

Falmouth is quintessential Cape in all ways

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resident put it, “you have to want to go there to get there!” Meaning, to reach Falmouth from points north, you have to head due south on Route 28 from the Bourne Bridge and keep going, heading toward Vineyard Sound and land’s end. The Cape’s other vacation hotspots are located to the east, situated along the arm of the peninsula toward the curled fist of Provincetown.

“It’s one of those quintessential Cape Cod towns,” says Todd Bidwell, whose family has been coming to Falmouth for three generations. Bidwell, who lives in Falmouth year-round, is general manager of the Island Queen ferry (running between Falmouth and Martha’s Vineyard.) “Falmouth is a truly welcoming community with a small-town feel — I adore it,” he says. “And we’re bordered by water nearly all around, so there are water views everywhere,” adding to the vacation vibe. Here are a few of our Falmouth favorites.

Good eats in unexpected places

We’ve already raved about the killer lobster roll at **Quahog Republic** (508-450-4111; www.quahogrepublic.com.) For the Cape’s best burger, try the juicy half-pounder (\$12) at **Red’s** (named after Red Auerbach) at the Sea Crest Beach Hotel (508-540-9400; www.seacrestbeachhotel.com), a local fave. Bidwell recommends the Drunken Sailor burger at **Liam Maguire’s Irish Pub** (508-548-0285; www.liammaguire.com, \$13.95), served with Irish whiskey sauce. Another sandwich worth seeking out: the Cubano at **Quicks Hole Tavern** (508-495-0792; www.quicksholewickedfresh.com) in Woods Hole, a perfect marriage of roasted pork and pickles on ciabatta. Or grab a beer and their signature bar snack, pig candy (house-smoked pork shoulder braised in maple syrup and the house spice mix).

An unassuming Cape-style house is the setting for **C. Salt Wine Bar & Grille** (774-763-2954; www.csaltfalmouth.com), a standout in the fine dining category. Chef/owner Jonathan Phillips (former of Tosca and the Square Café on the South Shore) fills his 20 tables (plus those at a second outpost, **TGC Grille**) with inspired dishes like tuna tartar, a swordfish “chop” served on the bone, and a stellar wine list, including a variety of options by the glass.

But your best meal on the Cape may be one that you create yourself, at a cooking class at **Bear in Boots Gastro-pub** (508-444-8511; www.bearinboots.com) in Falmouth Center. This foodie darling specializes in made-from-scratch everything and has be-



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AMY RADER



AMY RADER

Things to do in Falmouth (clockwise from top): soak in the views at “The Knob,” a.k.a. the Cornelia Carey Sanctuary, walk through the Spohr Gardens, or check out all the shops and restaurants in the town.

come a must-eat thanks to dishes like duck confit poutine and grilled Caesar salad. So you know you’re in good hands when you sign up for a cooking class (\$45 per person). Or just show up for brunch, arguably the best in Falmouth.

“The Falmouth food scene is expanding at a staggering rate,” says Gates Rickard, co-owner and executive

chef at Bear in Boots. “Just a few years ago, the options were few,” he notes. “But the town has begun seeing a renaissance of restaurants.”

Where to soak up the sun, sunsets, and scenery

Among Cape Cod’s beloved bike trails, Falmouth claims the **Shining Sea Bikeway**. The 10.7-mile paved

pathway was named in honor of Falmouth native Katharine Lee Bates, who wrote “America the Beautiful” (from sea to shining sea) and it’s a beauty, traversing cranberry bogs, beaches, and harbors along its route from North Falmouth Village to Woods Hole.

We could write an entire article on Falmouth beauty spots. Two delightful

hideaways (undiscovered by most visitors) are **Spohr Gardens** (508-548-0623; www.spohrgardens.org) and “The Knob,” a.k.a. **Cornelia Carey Sanctuary** (www.qhpt.org/quissett_maps.htm). The former is a six-acre garden on Oyster Pond, formerly private but now open to the public, planted with more than 100,000 daffodils, along with day lilies, azaleas, rhododendrons, and hydrangeas. Also spotted on the property are nautical artifacts (bells, anchors, and so on), collected by Charles Spohr during his lifetime.

A short, woody walk leads to the Knob, a wonderful knob-shaped peninsula with exquisite views of Buzzards Bay and Quisset Harbor. This walk, a favorite of locals and birders, is alive with birdsong. Go early or late to snag one of the few parking places off Quisset Harbor Road.

For unrivaled sunsets, and a lovely beach walk at any time of day, head to **Old Silver Beach**, off Route 28A and Quaker Rd. If you’ve brought a treat from **Maison Villatte** (a primo patisserie on Main Street in Falmouth center), even better.

Cape Cod classics found here

Nothing says “summertime” like a stroll around town, followed by an outdoor concert. There’s free live music on Thursday nights at the **Harbor Band Shell**, and Friday nights at **Margaret E. (Peg) Noonan Park**. The latter is also the site of free family-friendly **Movies Under the Stars** on Wednesday nights from late June through August. If you’ve got kids in tow, don’t miss a visit to the Carousel of Light, featuring 32 horses and two chariots carved by local artist Lance Shinkle, on the grounds of **Mullen Hall School** (www.carouseloflight.org). And you don’t have to be local to cheer on the hometown team, the Falmouth Commodores, as they take on contenders in the **Cape Cod Baseball League** (www.capecod-baseball.org).

Tempted to stay? We’ll add one final recommendation: the **Sea Crest Beach Hotel** (508-540-4111; www.seacrestbeachhotel.com; rates range from \$248 to \$439 in season), set on Old Silver Beach in North Falmouth. With its nautically themed guest rooms and cottage, this property feels delightfully old-school vacation-y, and you can’t beat the aroma — a combination of salty sea air and burgers on the grill at Red’s. For more: www.FalmouthChamber.com; 800-526-8532.

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Highfield Hall and Gardens a big house with big plans

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Queen Anne home in the ornate, spindly Stick style that is among the last of its kind in New England. Look for original elements, including 15 fireplaces, each different from the next, and 10 stained glass windows whose colors glow in Cape light. Imagine keeping all 157 windows, in 31 styles, clean without the Beebe’s many servants.

The forward-thinking renovations

include opening two smaller rooms to create a windowed ballroom that can seat 90 for such recent programs as a three-part lecture series on Hollywood musicals and concerts by internationally known classical and jazz musicians. Weddings are held in the Great Hall, with expansive garden views, or on the lawn beneath giant trees.

But on a recent sunny midweek afternoon, one young family and a few solo visitors had the house and gar-

dens almost to themselves. Away from the Cape’s hubbub, they wandered inside and out, enjoying the solitude and photographing flowers and surprises along the way. The Fragment House, an outdoor sculpture of suspended pieces of sea glass, invites viewers inside to see the world through a different lens. Nearby is a playful walking labyrinth. A still-evolving Crystal Vision Earth Portal is yet another of the environmental artworks created for an

exhibit two years ago.

Dean has begun developing a walk especially for people who are visually impaired. Early phases include a jingle gate, fragrant herbs in the west garden, a restored ice house, and a large fabric installation in a giant beech tree.

The Beebe’s formal Sunken Garden, restored in 2011, blooms with ever-changing seasonal color. Rhododendrons flourish along paths. In the gardens and some of the 14 miles of car-

riage trails in the adjacent woods, guided walks are led by docents on the first and third Thursdays of the month through October.

Picnickers and dogs on leashes are welcome.

Highfield gardens will be featured in the 2nd annual Cape Cod Hydrangea Festival on July 10 from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Three free annual open houses feature craft activities, music, and demonstrations. And following Thanksgiving, there’s a 10-day holiday celebration when the house is elaborately decorated and hosts a crafts and gift gallery.

The grounds are open to the public without charge. Mansion admission is \$5.

HIGHFIELD HALL AND GARDENS 56 Highfield Drive, open daily April 15-Oct. 31, 508-495-1878. www.highfield-hall.org.

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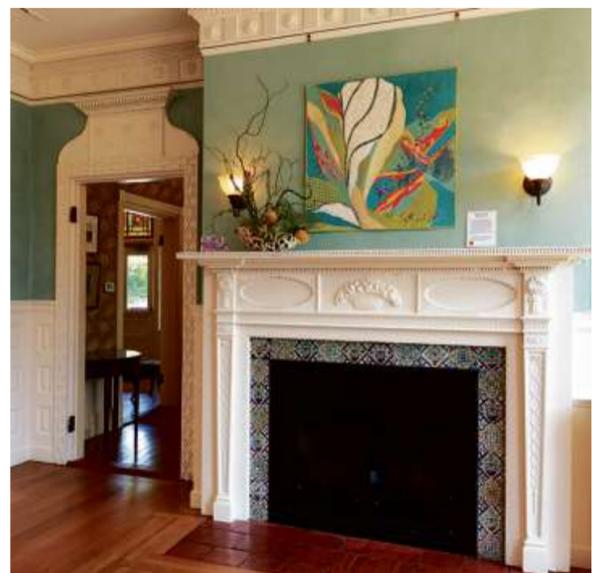
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One of two fireplaces in the ballroom at Highfield Hall. The mansion has 15 fireplaces in all.



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