Boston, but the region's compactness belies its diversity. Along the coast you'll find age-old fishing villages raking in lobster, beaches begging for a dip and century-old schooners hoisting the sails. Revitalized urban gems such as Providence, Portland and Portsmouth boast uncrowded sights, palate-pleasing dining and microbreweries.

Ready to stretch your quads? Inland Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont are as rugged and rural as the mountains that run up their spines. Snowboard the slopes, hike off to your own swimming hole or just get lost on a scenic back road and count the covered bridges. If you're lucky enough to be here in the fall, when the mountains are ablaze with color, you're in for the finest foliage scenery in the USA.

So give yourself time to get a real taste of the region. Crack open a lobster and let the sweet juices run down your fingers, stroll the cobbled streets of Nantucket, sink your toes into the sands of Cape Cod. Go to Harvard and Yale, if just for a day, and rub shoulders with Ivy Leaguers in hip campus cafés. Arm yourself with a good map and ramble along country roads past rolling rivers and iconic New England villages with white-steepled churches on tidy greens.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Following in the footsteps of Colonial rebel rousers along **Boston's Freedom Trail** (p252).
- Feasting on fresh boiled lobster at one of the **lobster shacks** (p304) along New England's coast towns like Ogunquit.
- Driving the scenic **Kancamagus Highway** (p299) across the craggy White Mountains, stopping for waterfalls, trails and moose sightings.
- Romping across the dunes at **Cape Cod National Seashore** (p264).
- Digging into **Acadia National Park** (p310), hiking and cycling its carriage roads and relaxing over afternoon tea at Jordan Pond.
- Ogling the palatial mansions and basking in music at folk and jazz festivals in **Newport** (p276).
- Working off an organic lunch at one of **Burlington's** (p292) green cafés with a paddle around Lake Champlain.
- Treating yourself to dazzling fall foliage in the **Green Mountains** (p288 and p291), **Berkshires** (p273) and **Litchfield Hills** (p284).



HISTORY

When the first European settlers arrived, much of New England was inhabited by native Algonquians who lived in small tribes, raising corn and beans, hunting game and harvesting the rich coastal waters.

English captain Bartholomew Gosnold landed at Cape Cod and sailed north to Maine in 1602 but it wasn't until 1614 that Captain John Smith, who charted the region's coastline for King James I, christened the land 'New England.' With the arrival of the Pilgrims at Plymouth in 1620, European settlement began in earnest. Over the next century the colonies expanded and thrived, often at the expense of the indigenous people.

Although subjects of the British crown, New Englanders governed themselves with their own legislative councils and they came to view their affairs as separate from those of England. In the 1770s King George III instituted policies intent on reining in the colonists' free-wheeling spirits and he imposed a series of costly taxes. The colonists, unrepresented in the English Parliament, revolted under the slogan 'no taxation without representation.' Attempts to squash the revolt resulted in the battles of Lexington and Concord, setting off the American Revolution that gave birth to the USA in 1776.

Following independence, New England became an economic powerhouse, its harbors booming centers for shipbuilding, fishing and trade. New England's famed Yankee Clippers plied ports from China to South America. The USA's first water-powered cotton-spinning mill was established in Rhode Island in 1793. In the years that followed New England's swift rivers became the engines of vast mills turning out clothing, shoes and machinery.

But no boom lasts forever. By the early 20th century many of the mills had moved south. The economy sprung back to life again during WWII. Today education, finance, biotechnology and tourism are linchpins of the regional economy.

LOCAL CULTURE

New Englanders tend to be reserved by nature, with a Yankee thriftiness of speech, which stands in marked contrast to the casual outgoing nature of, say, Californians. This taciturn quality shouldn't be confused with unfriendliness, as it's simply a more formal regional style.

Particularly in rural areas you'll notice the pride folks take upon themselves in their ingenuity and self-sufficient character. These New Englanders remain fiercely independent, from the fishing boat crews who brave Atlantic storms to the small Vermont farmers who fight to keep operating independently within America's gobble-up agribusiness economy.

Fortunately for the farmers and fishers, buy-local and go-organic movements have grown by leaps and bounds throughout New England. From bistros in Boston to small towns in the far north the menus are greening.

One place you won't find that ol' Yankee reserve is at the ball field. New Englanders are absolutely fanatical about sports. Attending a Red Sox game is as close as you'll come to a modern-day gladiators-at-the-coliseum scene – wild cheers and nasty jeers galore.

Generally regarded as a liberal enclave, New England's in the forefront on progressive political issues from gay rights (four of the five US states that have legalized gay marriage are in New England) to health care reform. Indeed the universal health insurance program in Massachusetts is now being touted as a model for a nationalized plan.

LAND & CLIMATE

New England's landscape has ample variety, with verdant valleys, rolling hills and vast forests. A spine of craggy mountains runs roughly from northeast to southwest; the highest point, Mt Washington in the White Mountains, tops out at 6288ft.

The coast is varied as well. In the north it's largely rocky, sculpted into coves and sprinkled with the occasional sandy beach, while the southern coastline's bounded by long swaths of sand and dunes.

The weather in New England is famously changeable. Muggy 90°F (32°C) days in July may be followed by a day of cool 65°F (18°C) weather. Precipitation averages about 3in per month year-round.

The beachy summer season is roughly June to mid-September. New England's brilliant fall foliage peaks from mid-September to mid-October.

PARKS

If you're ready to explore the great outdoors, New England provides plenty of options. Acadia National Park (p310), on the rugged,