

<<新英格兰指南The Rough Guide>>

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内容概要

The New England states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine often regard themselves as the repository of all that is intrinsically American. In this version of history, the tangled streets of old Boston, the farms of Connecticut, and the villages of Vermont are the cradle of the nation. It's a picture which has some truth to it, however, and, although nostalgia plays a big part in the tourist trade here, and innumerable small towns have been dolled up to recapture a past that can occasionally be wishful thinking, the appeal of New England is undeniable. It is indeed the most historic region of the United States; its towns and villages are often rustic and pretty, with white-spined churches sitting beside tidy greens and colonial churchyards; and its landscape can get surprisingly diverse — ranging from some of its stark coastlines to its green rolling hills and mountains further inland. Like most regions that have a well-developed tourist industry, the trick is to find the unspoiled corners, and to distinguish the bogus from the authentic. Above all, New England packs an enormous amount of variety into what is by American standards a relatively small area. There are the region's literary connections — with well-visited shrines to Emily Dickinson, Mark Twain, and Edith Wharton, to name just a few New England writers. There is no shortage of inviting places to ski, hike, boat, or just watch the leaves change color and drop from the trees — which phenomenal numbers of people come to do each fall. And there are the historic sights, which manage to catalog all manner of New England architecture and design, not to mention Yankee pride and ingenuity. Boston especially is celebrated as the birthplace of American independence — so many of the seminal events of the Revolutionary War took place here, or just outside, in Lexington or Concord; and, although the genteel seaside towns of Massachusetts and Rhode Island can seem a far cry from the first European settlements in New England, plenty of traces of those early years remain. This is, after all, the stretch of the United States where the Pilgrim Fathers and other religious sects put down their stakes, their survival aided by groups of Native Americans who themselves were eventually displaced, though their legacy remains, too, in place names throughout the region. Later, as the European foothold on the continent became more secure, the coastline became increasingly prime real estate, lined with grand patrician homes, from the Vanderbilt mansions of Newport to the presidential compounds of the Bush and Kennedy families. Inland, the Ivy League colleges of Harvard, Yale, Brown, Dartmouth, and others still embody New England's strong sense of its own superiority, and contribute to accusations of provincialism and snobbishness; in fact, the region's traditional role as home to the WASP elite is due more to the vagaries of history and ideology than to economic realities. Its thin soil and harsh climate made it difficult for the first pioneers to sustain an agricultural way of life, while the industrial prosperity of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is now but a distant memory. Indeed, New England has pockets, in Vermont and the other more northerly states, that are as poor as anywhere in the US; and the southern states have all the problems that are normally associated with long-established urban conglomerations. Despite the apparent gulf between its interior and coast — and, too, its northern and southern halves — New England is compact and well defined, and quite easy to get around; only Maine, New England's biggest and most rural state by some way, takes any real time and effort to navigate. Most of its states offer the same mix (to differing degrees) of picturesque small towns and villages, and at times dramatic landscapes, though each has its own distinctive character. When you're working out where to go, plan to include coverage of at least parts of two to three states, in order to pick up on some of that difference. The southern states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island are more urban and historic and, where nature intervenes, it is usually along the region's spectacular coastline. Here, the tourist facilities are aimed as much at weekenders from the big cities as outsiders — Cape Cod, the Berkshires, Martha's Vineyard, all are convenient (and very popular) targets for moneyed locals. Further north, the lakes and mountains of Vermont, New Hampshire, and particularly Maine, offer wilderness to rival any in the nation.

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