

NEW ENGLAND TOP OF THE CLASS

WRITER
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Breezy beach days melt into an autumnal spectacular in the US's brainy and brawny north-east

Late summer New England? A resounding A-plus. In the US's scenic and academic north-east corner long, lazy August days are followed by the crisp freshness of September and flaming foliage of October.

Summer in New England is humid, so it's no surprise that the region's entire population flocks to the coast for cool ocean breezes. Fortunately, it's a long coastline.

To escape the Cape Cod masses, head for Outer Beach, where the Cape Cod National

Seashore (www.nps.gov/caco) encompasses some 65km of pristine sand and sea. Walking and biking trails wind their way past lighthouses, sand dunes, salt marshes and beech forests. After a day on the beach, head to Bookstore & Restaurant (50 Kendrick Avenue, www.wellfleetoyster.com) in Wellfleet to sample the region's luscious oysters. Or take in the spirited gay cabaret at Provincetown Art House Theatre (214 Commercial Street).

A more serene outpost, Block Island, is 20km off the

coast of Rhode Island. The ferry drops you in the gingerbread village of Old Harbor, from where you can bike or hike through picturesque pastureland and isolated beaches. Two postcard-perfect lighthouses – one at either end of the island – complete the New England scene.

To really get away, follow the rocky coast of Maine all the way to Lubec, a tiny town on the Canadian border. Spend the night in an antique-filled room at the Home Port Inn (www.homeportinn.com) but

don't get too comfortable: you'll want to wake up before dawn to visit Quoddy Head State Park, the easternmost point in the US, where you can be the first person in the country to see the sunrise.

After Labor Day (the first weekend in September), the coastal crowds thin out as Americans go back to school. So why not join them? Hundreds of institutions of higher education are located in Boston, while neighbouring Cambridge is home to academic heavyweights Harvard University (www.harvard.edu) and Massachusetts Institute of

STATES IN NEW ENGLAND
6 (MA, RI, NH, ME, CT, VT)

REGIONAL HUB
BOSTON, MA

UK-BOSTON FLIGHT TIME
7 HOURS

MUST EAT
BOILED LOBSTER WITH DRAWN BUTTER

HIGH POINT
MT WASHINGTON (NH), 1,917M



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Technology (www.mit.edu). Get the inside scoop by taking the offbeat Hahvahd Tour (www.unofficialtours.com) or have some geeky fun at the MIT Museum (265 Massachusetts Avenue).

Afterwards, settle into a sidewalk café in Harvard Square for a front-row view of students and buskers, professors and panhandlers.

The Ivy League Brown University (www.brown.edu) and the innovative Rhode Island School of Design (RISD, www.risd.edu) both lend their progressive viewpoints to Providence, making this city one of the region's edgiest and artist. Spend a day browsing the impressive collections at the RISD art museum (224 Benefit Street) and admiring the colonial architecture on College Hill, then spend an evening pondering the so-called music at experimental club AS220 (115 Empire Street, www.as220.org).

In central Massachusetts, the Five Colleges (www.fivecolleges.edu) are a coalition of esteemed (and exclusive) liberal arts schools clustered in adjacent towns. Amherst is centred on an attractive green, populated by lounging students. Nearby, the crooked streets of Northampton are crammed with coffee shops, bookshops and other bohemia. The lovely bike-or-hike Norwottuck Rail Trail (15km) connects these communities. If you're looking for 'College Town, New England', look no further.

As temperatures drop, the leaves on the trees turn vibrant shades of



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crimson, orange and gold. While colourful foliage is all around, it is the rainbow-covered mountainsides that put on the best show, so October is the time to head into the hills.

The magnificent White Mountains are the ultimate destination for 'leaf peeping'. To admire the picturesque peaks without the picture-takers and travel the winding roads without the traffic jams, approach these beauties from the north.

Use the Philbrook Farm Inn (www.philbrookfarminn.com) in Shelburne, New Hampshire, as a base for exploring New England's highest summits. Miles of hiking trails originate at the inn and

connect with the extensive network of the Appalachian Mountain Club (www.outdoors.org). Few tourists find themselves on this side of the Presidential range; you're more likely to meet a moose than other people.

No one captured the allure of New England more eloquently than Robert Frost, who penned many of his poems while living in New Hampshire. Literature-lovers will appreciate a detour to the Frost Place (www.frostplace.org) in Franconia, where visitors can follow a trail of his poetry through the wooded grounds.

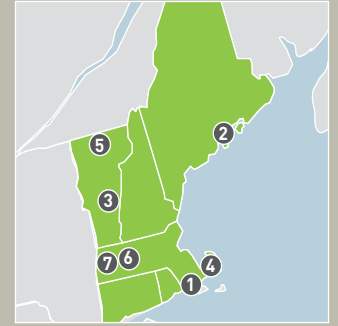
Wedged between Québec and New Hampshire, the 'Northeast Kingdom' of Vermont is a land of verdant hillsides and family-run farms, humble villages and even humbler folk inhabiting them. Thrill-seekers can explore a 160km network of mountain-biking routes maintained by Kingdom Trails (www.kingdomtrails.org) in East Burke. For tamer fun, head to nearby Glover, where a tumbledown homestead accommodates the Bread & Puppet Theater (www.breadandpuppet.org), a two-storey barn full of fanciful and frightening masks and marionettes.

Seasons change swiftly in this neck of the woods – as the leaves start to fall, vibrant October into November's drear, and New England takes on a more pallid palette. But revel in the late-summer sun while it lasts to discover a region at the top of its class.



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- 01 Castle Hill Lighthouse in Narragansett Bay, Newport
- 02 Coast Guard Beach, Eastham, Cape Cod
- 03 Autumn foliage in Connecticut
- 04 Brown University, Providence



BEST BITS

1. BEST MUSIC FESTIVAL Newport Folk Festival, Rhode Island

One of the region's most anticipated music events, with rising stars and big names. (Jul 30-Aug 1)

2. BEST RESTAURANT Primo, Rockland, Maine

Unbeatable fresh seafood, organic meats and local produce. www.primorestaurant.com

3. BEST MICROBREW Long Trail Brewery, Bridgewater Corners, Vermont

This boutique brewery wins accolades for its efforts in environmental awareness.

4. BEST BIKE TRAIL Cape Cod Rail Trail, Massachusetts

Runs 35km from Dennis to Wellfleet, passing salt marshes, ponds and cranberry bogs.

5. BEST HIKE TRAIL Long Trail, Vermont

Follows the Green Mountains for 450km through Vermont to the Canadian border.

6. BEST BOOKSHOP Montague Bookmill, near Amherst, Massachusetts

A scenic spot to browse for books, antiques and artwork. www.montaguebookmill.com

7. BEST OUTDOOR AUDITORIUM Tanglewood, Lenox, Massachusetts

Summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. www.tanglewood.org

LENGTH OF COASTLINE
9,900KM

TYPICAL SEP HIGH
23°C (BOSTON)

MOST SCENIC TRAIN RIDE
THE VERMONT (VERMONT-CONNECTICUT)

LOCAL HEROES
HENRY THOREAU, JFK, MATT DAMON