

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

CRESCENT BEACH
RHODE ISLAND



OGUNQUIT BEACH
MAINE



ELLEN MCKNIGHT/SHUTTERSTOCK (LEFT); COL/SHUTTERSTOCK

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Squishing sand between your toes is a summer necessity. After a long, snowy winter, start thinking ahead to your warm-weather plans and make sure to squeeze in a trip to the beach. But before you pack up the car with flip-flops and sand pails, do your research.

TripAdvisor's family travel site, Family Vacation Critic, recently compiled its 2015 "Best US Beaches for Families" list, providing reviews of some of the best spots. Among packed destinations like Virginia Beach, Rehoboth Beach in Delaware, and Carlsbad State Beach in California, New England received two shout-outs: Crescent Beach on Block Island, R.I., and Ogunquit Beach in Maine. Both offer stunning views and plenty of sand for a castle or 12, but TripAdvisor ruled that to make the cut as a top family destination, the appeal has to extend far beyond that.

"It's not just beautiful sands and picturesque views," says Lissa Poirot, editor in chief of Family Vacation Critic. In addition to the natural scenery, the cleanliness and safety of each beach is also prioritized, as well as any local attractions close by. "We're looking for beaches that offer a well-rounded experience for families. . . . Accommodations, dining, and entertainment within close distance of the beach, and plenty to keep the whole

'BEST' BEACH NEAR YOU

family entertained while in town."

To fill the bill, New England offered up some heavy-hitting contenders. Tried and true is Ogunquit Beach, a top regional vacation spot. With plenty of prime beach towel real estate, the whole family can settle in to dig for crabs and keepsake shells. If you start feeling peckish under the hot sun, head into the nearby village of Ogunquit, nestled along the bank of the Ogunquit River and full of restaurants and shops. If you're looking to stay awhile, TripAdvisor highly rates the Sparhawk Oceanfront Resort, the Riverside Motel, and the Beachmere Inn. With idyllic views of the ocean, flanked by craggy cliffs and sparkling sand, there's a reason the indigenous Abenaki name means "beautiful place by the sea."

If you're looking for something a little more secluded, head out to Crescent Beach, a 2.5-mile stretch on Block Island's eastern side. With part of it nicknamed "Baby Beach" for its soft sand and shallow waves, it's perfect for little swimmers. Accommodations along the beach are plentiful, equipped with restrooms, showers, chair, umbrella and boogie board rentals, and snack bars. For those looking to sunbathe, make sure to face the Mohegan Cliffs. Now you know what to do: Breathe to the rhythm of the waves.

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HERE

CRAFT BEER AND BIKE TRIP THROUGH VERMONT

Enjoy some of Vermont's famed microbreweries while cycling the pastoral hills, forests, and farmlands of the Green Mountain State with Trek Travel. For six days and five nights in July, recreational riders will cycle between 14 and 42 miles per day from Middlebury to Stowe (July 12-17; 19-24). En route, swimmers can visit the Warren swimming hole, the Appalachian Gap, Mad River Valley, or

browse Stowe's shops. Micro-brewery stops include Lawson's Finest Liquids, Craft Beer Cellar, Prohibition Pig, Rock Art Brewing, Lost Nation Brewing, and Vermont Ale House. Includes daily breakfast, two lunches, three social hours, and three dinners. Featured hotels include Middlebury Inn, Waitsfield Inn, and Green Mountain Inn. \$2,299 per person. 866-464-8735, trektravel.com/trip/vermont-brewery-bike-tour. Itinerary does not include tickets to the Vermont Brewers Festival in Burlington (July 17-18). Guests wishing to go before or after their trip should secure tickets on May 15, as they sell out quickly. www.vtbrewfest.com

WINDJAMMER ADVENTURES OFF MAINE'S COAST

Set sail from May through October on three- to six-day sailing adventures with the Maine Windjammer Association. The 2015 season includes specialty cruises with themes related to yoga and wellness; kids and families; lighthouses; gourmet food, chocolate and wine tasting; coastal and maritime history; seamanship; photography; writing; knitting; pirates, and more. Featuring a fleet of eight unique sailing vessels with home ports in Camden and Rockland, the sailing experience also highlights the wildlife and scenery of Maine, and

offers time to go ashore and explore. Rates vary per boat and season. 800-807-WIND, www.sailmainecoast.com

THERE

MOB-STYLE VEGAS WEDDING

If you're thinking of a wedding in Vegas — and who hasn't at one time or another? — consider tying the knot at The Mob Museum, officially the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement. The museum offers many marriage packages, from a quick daytime ceremony to a Big Italian Wedding, a 100-guest soiree with three-hour Italian buffet. To truly wow your guests, sign up for the very first overnight package, Sleeping with the Mob



(8 p.m. to 9 a.m.). The package features appetizers and cocktails, and screening of a mob movie. Guests can test their sleuthing skills at a midnight scavenger hunt, smile for the camera at a lineup photo-op, and settle down for the night at the courtroom slumber party. Includes continental breakfast. \$300 per person; minimum 20. 702-229-2734, themobmuseum.org

TEE OFF AND UNWIND IN MIAMI

If you're craving some post-winter G&R (golf and relaxation), check out the Couples Golf & Spa package offered at Aventura's Turnberry Isle Miami, a luxury resort and golf club located between Miami and Fort Lauderdale. Package includes a bottle of champagne; 18 holes of golf; 60-minute Swedish massage, nightly; daily breakfast buffet; forecaddie (upon request); and more. Rates from \$499 through June 30. And make sure to dine at CORSAIR, a new on-site restaurant by celebrated chef Scott Conant. The seasonal and rustic menu, rooted in farmhouse cooking of America and the Mediterranean, features dishes such as polenta with sausage and mushroom ragu, local snapper with celery root and pickled caraway seeds, balsamic lacquered duck, and short rib lasagna. Pasta and entrees:



\$18-\$34. 866-612-7739, www.turnberryislemiami.com

EVERYWHERE

SEEK THE HIGH GROUND, CAMPERS

Upgrade your gear with Silver Canyon, a new family camping collection by Eureka! The Silver Canyon line of three-season, cabin-style tents, available in 4- and 6-person models, features a combination steel-and-aluminum frame to enhance strength and stability, and vertical walls to maximize interior space. The E!luminate System — removable reflective ceiling panels — reflects light from a hanging LED lantern back toward the floor, increasing interior brightness up to three times. (Lantern sold separately.) The E! Media Center is a three-pocket hammock with touch-screen-friendly clear center-screen that can be suspended for watching

video from your electronic device from the comfort of your sleeping bag. \$329.99-\$399.99. Silver Canyon sleeping bags and pads also available. \$89.95-\$179. www.rei.com

COOL TRAVEL CARRIERS

Keep your cosmetics, sunscreen, medications, and snacks cool when you travel in the summer with a new product line by Cool-It Caddy. Three varieties of compact carryall cases feature a built-in coolant system that ensures your valuables stay chilled on the go. Simply pop your bag in the freezer until frozen, and then pack it for summertime activities. The Contempo and Bella models offer stylish patterns and colors; the new vibrant Icepops line speaks to kids and kids at heart. A Cool-It Caddy for men is available in basic black. \$19.95-\$29.95. 480-621-5756, cool-it-caddy.com

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