



Winter Walks on Cape Cod

by Dorothy Cohen



The Cape is a wonderful place for winter walks, especially for people with dogs. In the summer, most places frown on dog walking, and there are lots of "No Pets" signs everywhere. Especially on the beaches, of course, but even on some of the bike paths and walking trails.

For example, there are (officially) no dogs allowed at Fort Hill in Eastham at any time of year. Other spots are pet friendly, like some places along the National Seashore and many of the conservation properties that dot our landscape.

I grew up in Falmouth, and have been walking in different towns all over Cape Cod all my life. Every morning I take my dogs to Thompson's Field in Harwich, where we meet up with friends both dog and human (although I like most of the dogs better.) But we go there mostly because it's easy for me to get to. When I want to really go walking, I try to go somewhere special.

What follows is my short list – just the top three – of my very favorite walks on the Cape.

1. The Knob - Falmouth (Quissett) - off Woods Hole Road

* Dog-friendly all year long *

Directions: Follow Woods Hole Road south from Falmouth center for about two miles. At the traffic lights, turn right onto Quissett Harbor Road and follow until its end by the docks. Limited parking is available along the road.

For as long as I can remember, this walk has been my very, very favorite. The shoreline mansions along the harbor are, in and of themselves, a reason to visit any time of year. The Knob is part of 12 acres belonging to the Salt Pond Areas Bird Sanctuary, on the former property of Cornelia Carey, who left it to be enjoyed by the public upon her death.

When you arrive, there is a small parking area to the right; the Harbor with the National Academy of Sciences mansion is directly across to the left. After parking, you'll see there's a path that first runs along a big stone wall.

The path is a big loop that winds its way through beautiful woodlands. As you come halfway around the loop you'll see up ahead, like, well, a "knob." It's a round piece of land that can be reached by way of a rocky, sandy causeway. The views of Buzzards Bay and the mainland of Fairhaven and New Bedford are spectacular.

My favorite part, if you continue along the rest of the loop, is a grove of stunted oaks, bent and gnarled – a child's climbing wonderland. After exploring you can head back to the car and continue on to Woods Hole. I like to head to Coffee Obsession on the harbor, for a cup of hot cocoa.

2. Beebe Woods - Falmouth - former estate of the Beebe family

* Dog-friendly all year long*

Directions: From the Bourne Bridge, follow Route 28/MacArthur Blvd. into Falmouth. From Hyannis, follow Route 28 to the Mashpee Rotary. Take Route 151 to North Falmouth and get onto Route 28 heading toward Falmouth.

Proceed straight through the traffic light and go approximately 1/2 mile to Depot Avenue. Depot Avenue is just beyond the Inn on the Square, which will be on your right. Take a right on Depot Avenue and proceed through the stone pillars. You are now on Highfield Drive. Go all the way to the top of the hill, staying left, and you will see the mansion on your left. Parking is

on the left just before you arrive at the mansion.

Beebe Woods consists of 383 acres of land given to the Town of Falmouth by Mr. and Mrs. Josiah K. Lilly, III in 1966. This walk starts at the beautifully refurbished Highfield Hall, which is open to the public for events. Behind the theater building is the parking lot. The walking paths start from behind the parking lot.

For this walk, there are many, many directions to choose. My favorite is the one that leads to the Punch Bowl, a kettle pond of the type common to the Cape. It's a picturesque pond that lays deep within the woods.

I wish I could tell you the complete route, but I've never done the same route twice, as there's no trail guide. The many paths crisscross and intersect back and forth for miles and miles. It's kind of one of those walks where you walk and walk until you find your way back. Leave plenty of time just in case, and make sure you don't have to be "on time" anywhere else that day, so you can just enjoy.

If you're interested in finding out more about the trails in Beebe Woods, Highfield Hall sponsors a guided nature walk on the fourth Tuesday of each month, from April through September at 10 am. But not in the Winter. So go explore on your own.



Montana (16) & Louie (9 weeks) enjoy a Winter Walk

3. Great Island – Wellfleet, part of the Cape Cod National Seashore

Directions: To reach Great Island, turn left off Route 6 to Wellfleet Town Center (look for green and white sign for Town Center). Turn left onto East Commercial Street. At town pier, turn right onto Kendrick Road, then left onto Chequesset Neck Road to the Great Island parking lot, 1/2 mile from traffic light on Route 6. Driving hint: Water view will generally be on your left.



Midget checks out the surf

Follow Chequesset Neck Road from the center of Wellfleet and you'll reach the parking lot for this amazing walk. This walk has it all – everything you could want from a Winter walk on Cape Cod. You can start out on the beach, follow a path into the woods, and finish up doing a marsh walk.

The entire walk round trip adds up to 14 miles (!) but halfway through is a large marsh that bisects the island. The marsh is about 9 miles from the parking lot round trip. Some of this walk is hard going on soft sand, something I don't particularly care for, but the dogs seem to enjoy. Avoid the beach if you hate walking through that. (It sucked.)

Dorothy Cohen is a Cape Cod native who lives in Harwich with her family and ever-changing menagerie.

In 2009, she was recognized as one of the Animal Rescue League's Volunteers of the Year.