

New England

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Best Places to Eat

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- ➔ Fore Street (p252)
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- ➔ Art Cliff Diner (p211)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Verb Hotel (p191)
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- ➔ The Attwater (p221)

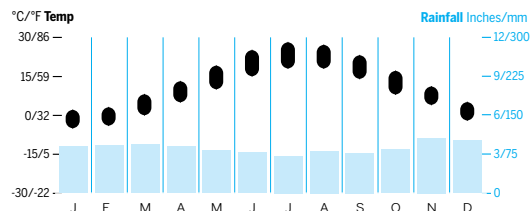
Why Go?

The history of New England is the history of America. It's the Pilgrims who came ashore at Plymouth Rock and the minutemen who fought for American independence. It's hundreds of years of progressive thinkers who dared to dream and dared to do. Nowadays, New England is still at the cutting edge of culture, with top-notch art museums and music festivals.

For outdoor adventure, the region undulates with the rolling hills and rocky peaks of the ancient Appalachian Mountains. Plus, nearly 5000 miles of coastline make for unlimited opportunities for fishing, swimming, surfing and sailing. Those are surefire ways to work up an appetite. Fortunately, New England is a bounty of epicurean delights: pancakes drenched in maple syrup; just-picked fruit and sharp cheddar cheese; and – most importantly – sublimely fresh seafood that is the hallmark of this region.

When to Go

Boston



May–Jun

Uncrowded sights and lightly trodden trails. Whale-watching begins.

Jul–Aug

Top tourist season with summer festivals and warmer ocean water.

Sep–Oct

New England's blazing foliage peaks from mid-September to mid-October.

History

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

In 1602 English captain Bartholomew Gosnold landed at Cape Cod and sailed north to Maine; 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, 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 imposed a series of taxes to pay for England's involvement in costly wars. The colonists, unrepresented in the British parliament, protested under the slogan 'no taxation without representation.' Attempts to squash the protests eventually led to battles at Lexington and Concord, setting off the War for Independence. The historic result was the birth of 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. A thriving whaling industry brought unprecedented wealth to Nantucket and New Bedford. The USA's first water-powered cotton-spinning mill was established in Rhode Island in 1793.

No boom lasts forever. By the early 20th century many of the mills had moved south. Today education, finance, biotechnology and tourism are linchpins of the regional economy.

Local Culture

New Englanders tend to be reserved by nature, with the Yankee brusqueness standing in marked contrast to the casual outgoing nature of some other American regions. This taciturn quality shouldn't be confused with unfriendliness, as it's simply a more formal regional style.

Particularly in rural areas, folks take pride 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 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 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 is at the forefront on progressive political issues from gay rights to health-care reform. Indeed the universal health-insurance program in Massachusetts became the model for President Obama's national plan.

NEW ENGLAND IN...

One Week

Start in **Boston**, following the **Freedom Trail**, dining at a cozy **North End bistro** and exploring the city's highlights. Spend a day ogling the mansions in **Newport**. Then hit the beaches on **Cape Cod** or hop a ferry to **Nantucket** or **Martha's Vineyard**. End the week with a jaunt north to New Hampshire's **White Mountains** or the **Maine coast**.

Two Weeks

On your second week, take a leisurely drive through the **Litchfield Hills** and the **Berkshires**. Bookend the week with visits to the lively burgs of **Providence** and **Burlington**. Alternatively, plan an extended stay on the Maine coast, with time to explore **Bar Harbor** and kayak along the shores of **Acadia National Park**. Wrap it up in Maine's vast wilderness, where you can work up a sweat on a hike up the northernmost peak of the **Appalachian Trail** or take an adrenaline-pumping ride down the **Kennebec River**.