

ROAD TRIP

CAPE COD'S WHITE SANDS ON TWO WHEELS

Robert Laford

The eastern seaboard of the United States boasts many coastal roads and vistas that are truly made for those who enjoy cruising the curves on two wheels. One such spot that offers fun roads, great views, and a superb reason for a motorcycle getaway is Massachusetts: Cape Cod. Fifty years ago, singer Patty Page paid tribute to "The Cape" with the lyrics, "miles of green beneath a sky of blue." That statement is as true today as it was when it was recorded.

Cape Cod's breathtaking beauty is incomparable. Scenic roads surrounded by pristine

beaches with white sand, the historic countryside, and great views beckon the rider to enjoy the twists and turns then park the bike to take in all the natural beauty that abounds.

Cape Cod, which extends 70 miles into the Atlantic Ocean from southeastern Massachusetts, is surrounded by Cape Cod Bay on the north, Buzzards Bay on the west, the Vineyard and Nantucket Sound to the south and the Atlantic Ocean on the east. Although a wonderful place to visit any time of year, the months of May and September afford the motorcyclist even better opportunities to enjoy

the visit to the highest level. During these months, just prior to and after the tourist season, riders can expect to find most businesses and attractions open, but with reduced traffic volume.

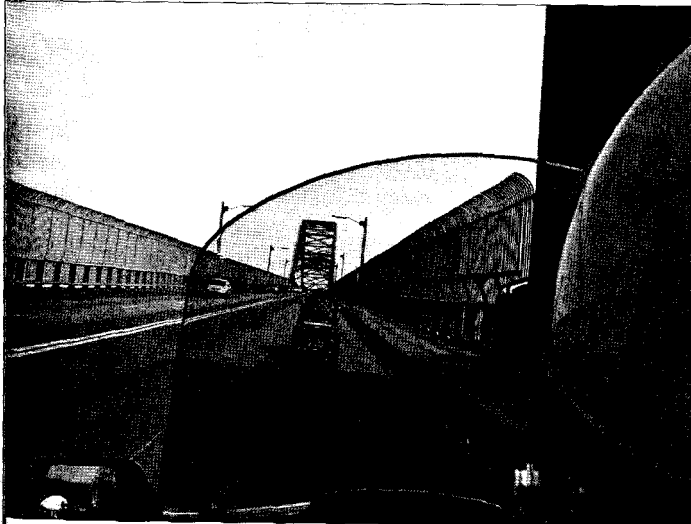
Although the roads leading to Cape Cod offer many great stops for sight seeing and rest breaks, our ride begins as we cross the Cape Cod Canal into the town of Bourne. There are two bridges that cross the Canal that lead you onto the Cape. The Sagamore Bridge on the north end of the canal and the Bourne



Bridge on the south end. Picturing Cape Cod as a flexed arm, some benchmarks are the town of Bourne at the Canal, Chatham at the arm's elbow, and Provincetown at the tip of the fingers. Route 6 is the major highway that extends the length of the Cape and is commonly referred to as the Mid-Cape Highway. On the Bay side to the north is Route 6A, to the south on the Atlantic side is Route 28.

Once we cross onto the Cape we pick up Route 6A to the north and enjoy a leisurely ride to our destination. Throughout the year, riders should take extra caution around the "Cape Cod corners." Because of the close proximity that all roads have to the ocean, sand in the cor-

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ners is very prevalent and should be anticipated.

Route 6A is a very enjoyable ride offering rolling hills and banked corners through small towns with quaint shops, mom and pop restaurants, antique stores, and interesting places to stop and spend time. Besides the traditional architecture of Cape Cod homes and buildings, this route offers many roadside marshes and ocean inlets to add to our visual pleasure. All these views offer the opportunity to forget the busy life we left on the other side of the Cape Cod Canal - as when Thoreau wrote of Cape Cod, "A man may stand there and put all America behind him." Route 6A has many hidden beaches on the Cape Cod Bay that are off the beaten path. Turning left off of Route 6A in Orleans we take a break at Rock Harbor — like a classic New England painting with the fishing boats moored in the rock-lined harbor. At low tide the sea grasses and beaches entice you to dismount your bike and walk the beachfront and enjoy the peaceful solitude.



At the Orleans rotary we pick up Route 6 and travel the last few miles to where we have our reservations in Eastham at the Town Crier Motel (www.towncriermotel.com). Eastham is located just beyond the "elbow" of Cape Cod and is of historical significance. First Encounter Beach in Eastham is the site of the first meeting between the Native Americans and the arriving Pilgrims. Eastham was settled shortly after the Pilgrim's arrival to the New World when they ventured further away from their original settlement in Plymouth to seek out more fertile farmland. Cape Cod's oldest windmill, originally built in 1680, still proudly sits in its place of honor in the center of Eastham, just off Route 6.

After checking into our motel, we enjoy dinner at the nearby Sea Dog Restaurant, just a stone's throw from the motel. The restaurant offered us not only great food with steaks and locally caught seafood, but we were able to enjoy the live karaoke entertainment during our visit.

The morning greeted us with bright sunshine and unlimited blue skies just waiting to envelop us as we journey further up the Cape. One pleasant surprise was that the "Cape Cod Rail Trail," a pedestrian-bicycle path



that traverses the Cape ran adjacent to our hotel (www.ccrailtrail.com/trail.html). A brisk walk before breakfast was just the ticket to invigorate us for the day ahead. On our bikes and on our way again we head further east for more white sand, tall grass, and beautiful ocean views. Our several stops along Route 6 include the Cape Cod National Seashore between Eastham and Provincetown on the east side of the Cape.

The National Seashore encompasses over

40,000 acres of shoreline, salt marshes, clear, deep, freshwater kettle ponds, as well as a great diversity of wildlife. Lighthouses, dune shacks, Cape Cod-style houses, and wild cranberry bogs provide a glimpse into Cape Cod's past and present way of life: there is much more to the National Seashore than just beaches. If time affords a visitor can hike and bicycle on trails, explore educational centers, and inspect two operating lighthouses, to name a few attractions.

A stop at Coast Guard Beach has a number of visitors concerned about a sea otter that is on the beach. He has no concern for us, and with the tide soon coming in, he will be playing in deep water again. Nearby at the Nauset Light we see different "wildlife" — a dozen or so cold-water surfers are practicing their skills in the Atlantic's wakes below our vantage point. A third stop along the Route is at the Marconi Station. Perched high on the bluffs overlooking the shore below are the remains of a radio station from the early 1900's that was named after the famed inventor, Guglielmo Marconi, who initiated construction to prove his "wireless radio theory" and transmit information across the Atlantic. As we climb to the observation deck we see a lone fishing trawler making his way back to port — probably a sight seen many times by radio operators a century ago as they kept watch from the cliffs.

Journeying back to Route 6 from the coastline we continue towards Provincetown; this tour reveals a splendid barren landscape of white sand and scrub brush dotting the dunes.

As we near the end of the Cape, cottages line Beach Point to our left with Cape Cod Bay as a backdrop. Before stopping in Provincetown we take a detour to Race Point.

Race Point is where the Cape Cod Bay waters meet the Atlantic's waves to create a roiling surge called "The Race." Although the roads leading to the point are most enjoyable for our motorcycles, twisting and turning, dipping and rolling through the sand dunes, the

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water is not always safe for small boats as evidenced by the Race Point Lifesaving Museum located on the beach. During our early spring visit the beach hosts a number of fishermen and beachcombers. In the summer, it is a very popular spot for sunning and swimming.

We meander into Provincetown and park near the pier. Provincetown itself is full of history, shops and restaurants offering an excellent opportunity to people watch. Even in our early spring visit, there were many people enjoying the sunny day as they strolled the narrow streets and visited the shops that line the village.

Early in its history, "P-town" was known as Helltown and was a sailing point for pirate ships. Near the end of the main pier is a museum that cele-

brates this period of the Cape's History. The Whydah Museum is named after the pirate ship Whydah - the only fully authentic pirate ship-

wreck ever discovered. The museum has many artifacts on display that have been retrieved from the wreckage of the vessel from the nearby Atlantic waters. Visit <http://whydah.com> for more information on the ship's history, the expedition, and the museum.

On the road again, we choose to stay on the bay side of the Cape as we make our way west. A stop in Wellfleet at the Bookstore Restaurant offers great food beside the glistening and tranquil Wellfleet Harbor. The Bookstore, like many of the restaurants on the Cape, abounds in fresh seafood available from the nearby fishing fleets. Overlooking the harbor, the Bookstore offers outdoor seating that gives patrons a chance to bask in the sun and indoor seating which has a nice homey feeling.

As our visit starts to wind down we continue west. At the Orleans rotary we lean to the ocean side of Cape Cod and take Route 28. Route 28 appears more commercially developed than our ride on east Route 6A. We have the opportunity to stop at many stores, shops, and factory outlets as we make our way homeward.

Still there are many side roads to explore between the main route and the oceanfront to our left. The side roads lead us by many waterfront homes and private ways in towns like Chatham, Dennis, Yarmouth, Hyannis, and Falmouth. Each town has a story and each road offers picture-postcard snapshots of the ocean, the cranberry bogs, the boats, and the people.

Having spent several satisfying days on Cape Cod, we approach the rotary that will lead back over the bridge to our working world, and know that our trip has been far too short, that there are still parts of the Cape we have yet to explore. However, those roads and towns, beaches and lighthouses will have to wait until our next visit, as one visit to Cape Cod is never enough.

