

Cape Cod Family Beach Weekend That Beats the Tide, August 14–16, 2026

o) Your Details at a Glance

Item	Detail
Dates	Friday, August 14, Sunday, August 16, 2026 (2 nights)
Group	2 adults + 2 kids (ages 5 and 8)
Budget	Up to \$1,300 total
Home base	East Dennis / Brewster, driving from Boston
Must-haves	Bayside tidal flats, real swimming (tide-proof plan), lighthouse, ice cream, lobster rolls, a clam shack, cottage-style breakfasts
Special request	A real tide chart for this exact weekend, bayside vs. ocean side explained, with swimming and flats walks scheduled around it, official source cited

The good news up front: the whole point of your trip, "the beach day must not die because the tide went out to the horizon," is completely solvable this weekend. On the Cape Cod Bay side the tide genuinely does retreat about a mile, but this weekend the high tides land in the early-to-mid afternoon, which is exactly when you want to be swimming. The dramatic low-tide flats fall in the morning and evening, perfect for barefoot exploring. And when in doubt, the Atlantic (ocean) side always has water. See Section 2 for the hour-by-hour choreography.

1) At a Glance

Element	The plan
Base town	East Dennis (on Route 6A, between Dennis village and Brewster)
Recommended stay	Sesuit Harbor House, 1421 Main St (Route 6A), East Dennis, MA 02641
Main bayside beach	Crosby Landing Beach, Brewster (the famous Brewster Flats)
Ocean-side backup	Nauset Light Beach / Coast Guard Beach, Eastham
Lighthouse	Nauset Light, Eastham (free tours, Sunday 4:30–7:30 PM)
Signature clam shack	Sesuit Harbor Café, East Dennis (lobster rolls + fried clams)
Ice cream	Sundae School, Dennis Port (Cape Cod institution)
Tide source	NOAA Tides & Currents, Sesuit Harbor station #8447241 (bayside)

Element	The plan
Drive from Boston	~90 miles, roughly 1 hr 45 min to 2 hr 30 min in summer traffic
Est. total cost	~\$980–\$1,200 for 2 nights (see Section 3)

The Tide Chart for Your Exact Weekend (the star of the show)

These are the NOAA predicted high and low tides for **Sesuit Harbor, East Dennis (station #8447241)**, the closest bayside reference point to Brewster and Dennis. Times are local (Eastern Daylight, 12-hour). Note this weekend falls right after the new moon, so these are **spring tides**, meaning bigger swings, higher highs and dramatically low lows. Translation: the flats will be spectacular.

Day	High tide	Low tide (flats!)	High tide	Low tide (flats!)
Fri Aug 14	12:39 AM	6:55 AM	1:09 PM	7:14 PM
Sat Aug 15	1:28 AM	7:41 AM	1:55 PM	8:03 PM
Sun Aug 16	2:16 AM	8:27 AM	2:41 PM	8:52 PM

Bayside vs. ocean side, explained simply:

- **Bayside (Cape Cod Bay: Crosby Landing, Breakwater, Mayflower, Skaket).** Gentle, warm, shallow water. At low tide it recedes roughly a mile, exposing the tidal flats with warm pools, hermit crabs, snails and clams. Tide range this weekend is about 10 feet. **High tide is in the early-to-mid afternoon (1:09 PM Fri, 1:55 PM Sat, 2:41 PM Sun), which is your prime swimming window.** Low tides are early morning and evening, which are your flats-walking windows.
- **Ocean side (Atlantic: Nauset Light Beach, Coast Guard Beach, Eastham).** Bigger surf, colder, steeper beach that keeps deep water at essentially all tides. Atlantic high tide runs roughly 2 to 3 hours **earlier** than the bay. Because the ocean beach is steep, the water never "walks to the horizon," so this is your guaranteed-swimming fallback if you ever hit a bayside low tide and want waves.

The one-sentence strategy: swim on the bay in the early-to-mid afternoon (near high tide), explore the flats in the morning or the golden hour before sunset (near low tide), and keep the Atlantic side in your back pocket for any moment you want real waves.

💡 Because these are spring tides, the evening lows (7:14 PM Fri, 8:03 PM Sat, 8:52 PM Sun) line up beautifully with sunset over the bay. A flats walk at that hour, kids with buckets, sky on fire, is the postcard everyone remembers.

1b) Why This Base, and the Best Alternative

Recommended: Sesuit Harbor House, East Dennis. It hits your brief squarely: it is a family-run motel-and-cottages property right on Route 6A between Dennis and Brewster, with a seasonal outdoor pool, a firepit, a small playground and (yes) resident goats that 5- and 8-year-olds adore.

Some rooms are efficiencies/suites with kitchenettes, handy for cottage-style mornings, and a free continental breakfast is offered in summer. Crucially, it sits directly across from the Sesuit Harbor Café clam shack and is a short drive to the Brewster Flats. It is small and quiet, and you park right by your room. As a guide value for peak August, expect roughly **\$250–\$340/night** (as of June 2026); this is behind a live booking widget, so treat it as a range, not a quote.

Best alternative: Holiday Hill Inn & Suites (near Brewster/Marstons Mills). A classic family motel with a pool, arcade and mini-golf on the property, which is catnip for kids and typically a bit gentler on the wallet. Guide value roughly **\$180–\$260/night** (as of June 2026). A second fallback is **Three Seasons Resort** in Dennis Port, a seasonal-pool motel with a private bay-beach area, guide value roughly **\$200–\$300/night** (as of June 2026).

Honest budget note: a true standalone rental cottage in Brewster/Dennis in peak August commonly runs \$450+ per night, which would eat your entire \$1,300 in two nights before you've bought a single lobster roll. A family motel or efficiency is the realistic way to keep this weekend inside budget, so that's what this plan is built around.

1c) Book Now

What	By when	Where / link
Lodging (Sesuit Harbor House or an alternative)	ASAP, peak August books out	Open in maps
Brewster non-resident beach parking (\$20/day, online only, before you leave the car)	Day of, or in advance	stickers.brewster-ma.gov
Nauset Light free tour (Sunday 4:30–7:30 PM, open-house, no reservation)	Just show up; confirm date on site	nausetlight.org/...
Cape Cod National Seashore parking (if you do the ocean side) \$25/vehicle, cash/card at the booth	Day of	nps.gov/...

For lodging, you'll see the binding price for your exact dates and occupancy at the provider's booking step, it changes daily.

2) Day-by-Day Plan

Friday, August 14, Arrive and catch the evening flats

Because Friday's afternoon high tide is at **1:09 PM** and the evening low is at **7:14 PM**, this day is tailor-made for a relaxed arrival plus a sunset flats walk.

- **Morning/midday:** Drive down from Boston (~90 miles, plan 2 to 2.5 hours in Friday summer traffic; leaving before 9 AM or after 1 PM helps you dodge the worst of the Sagamore Bridge crawl).

- **Lunch on the way in or at base: Sesuit Harbor Café**, 357 Sesuit Neck Rd, East Dennis. Order-at-the-counter clam shack with picnic tables overlooking the marina and Cape Cod Bay. This single spot knocks out two of your food wishes at once, the lobster roll and the fried-clam clam-shack experience. It's cash-only with an ATM on site, and BYOB. Open daily in season, roughly 7:00 AM–8:30 PM.
 - Map: [Open in maps](#)
- **Check in** at Sesuit Harbor House (check-in from mid-afternoon), let the kids meet the goats and burn energy in the pool.
- **Late afternoon into evening (the flats!):** Head to **Crosby Landing Beach**, Brewster, off Crosby Lane from Route 6A. As low tide approaches around **7:14 PM**, the bay pulls back roughly a mile and the flats become a warm, shallow playground of tidal pools and critters. This is the "beach day that won't die," you're arriving as the water leaves, and the exposed sand is the whole point.
 - Map: [Open in maps](#)
 - Parking: \$20/vehicle non-resident, online only at stickers.brewster-ma.gov, buy it before you leave the car (license-plate readers, \$40 fine otherwise). Enforced 9 AM–4 PM, so an evening visit may fall outside paid hours, but buy the pass anyway to be safe if you arrive before 4 PM.
 - Heads-up: Crosby Landing has portable toilets only, no concession stand and no showers, so bring water and snacks.
- **Dinner:** casual, near base. If you want a sit-down clam-shack vibe on the Brewster side, **JT's Seafood** (Route 6A, Brewster) does lobster rolls, fried clams and ice cream with lots of outdoor seating and is a reliable kid-pleaser.
 - Map: [Open in maps](#)

💡 **Tip:** Bring a small net and a bucket. On the flats, kids love scooping hermit crabs and snails from the warm pools. Everything goes back where it came from, and it keeps a 5-year-old happily occupied for an hour.

Plan B (if Friday is rainy or blustery): Skip the flats and hit the **Cape Cod Museum of Natural History** in Brewster (right on 6A, indoor exhibits plus a marsh boardwalk you can do between showers), then do the flats on Saturday evening instead.

Saturday, August 15, Big bay beach day, morning flats + afternoon swim

Saturday's rhythm: low tide **7:41 AM** (flats), high tide **1:55 PM** (swimming), low tide again **8:03 PM** (sunset flats). You genuinely get the best of everything.

- **Breakfast, cottage-style:** If your room has a kitchenette, do a lazy in-room breakfast; otherwise grab pastries and excellent coffee at **Snowy Owl Coffee Roasters**, 7 Underpass Rd, Brewster, a family-friendly roaster in a converted barn with picnic tables and shade trees. For a full sit-down eggs-and-pancakes breakfast, **Grumpy's** in East Dennis is a decades-old local favorite about 2.5 miles away (dine-in or take-out, (508) 835-2911).
 - Map: [Open in maps](#)

- **Optional early flats stroll (~8:00–9:30 AM):** With low tide at 7:41 AM, an early wander onto the Brewster or Breakwater flats is quiet and gorgeous before the crowds. Great for photos and cool-morning crabbing.
- **Midday beach + swim (~11:30 AM–3:00 PM):** Back to the bay for the main event. As the water floods in toward the **1:55 PM** high tide, the shallow bay warms up and becomes ideal, waist-deep, gentle, no undertow, for ages 5 and 8. Crosby Landing or nearby **Breakwater Beach** both work.
- **Lunch:** beach picnic (remember, no concessions at Crosby Landing), or duck back to Sesuit Harbor Café.
- **Late afternoon:** pool time and goat visits back at the base, or a scenic pedal on the **Cape Cod Rail Trail** (paved, flat, family-friendly, crosses Route 6A near Brewster).
- **Ice cream (non-negotiable): Sundae School Ice Cream**, 381 Lower County Rd, Dennis Port, a roughly 50-year-old Cape institution making its own ice cream, with indoor and patio seating. In season it runs daily about 11:30 AM–10:00 PM. Go mid-afternoon or early evening to dodge the after-dinner line.
 - Map: [Open in maps](#)
- **Dinner:** casual seafood again (you're on the Cape, lean in), or a family pizza night at **Stone L'Oven Pizza Co.** in Brewster.

💡 Tip: On a bay flats morning, water shoes are worth it. The flats have the occasional shell and slipper-snail, and shoes turn "ow" into "let's keep going."

Plan B (weather): If Saturday turns cold, gray or windy, flip to the **ocean side**. Nauset Light Beach / Coast Guard Beach in Eastham have real Atlantic surf and lifeguards, and the water is there regardless of tide. Parking is \$25/vehicle at the Cape Cod National Seashore booth; arrive by about 9:30–10 AM in summer or the lots fill. This also perfectly sets up the lighthouse (below) for that afternoon instead of Sunday.

Sunday, August 16, Lighthouse, last flats, and the drive home

Sunday's tides: low **8:27 AM** (morning flats), high **2:41 PM**. And Sunday is a **Nauset Light tour day**.

- **Cottage-style breakfast** at the base or a final Snowy Owl / Grumpy's run.
- **Morning flats farewell (~8:30–10:00 AM):** One last barefoot lap of the bay flats near the 8:27 AM low, then pack up (Sesuit Harbor House checkout is mid-morning, confirm at booking).
- **Late morning/midday, head up-Cape toward Eastham** (~25 miles / 35–45 min from East Dennis).

- **The lighthouse: Nauset Light**, 120 Nauset Light Beach Rd, Eastham, the red-and-white tower on the Cape Cod potato-chip bag. Tours are **free** (donations welcomed), open-house style, and you can climb the tower and see the lookout room. The summer schedule includes **Sundays 4:30–7:30 PM**, so August 16 is a tour day. Only 10–15 people fit inside at once, so there may be a short wait.
 - Map: [Open in maps](#)
 - Because 4:30 PM is late for a homeward drive, you have two clean options: (a) do the tour and drive home after, or (b) if you'd rather leave earlier, still stop to see and photograph the lighthouse from the grounds and beach (free, anytime) and skip the tower climb.
- **Ocean beach bonus:** Nauset Light Beach sits right below the lighthouse, so if the kids have one more swim in them, the Atlantic is right there (Seashore parking \$25/vehicle).
- **Drive home to Boston:** Sunday-evening Cape traffic is real; leaving before ~2 PM or after ~7 PM is the difference between 2 hours and 3.5.

💡 Tip: Nauset Light Beach has a fairly steep stairway down to the sand, fine for your kids but a lot of trips up and down. Do the lighthouse-and-view first while everyone's fresh, then decide on the beach.

Plan B (weather): If Sunday washes out, swap the lighthouse-and-beach for the drive-home-adjacent **Hot Chocolate Sparrow** in Orleans (cocoa, pastries, ice cream, easy with kids) and photograph Nauset Light from the grounds in your rain jackets, tower tour optional.

3) Practical Notes & Checklist

Money: estimated cost overview vs. your \$1,300 budget

Item	Estimate (USD)	Notes
Lodging, 2 nights	\$500–\$680	Guide value for Sesuit Harbor House peak August; check the exact date price with the provider
Fuel, Boston round trip (~180 mi)	\$30–\$45	One tank-ish in most cars
Brewster beach parking	\$20–\$40	\$20/day; buy 1–2 days depending on your plan
Ocean-side Seashore parking (optional)	\$0–\$25	Only if you do Nauset/Coast Guard
Meals (2 adults + 2 kids, ~5 casual meals + breakfasts)	\$300–\$400	Clam shacks and picnics keep this reasonable; a lobster roll runs ~\$25–\$34 each
Ice cream + treats	\$30–\$50	Two sundaes ran about \$25 in a recent review
Lighthouse tour	\$0 (donation)	Free; bring a few dollars to donate

Item	Estimate (USD)	Notes
Estimated total	~\$910–\$1,280	Comfortably within \$1,300 if you keep meals casual

Reality check: the biggest swing is lodging. If your dates land at the top of the peak-August range, protect the budget by leaning on picnics and clam-shack counters rather than sit-down dinners, and you'll still land under \$1,300. Standard US restaurant tipping of 15–20% applies at any table-service meal, and note that Cape Cod posted food prices are typically before Massachusetts sales tax.

Packing & prep checklist

- ☐ Beach: water shoes (essential for flats), buckets, small nets, sand toys, reef-safe sunscreen
- ☐ Sun/shade: pop-up shade or umbrella (bay flats have zero shade), hats, sunglasses
- ☐ Bring your own water and snacks to Crosby Landing (no concessions, porta-potties only)
- ☐ Cash for Sesuit Harbor Café (cash only) and lighthouse donation
- ☐ Buy Brewster beach parking online **before leaving the car** (plate-reader enforced 9 AM–4 PM)
- ☐ Layers/windbreaker: the bay is warm, the Atlantic side is breezy and cooler
- ☐ Screenshot the tide table above so you're not hunting for signal at the beach
- ☐ Reservations aren't taken at most casual spots; aim to eat before ~6 PM to skip the summer wait

Family-fit notes

- Ages 5 and 8 are perfect for bayside flats: warm, shallow, no waves, endless critters. That's why the itinerary centers on the bay and uses the Atlantic only as a waves-on-demand backup.
- The lighthouse climb and the goats/pool at the base give the kids "wow" moments between beach sessions, which keeps the weekend from becoming one long sit-on-a-towel.

4) Sources (checked June 2026)

Tides

- NOAA Tides & Currents, Sesuit Harbor (East Dennis) station #8447241 (bayside reference): tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/...
- NOAA Tides & Currents, Nauset Harbor station #8447335 (ocean-side reference): tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/...
- Sesuit Harbor August 2026 tide calendar (NOAA-based daily hi/lo used for the table): tidetime.org/...

Beaches & parking

- Town of Brewster, Beach Information (fees, enforcement, amenities): brewster-ma.gov/...
- Town of Brewster online permit sales: stickers.brewster-ma.gov

- Cape Cod National Seashore, Fees & Passes (ocean-side parking): [nps.gov/...](https://nps.gov/)

Lighthouse

- Nauset Light Preservation Society, Visit page (free tours, directions): [nausetlight.org/...](https://nausetlight.org/)
- Nauset Light 2026 tour schedule reference: [capecodlife.com/...](https://capecodlife.com/)

Food & ice cream

- Sesuit Harbor Café (clam shack / lobster rolls), East Dennis: referenced via listing at visitdennis.com
- Sundae School Ice Cream, Dennis Port (hours, locations): [sundaeschool.com/...](https://sundaeschool.com/)
- Snowy Owl Coffee Roasters, Brewster (breakfast/coffee, new 7 Underpass Rd location): socoffee.co

Lodging

- Sesuit Harbor House, East Dennis: search and booking via [Open in maps](#) (confirm live nightly price and availability at the provider's booking step)

A note on the lodging figures: hotel and motel prices sit behind live booking systems and change daily, so every accommodation number here is a guide value as of June 2026, not a binding quote. Everything time- and price-specific for attractions, parking and tides is drawn from the official pages listed above. Have a wonderful, un-killable beach weekend.

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