

The Best of Cape Cod, Nantucket & Martha's Vineyard

Cape Cod is a curling peninsula only 70 miles long that encompasses hundreds of miles of beaches and more freshwater ponds than there are days in the year. The ocean's many moods rule this thin spit of land, and in summer, it has a very sunny disposition indeed. The "arm" of the Cape has beckoned wayfarers since pre-Colonial times. These days, more than five million visitors flock from around the world each year to enjoy nature's nonstop carnival, a combination of torrid sun, and cool, salty air.

On the Cape, days have a way of unfurling aimlessly but pleasantly, with a round of inviolable rituals. First and foremost is a long, restful stint at the beach (you can opt for either the warmer, gently lapping waters of Cape Cod Bay or the pounding Atlantic surf). The beach is generally followed by a stroll through the shops of the nearest town and an obligatory ice-cream stop. After a desalinating shower and perhaps a nap (the pristine air has a way of inspiring snoozes), it's time for a fabulous dinner. There are few experiences quite so blissful as sitting at a picnic table overlooking a bustling harbor and feasting on a just-caught, butter-dripping, boiled lobster.

Be forewarned, however, that the Cape can be a bit too popular at full swing. European settlers waited nearly 3 centuries to go splashing in the surf, but ever since the Victorians donned their bathing costumes there's been no stopping the waves of sun-, sand-, and sea-worshippers who pour onto this peninsula and the islands beyond every summer.

Experienced travelers are beginning to discover the subtler appeal of the off season, when the population and prices plummet. For some, the prospect of sunbathing with the midsummer crowds on sizzling sand can't hold a candle to the chance to take long, solitary strolls on a windswept beach, with only the gulls as company. Come Labor Day (or Columbus Day, for stragglers) the crowds clear out, and the whole place hibernates until Memorial Day weekend, the official start of "the season." It's in this downtime that you're most likely to experience the "real" Cape. For some, it may take a little resourcefulness to see the beauty in the wintry, shuttered landscape (even the Pilgrims, who forsook this spot for Plymouth, didn't have quite the necessary mettle), but the people who do stick around are an interesting, independent-minded lot worth getting to know.

As alluring as it is on the surface, the region becomes all the more so as you become more intimately acquainted with it. One visit is likely to prompt a follow-up. Although you can see all of the Cape, and the islands as well, in a matter of days, you could spend a lifetime exploring its many facets and still just begin to take it all in. Early Pilgrims saw in this isolated spot the opportunity for religious freedom, whaling merchants the watery road to riches, and artists the path to capturing the brilliance of nature's palette. Whatever the incursions of commercialism and overdevelopment, the land is suffused with spirit, and it attracts seekers still.

Narrowing down possible “bests” is a tough call, even for a native of the region. The selections in this chapter are intended merely as an introduction to some of the highlights. They’re listed from closest in to farthest out along the Cape, followed by the islands. A great many other outstanding resorts, hotels, inns, attractions, and destinations are described in the pages of this book. Once you start wandering, you’re sure to discover bests of your own.

Basic contact information is given for the places listed below. You’ll find more information by referring to the appropriate chapters of the book.

1 The Best Beaches

It is difficult to identify the best beaches without specifying for whom: fearless surfers or timid toddlers, party types or incurable recluses? At the bayside and sound beaches, for instance, the water tends to be much more placid than it is on the ocean, and thus better for little ones who plan only to splash and muck about.

- **Sandy Neck Beach:** This relatively unpopulated, 6-mile barrier beach, extending from the eastern edge of Sandwich to shelter Barnstable Harbor, features pretty little dunes seldom seen on the bayside. Hike in far enough (but avoid the nests of piping plovers), and you’re sure to find a secluded spot. Adventurous types can even camp overnight with permission (☎ 508/362-8300). See p. 75.

- **Falmouth Heights Beach:** On a clear day, you can see Martha’s Vineyard from this hip beach in Falmouth’s most picturesque neighborhood. The newer motels take in the same view as do grand turn-of-the-20th-century homes, and the beach fills up with families throughout the day. Off season, this beach is virtually deserted, perfect for romantic arm-in-arm strolling. See p. 94.

- **Nauset Beach:** Located along the outer “elbow” of the Cape, this barrier beach descends all the way from East Orleans to a point opposite Chatham—about 9 miles in all, each mile increasingly deserted. The entry point, however, is a body squeeze: It’s here that the young crowd convenes

to strut their stuff. Administered by the town of Orleans, but still considered part of the Cape Cod National Seashore, Nauset Beach has paid parking, restrooms, and a snack bar. See p. 177.

- **Cahoon Hollow Beach:** Spectacular Cahoon Hollow Beach on the rough, frigid Atlantic Ocean is your reward at the end of a winding trek down a 75-foot dune. See p. 194.
- **Race Point Beach:** Unlike many of the beaches closer to Provincetown, which are tacitly reserved for gays or lesbians, Race Point—another Cape Cod National Seashore beach at the northernmost tip of the Cape—is strictly nondenominational. Even whales are welcome—they can often be spotted with the bare eye, surging toward Stellwagen Bank. The Province Lands Visitor Center at Race Point (☎ 508/487-1256) has particularly good views. See p. 212.
- **Jetties Beach:** Among the region’s beaches, Nantucket’s have, as a rule, the best amenities; most have restrooms, showers, lifeguards, and food. For families and active types, Jetties Beach (just ½ mile from the center of town) can’t be beat. Offering boat and windsurfing rentals, tennis courts, volleyball nets, a playground, and great fishing (off the eponymous jetties), it’s also scenic (those jetties again) with calm, warm water. See p. 236.
- **Aquinnah Beach** (formerly **Gay Head**, Martha’s Vineyard): These

landmark bluffs on the western extremity of Martha's Vineyard (call the **Chamber of Commerce** at ☎ 508/693-0085 for directions) are threatened with erosion, so it's no

longer politically correct to engage in multicolored mud baths, as hippies once did. Still, it's an incredibly scenic place to swim—come early to beat the crowds. See p. 271.

2 The Best Bike Routes

Blessed with many gently rolling hills, the Cape and islands are custom-made for a bike trek—whether as a way to get to the beach or as an outing unto itself.

- **Cape Cod Canal:** On this 14-mile loop maintained by the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** (☎ 508/759-5991), you can race alongside the varied craft taking shortcuts through the world's widest sea-level canal. See p. 86.
- **Shining Sea Bikeway** (☎ 508/548-8500): Connecting Falmouth to Woods Hole by way of the shore and the picturesque Nobska Lighthouse, this 3.3-mile path lets you dash to the ferry or dally at the beach of your choice. See p. 94.
- **Cape Cod Rail Trail** (☎ 508/896-3491): Reclaimed by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, this paved railroad bed currently stretches some 25 miles from South Dennis all the way to Wellfleet, with innumerable detours that beckon en route. Several sections of the bike path have recently been rehabilitated to make for an even smoother ride. See chapters 5 through 7.
- **Province Lands Trail** (☎ 508/487-1256): Offering by far the most rigorous workout, this 7-mile network swoops among the dunes and stunted forests at the very tip of the Cape. Take your time enjoying this moonscape. Be sure to stop off at Race Point Beach for a bracing dip, and at the **Province Lands Visitor Center** (☎ 508/487-1256) as well. See p. 212.
- **Nantucket Town to Madaket** (☎ 508/228-1700): Only 3 miles

wide and 14 miles long, Nantucket is a snap to cover by bike. The 6-mile Madaket path crosses undulating moors to reach a beach with boisterous surf. See "Beaches & Recreational Pursuits," in chapter 8.

- **Nantucket Town to Surfside** (☎ 508/228-1700): An easy, flat few miles from town, Surfside Beach is a perfect miniexcursion for the whole family. There are even benches along the route if you'd like to stop and admire the scrub pine and beach plums. When you return to town, pause at Brant Point to watch the yachts maneuver in and out of Nantucket Harbor. See "Beaches & Recreational Pursuits," in chapter 8.
- **Oak Bluffs to Edgartown** (Martha's Vineyard; ☎ 508/693-0085): All of Martha's Vineyard is easily accessible for two-wheel recreationists. This 6-mile path hugs the water almost all the way, so you're never far from a refreshing dip. See "Beaches & Recreational Pursuits," in chapter 9.
- **Chilmark to Aquinnah** (Martha's Vineyard; ☎ 508/693-0085): The Vineyard's awe-inspiring vistas of ponds, inlets, and ocean greet you at every turn as you bike along State Road and then turn onto the Moshup Trail, a road that takes you along the coast up to Aquinnah. It's a strenuous ride with perhaps the best views in the region. On the way back, treat yourself to a bike-ferry ride to the fishing village of Menemsha. See "Beaches & Recreational Pursuits," in chapter 9.

3 The Best Small Towns & Villages

The prettier towns of the Cape and islands combine the austere traditionalism of New England—clusters of well-tended historic houses punctuated by modest white steeples—with a whiff of their own salty history.

- **Sandwich:** For a “gateway” town, Sandwich is remarkably composed and peaceful. Not-too-fussy preservation efforts have ensured the survival of many of this first settlement’s attractions, such as the pond that feeds the 17th-century **Dexter Grist Mill** (☎ 508/888-4910). Generous endowments fund an assortment of fascinating museums including the multifaceted **Heritage Museums and Gardens** (☎ 508/888-3300), famous for its splendid rhododendrons but interesting to all for its many other exhibits. See p. 78.
- **Woods Hole:** Besides being the Cape’s main gateway to Martha’s Vineyard, Woods Hole is a world-renowned science community, a charming fishing village, and a bohemian mecca. A proper tour of town should include visits to the aquarium and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, a stroll along the bustling harbor, and a drink at the Cap’n Kidd, the Cape’s top tavern. See “Falmouth,” in chapter 4.
- **Yarmouth Port:** It may look somewhat staid on the surface (Haller’s, the local soda fountain, hasn’t changed much since 1889, except it now rents videos), but there are a number of quirky attractions here. A museum features the works of author/illustrator Edward Gorey, a Yarmouth Port resident who died in 2000. There’s also the gloriously jumbled **Parnassus Books**, owned by vintage bookseller Ben Muse. Stop at **Inaho**, 157 Main St. (☎ 508/362-5522), all but hidden within an ordinary frame house, for the Cape’s best sushi. See p. 129.
- **Chatham:** Only Provincetown offers better strolling-and-shopping options, and Chatham’s are G-rated. This is perhaps the Cape’s quaintest town. In summer, Friday-night band concerts draw multigenerational crowds by the thousands. For a fun natural history lesson, take a boat ride to see the hordes of seals on uninhabited Monomoy Island. See p. 164.
- **Wellfleet:** A magnet for creative souls (literary as well as visual), this otherwise classic New England town is a haven of good taste—from its dozens of shops and galleries to its premier restaurant, Aesop’s Tables. All is not prissy, however: certainly not the iconoclastic offerings at the **Wellfleet Harbor Actors’ Theatre** (☎ 508/349-6835) or the goings-on at the ‘Comber, otherwise known as the Beachcomber, one of the Cape’s best nightclubs. See p. 193.
- **Provincetown:** At the far tip of the Cape’s curl, in intensely beautiful surroundings, is Provincetown. Its history goes back nearly 400 years, and in the last century, it’s been a veritable headquarters of bohemia—more writers and artists have holed up here than you could shake a stick at. It’s also, of course, among the world’s great gay and lesbian resort areas—people come here for the pleasure of being “out” together in great numbers. If you’re uncomfortable with same-sex public displays of affection, this stop might be best left off your itinerary. More open-minded straights will have a great time—Provincetown has savory food, fun shopping, terrific company, and fascinating people-watching. See p. 209.

- **Nantucket Town:** This former whaling town is so well-preserved it looks as though the whalers left their grand houses and cobblestone streets just yesterday. Tourism may be rampant here, but it's without the tackier side effects, thanks to stringent preservation measures. A gamut of enticing shops offers luxury goods from around the world. Time has not so much stood still here as vanished. So relax and shift into island time, dictated purely by your desires. See chapter 8.
- **Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard:** This harbor town on Martha's Vineyard evolved from a mid-19th-century Methodist campground. Pleased with the scenic and refreshing oceanside setting (and who wouldn't be?), the faithful started replacing their canvas tents with hundreds of tiny, elaborately decorated and gaudily painted "gingerbread" cottages. Still operated primarily as a religious community, the revivalist village is flanked by a commercial zone known for its rocking nightlife. See chapter 9.
- **Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard:** For many visitors, Edgartown *is* Martha's Vineyard. Its regal captains' houses and manicured lawns epitomize a more refined way of life. Roses climb white picket fences, and the tolling of the Whaling Church bell signals dinnertime. By July, a procession of gleaming pleasure boats glides past Edgartown Lighthouse into the harbor, and shops overflow with luxury goods and fine art. Edgartown's old-fashioned Fourth of July parade harkens back to small-town America, as hundreds line Main Street cheering the loudest for the floats with the most heart. It's a picture-perfect little town, a slice of homemade apple pie to go with nearby Oak Bluff's hot-fudge sundae. See p. 268.

4 The Best Luxury Hotels & Inns

- **Wequassett Resort and Golf Club** (Harwich; ☎ 800/225-7125 or 508/432-5400): This Chatham institution occupies its own little peninsula on Pleasant Bay and offers excellent sailing and tennis clinics. It is also next to the Cape's premier golf course and guests have members' privileges. You'll be tempted to just relax, though—especially if you score one of the clapboard cottages, done in an upscale country mode, right on the water. The on-site restaurant, **28 Atlantic**, is now one of the Cape's best. See p. 161.
- **Captain's House Inn** (Chatham; ☎ 800/315-0728 or 508/945-0127): An elegant country inn that positively drips with good taste, this is among the best small inns in the region. Most rooms have fireplaces, elegant paneling, and antiques throughout; the rooms are sumptuous yet cozy. This may be the ultimate spot to enjoy Chatham's Christmas Stroll festivities, but you may need to book your room a couple of years in advance. See p. 172.
- **Brass Key Guesthouse** (Provincetown; ☎ 800/842-9858 or 508/487-9005): The Brass Key Guesthouse, a compound consisting of five historic buildings, is *the* place to stay in Provincetown. With Ritz-Carlton-style amenities in mind, the owners have created a paean to luxury. These are the kind of innkeepers who think of everything: Pillows are goose down, showers have wall jets, and gratis iced tea is delivered poolside. See p. 220.
- **Cliffside Beach Club** (Nantucket; ☎ 800/932-9645 or 508/228-0618): Right on the beach and within

walking distance (about 1 mile) of town, this is the premier lodging on the island. It may not be as fancy as some, but there's a sublime beachiness to the whole setup: simply decorated rooms; cheerful, youthful staff; a sea of antique wicker in the clubhouse; and of course, the blue, yellow, and green umbrellas lined up on the beach. Every Fourth of July, guests get a front-row seat for the fireworks show at nearby Jetties Beach. See p. 244.

- **Charlotte Inn** (Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard; ☎ 508/627-4151): Edgartown tends to be the most formal enclave on Martha's Vineyard, and this exquisite compound is by far the fanciest address in town. An Anglo-phil's dream (and the Vineyard's only Relais & Châteaux property), the inn oozes old-fashioned British posh from

every distinctively decorated room. The conservatory restaurant, **L'étoile** (☎ 508/627-5187), is among the finest you'll find on this side of the Atlantic. See p. 282.

- **Winnetu Oceanside Resort** (Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard; ☎ 866/443-1733): This resort on Katama Beach, just outside Edgartown, has seemingly come out of nowhere in the last few years to become one of the best luxury hotels in the region. The Winnetu stands apart from other luxury resorts because it's also a wonderful place for families, with lots of activities to keep kids busy. The resort's restaurant, **Lure** (☎ 508/627-3663), complete with a distant water view, is one of the island's best fine-dining options. See p. 283.

5 The Best Hotel Deals

- **Simmons Homestead Inn** (Hyannisport; ☎ 800/637-1649 or 508/778-4999): Bill Putman may be the most personable and hospitable innkeeper on Cape Cod. He is determined that his guests have an excellent vacation, a factor that may make the Simmons Homestead Inn one of the best deals around. A former race-car driver/ad exec, Putman has filled his inn with a merry mishmash of animals (stuffed, sculpted, or painted). But his passion is automobiles, and you'll enjoy touring his "museum" of more than 55 red sports cars. See p. 121.
- **Lamb and Lion Inn** (Barnstable; ☎ 800/909-6923 or 508/362-6823): Part B&B, part motel, this historic Cape cottage has been turned into a comfortable lodging with a pool. Hallways have murals, and rooms are creatively decorated. See p. 123.
- **Old Sea Pines Inn** (Brewster; ☎ 508/896-6114): This reasonably priced,

large historic inn is a great spot for families. Accommodations range from small singles with shared bathrooms to family suites. In summer, the dining room is the location for weekly dinner theater performances. See p. 155.

- **The Orleans Inn** (Orleans; ☎ 508/255-2222): Don't miss this inn, perched right on the edge of Town Cove, and make sure to get a room facing the water. Built in 1875, the inn has been restored to its former grandeur. The water view and great location make this a terrific value. See p. 182.
- **The Inn at Duck Creeke** (Wellfleet; ☎ 508/349-9333): In one of the Cape's most charming towns, this humble and historic complex offers no-frills rooms, some with shared bathrooms, for bargain prices. With grandmotherly touches like chenille bedspreads, it will make you feel right at home. A good restaurant and a tavern are also on the property. See p. 201.

- **Beachside at Nantucket** (Nantucket; ☎ 800/322-4433 or 508/228-2241): Although the in-season rates at Nantucket's only motel are about the same as at other B&Bs in town, the off-season rates are a real bargain. Specials could include rooms for less than \$100 a night in May. The property is also one of the only lodgings in town with a pool. See p. 245.
- **Edgartown Inn** (Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard; ☎ 508/627-4794): This quirky, old-fashioned inn is located in the heart of Edgartown. The smells of freshly baked goodies fill the air,

and the staff is friendly and helpful. Most important, prices have stayed reasonable, a rarity on the Vineyard. See p. 285.

- **Wesley Hotel** (Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard; ☎ 800/638-9027 or 508/693-6611): This imposing 1879 property, overlooking Oak Bluffs Harbor, is a solid entry in the good-value category, especially with its low off-season rates. It's a no-frills hotel with a great location, just steps from Circuit Avenue, the heart of Oak Bluffs. See p. 286.

6 The Best Restaurants

It wasn't long ago that "fancy" food in these parts began and ended with classic French. Now "fancy," when it comes to food, is almost out of style and French food is hard to find. Although two of this year's "bests" are Italian and one is Mexican, most occupy that catchall category of New American, with influences from all over the world. Several aren't even fancy at all, just memorable.

- **La Cucina Sul Mare** (Falmouth; ☎ 508/548-5600): The permanent line outside this Main Street restaurant is the first hint of its popularity. You'll soon see why there's always a wait. Chef Mark Cifone and his wife, Cynthia, have created a very special establishment, with a top-notch waitstaff and a romantic and fun atmosphere. Mark's dishes are delicious, from his signature lasagna to the lobster *fra diavolo*. Portions are huge. See p. 103.
- **RooBar** (Falmouth; ☎ 508/548-8600): The food is so good at this hip venue on Falmouth's Main Street that it might distract you from the artsy decor, which includes handblown glass lights over the bar and wrought-iron sconces on the walls. From Thai

wontons to snapper pie to brick-oven pizza, there's great variety and creativity to the menu. See p. 103.

- **The Regatta of Cotuit at the Crocker House** (Cotuit; ☎ 508/428-5715): What most distinguishes the Regatta from its competition is the sensational service so rare at local establishments. The Regatta has a quintessential old Cape Cod setting—the building was once a stage-coach inn, and the decor is formal Federal style. Food here is consistently excellent, with fresh ingredients, generous portions, and creative preparations. See p. 127.
- **902 Main** (South Yarmouth; ☎ 508/398-9902): How does one begin to describe the sublime experience of dining at 902 Main? This is fine dining as it used to be, with the chef/owners manning the kitchen and greeting people out front. They make you feel welcome, coddled, and special. And then there's the food. Featuring the best produce, meats, and seafood from the region, every course will make you *oooh* and *abhh*. See p. 135.
- **28 Atlantic** (Harwich; ☎ 508/430-3000): This superb restaurant at the

Wequassett Inn and Resort offers the most elegant dining in the region. Floor-to-ceiling plate glass windows give you a panoramic view of Pleasant Bay. The menu is loaded with delicacies from around the world. In this graceful setting, professional waiters will see to your comfort and thorough satisfaction. See p. 162.

- **Bramble Inn Restaurant** (Brewster; ☎ 508/896-7644): An elegant entry in the Lower Cape dining scene, the Bramble Inn attracts those who don't mind a rather steeply priced, four-course, fixed-price dinner. The five intimate dining rooms are decorated with antique china and fresh flowers. Chef Ruth Manchester is a local favorite for her extraordinary, evolving cuisine. See p. 156.
- **Devon's** (Provincetown; ☎ 508/487-4773): The namesake of Devon's is a multitalented restaurateur with a great attitude. That positive vibe permeates every part of this small fine-dining restaurant, a former fishing shack on Provincetown's far East End. Serving New American cuisine with an emphasis on local provender, this is one of Provincetown's most romantic options, but its teensiness means you do need a reservation. See p. 223.
- **Lorraine's** (Provincetown; ☎ 508/487-6074): This is exciting cuisine, part Mexican, part New American, and all sensational. Even people who don't like Mexican food should try Lorraine's. Start your meal off with a shot of tequila from the four-page menu and chase it with their

special-recipe tomato juice. Now you're off and running. Try something different—you can hardly help it here—like the sea scallops flambéed in tequila and topped with green-chile sauce. See p. 224.

- **Black Eyed Susan's** (Nantucket; ☎ 508/325-0308): Inspired by flavors from around the world, this is supremely exciting food in a funky bistro atmosphere. There's no extra charge for the show; watch chef Jeff Worster at work in the open kitchen behind the dinerlike counter. If you can put up with the eccentricities (no liquor license, no reservations, no credit cards), you're in for a treat. See p. 255.
- **Straight Wharf** (Nantucket; ☎ 508/228-4499): New chef/owners have made this *the* fine-dining reservation on Nantucket. Make your reservation for 8pm, so you can sit on the outside deck and watch the sun set over the harbor. Whether you opt for one of their specialty seafood dishes (wild striped bass with gazpacho) or choose a land-based entree (filet of Kobe beef), you will not be disappointed. See p. 251.
- **Atria** (Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard; ☎ 508/627-5850): This fine-dining venue on Upper Main Street gets rave reviews for its gourmet cuisine and high-caliber service. The menu, featuring produce and meats from local farmers and the daily catch from local fishermen, takes its influences from around the country and around the world. See p. 290.

7 The Best Clam Shacks

- **The Clam Shack** (Falmouth Harbor; ☎ 508/540-7758): The ultimate clam shack sits on the edge of the harbor and serves up reasonably priced fried seafood with all the fixings. Order the fried clams (with bellies,

please!), and squeeze into the picnic tables beside the counter to await your feast. See p. 105.

- **Cap't Cass Rock Harbor Seafood** (Orleans; no phone): Take a photo of the family in front of this shack

covered with colorful buoys, and then go inside and chow down. Hearty portions of simply prepared fresh fish keep diners coming back year after year. See p. 184.

- **Arnold's Lobster and Clam Bar** (Eastham; ☎ 508/255-2575): Once you get served a heaping plate of fried seafood here, you won't bother with any other clam shack. No one else gives you so much for such a reasonable price on Cape Cod. See p. 193.
- **Moby Dick's Restaurant** (Wellfleet; ☎ 508/349-9795): Unfortunately, word has spread about this terrific restaurant, and it can get pretty mobbed here around supper time. Still, it's a terrific place to bring the family, screaming kids and all. The clambake special is a 1¼-pound lobster, native Monomoy steamed clams, and corn on the cob. Perfect. See p. 203.

- **Sayle's Seafood** (Nantucket; ☎ 508/228-4599): Take a 10-minute walk from town on Washington Street Extension, and you'll arrive at this fish store-cum-clam shack. Charlie Sayles is a local fisherman, and everything here is deliciously fresh. Get your fried clams to go and eat them at the beach. See p. 243.

- **The Bite** (Menemsha, Martha's Vineyard; ☎ 508/645-9239): A travel writer once called it the best restaurant on Martha's Vineyard, perhaps in retaliation for a high-priced meal in Edgartown. Nevertheless, this is a top-shelf clam shack, tucked away in a picturesque fishing village. Order your meal to go and stroll over to the beach, which has the best sunset views on the island. The fried clams are delicious; some say the secret is the batter. Of course, the fish, unloaded just steps away, couldn't be fresher. See p. 296.

8 The Best Shopping

No matter how spectacular the scenery or splendid the weather, certain towns have so many intriguing shops that you'll be lured away from the beach, at least temporarily. The inventory is so carefully culled or created that just browsing can be sufficient entertainment, but slip a credit card into your cutoffs just in case.

- **Chatham:** Old-fashioned, tree-shaded Main Street is packed with inviting storefronts, including the **Chatham Glass Company** (☎ 508/945-5547), where you can literally look over their shoulders as artisans craft glass treasures, and **Mark, Fore & Strike** for classic and sporty Cape Cod clothes (☎ 508/945-0568). See p. 170 and 171.
- **Wellfleet:** The commercial district is 2 blocks long; the art zone is twice that. Pick up a walking map to locate the galleries in town: **CherryStone**

Gallery (☎ 508/349-3026) tops the don't-miss list. Seekers of low-key chic will want to check out two designers, **Hannah** (☎ 508/349-9884) and **Karol Richardson** (☎ 508/349-6378). See p. 200 and 200. For designer produce and impeccable seafood, peruse the array at the homey **Hatch's Fish & Produce Market** (☎ 508/349-2810 for fish, or 508/349-6734 for produce) behind Town Hall. See p. 203.

- **Provincetown:** Overlooking the import junk that floods the center of town, the 3-mile strip of Commercial Street is a shopaholic's dream. It's all here, seemingly direct from SoHo: sensual, cutting-edge clothing (for every sex and permutation thereof), art, jewelry, antiques, and more. And whatever you really need but didn't know you needed can be found at

Marine Specialties (☎ 508/487-1730), a warehouse packed with surplus essentials. See p. 219.

- **Nantucket:** Imagine Martha Stewart cloned a hundredfold, and you'll have some idea of the tenor of shops in this well-preserved 19th-century town. Centre Street—known as “Petticoat Row” in whaling days—still caters to feminine tastes, and the town's many esteemed antiques stores would never deign to present anything less than the genuine article. See the “Shopping” section, p. 242.

- **Vineyard Haven, Martha's Vineyard:** Though it's the dowdiest of Martha's Vineyard's six towns, this ferry port boasts the best shops, from **Bramhall & Dunn** for housewares (☎ 508/693-6437) to **The Great Put On** for designer and contemporary women's wear (☎ 508/627-5495); see p. 281. And don't miss Carly Simon's **Midnight Farm** (☎ 508/693-1997) for country home and personal furnishings. See p. 281. You might want to save some cash, though, for the multiethnic boutiques of Oak Bluffs or the pricey preppy redoubts of Edgartown.

9 The Best Bars & Clubs

- **Grumpy's** (Falmouth; ☎ 508/540-3930): Come to Grumpy's to hear some down and dirty blues or local cover bands rocking out. There's live music weekend nights year-round. It's also a friendly bar scene, attracting people of all ages, locals and tourists alike. See p. 108.
- **Roadhouse Café** (Hyannis; ☎ 508/775-2386): Most consider this the best bar in town and, even better, it's for grown-ups. There is live music nightly in the Back Door Bistro and a sizzling Monday-night Jazz Series popular with locals and those in the know. See p. 125.
- **The Beachcomber** (Wellfleet; ☎ 508/349-6055): Perched atop the towering dunes of Cahoon Hollow Beach, this bar and dance club is one of the most scenic watering holes on Cape Cod. Although the crowd tends to be on the young and rowdy side, the young at heart are also welcome. See p. 204.
- **Crown & Anchor** (Provincetown; ☎ 508/487-1430): The specialty bars at this large complex span

leather, disco, comedy, drag shows, and cabaret. See p. 228.

- **The Chicken Box** (Nantucket; ☎ 508/228-9717): The Box is the rocking spot for the 20-something crowd, but depending on the band or theme (reggae, disco, and so on), it can sometimes seem like the whole island is trying to get through the doors here. Jimmy Buffett makes an appearance late at night at least once every summer to jam with the band. See p. 260.
- **Offshore Ale Company** (Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard; ☎ 508/693-2626): The Vineyard's first and only brew pub features eight locally made beers on tap and entertainment six nights a week in season. See p. 297.
- **Outerland** (Martha's Vineyard Airport, Martha's Vineyard; ☎ 508/693-1137): Formerly the Hot Tin Roof, this sprawling club at the airport has been the place to see big names on the Vineyard for decades. See p. 297.