

6 Day History and Museum Tour of Southern New England

It's February which means people are planning a **New England vacation**. As New England is a popular destination because of the *history* and *living museums*, and I'm frequently asked for multi-day tour suggestions on that theme, I've pulled together a 6-day tour which focuses on the southern New England states.

This could quite easily turn into a 7 or 8-day tour and I've provided some additional **New England museums** you may want to take in if you have the extra time.

I've got an extensive resource section at the bottom if you want more information about any of these destinations or attractions.

DAY ONE - STOCKBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS:

Stockbridge is located in western Massachusetts in a region called *The Berkshires*. The village of Stockbridge is one of those New England delights to walk and browse, and use as a base for touring the Berkshires. Its most popular attraction is the **Norman Rockwell Museum** where you can also tour his studio and see his works and many artifacts. This is the genuine Norman Rockwell experience in New England.

DAY TWO - MYSTIC SEAPORT, CONNECTICUT:

Mystic is on the coastal eastern region of Connecticut and has a fine aquarium, interesting town and shops, and the **Mystic Seaport Museum**. This region was once the center for the building of the New England *whaling fleets*, and the Mystic Seaport Museum is a recreation of a 19th century whaling village. The museum has *tall ships* to tour and many exhibits and authentic shops to visit. Plan to spend all day here.

DAY THREE - NEWPORT MANSIONS, RHODE ISLAND:

The city of Newport sits on an island and is famous for its mansions, the America's Cup and the place where John and Jackie Kennedy were married. It also has the stunning scenic **Ocean Drive** and *Cliff Walk*. But perhaps most visit it for the **Newport Mansions**. Once the homes of the wealthy and elite of American society these are now preserved and available for touring. These "*cottages*", as they were once called, are a statement and history of the past.

DAY FOUR - CAPE COD NATIONAL SEASHORE, MASSACHUSETTS:

Cape Cod is the eastern most peninsular in the U.S. On the lower Cape and bravely facing the wild Atlantic are the beaches of the **Cape Cod National Seashore**.

Exploring this museum and park takes you through swamps and marshes, sand barriers, nature trails, historic wireless stations, and endless miles of sand cliffs and dunes.

Cape Cod was formed when the last of the glaciers receded from this area - about 20,000 years ago.

The main *Cape Cod National Seashore Visitor Center* is in **Eastham** and is the taking-off point for all things connected to the park.

DAY FIVE - PLIMOTH PLANTATION & MAYFLOWER II, MASSACHUSETTS:

While the pilgrims first set foot on Cape Cod when arriving in the New World they ended up at Plymouth a few weeks later and this was where they made their first settlement. **Plimoth Plantation** is an authentic recreation of the original pilgrim village and also includes a celebration of the important part the Native American's played in the settlement surviving.

The people dress, talk, and express ideas of the 17th century. A short drive to Plymouth town you can find the *Mayflower II* - a replica of the original ship and given by the people's of Plymouth, England. You can tour the ship and sense what life aboard must have been like during the harrowing voyage.

DAY SIX - BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS:

Boston is where the birth of this nation really begun. The city is small but drips history at every corner. Take the *Freedom Trail* as a paying tour or pick up a free guide and do it yourself. Take in Boston Common, the Public Gardens, Beacon Hill, the State House, the Meeting House, Faneuil Hall, and the USS Constitution, and much more. And I've just scratched the surface.

Check out the resources below to get tens more ideas for things to see and do - many of which are **free**... now there's a nice word in an otherwise expensive city.

OTHER NEW ENGLAND MUSEUMS TO CONSIDER:

Sturbridge Village - Sturbridge, Central Massachusetts.
Salem Museums - Salem, Massachusetts.
Lexington and Concord Battle Locations - Massachusetts.
Litchfield Village - Litchfield, Connecticut
Mashuntucket Pequot Museum - Mashuntucket, Connecticut
Heritage Plantation - Sandwich, Massachusetts
Watch Hill - Rhode Island

NEW ENGLAND MUSEUM RESOURCES:

[Norman Rockwell Museum](#)

[New England Getaway to the Berkshires](#)

[Massachusetts Vacation Guide](#)

[Mystic Seaport Museum](#)

[Eastern Connecticut Vacation Destinations](#)

[Connecticut Vacation Guide](#)

[Newport RI](#)

[Rhode Island Vacation Guide](#)

[Cape Cod Vacation Guide](#)

[Cape Cod National Seashore](#)

[The Great Beach of Cape Cod](#)

[Plimoth Plantation](#)

[Mayflower II](#)

[21 Free Things to do in Boston](#)

[Boston Vacation Guide](#)

[Where to Stay in New England](#)

6-Day History and Museum Tour of Northern New England

Last week I posted a **6-Day History and Museum tour** of Southern New England and my post today is a companion museum and history piece covering some highlights for the **Northern New England** states of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. If Boston, Hartford, and Newport are blessed with the sophistication of the arts in their museums, then **Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine**, are surely amply endowed with the *heart* of New England.

A New England *heart* that emphasizes the rustic and rural nature of its varied landscape.

In these states you'll find museums describing the heritage of the people and the struggles and triumphs of life in the region. Many of these museums are housed in villages and buildings themselves under the protection of both national and local heritage societies.

DAY ONE/TWO - PENOBSCOT BAY, MAINE:

Maine prefers to let its famous rocky coastline, and vast wilderness and woods speak for themselves as records of its history. However, many man-made museums are available as well, and two to include on any visit to Maine are: the **Maine Maritime Museum** in *Bath*, and the new **Maine Lighthouse Museum** in *Rockland*.

Maine has over 64 lighthouses to warn ships of its scenic but dangerous rocky coastline. And the Maine Lighthouse Museum in Rockland overlooking **Penobscot Bay** includes one of the largest collections of lenses and lighthouse artifacts in the United States.

Continuing with a nautical theme the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath along Maine's scenic route 1 collects, preserves and interprets materials relating to the maritime history of Maine.

Bath and its famous ironworks were known as home of "*The World's Greatest Shipbuilders*."

And finally Maine has many historic Forts along its coastline due to the military campaigns of various nations that laid claim to the territory during its early years. Many of these can be visited thanks to the dedicated and hard work of volunteers. **Fort Knox** is perhaps the most-well known in this area. See the resource section on where to find more to visit.

DAY THREE/FOUR - PORTSMOUTH AND SQUAM LAKES, NEW HAMPSHIRE:

If the awe-inspiring Northern Peaks and woods of **New Hampshire** are not enough of a geological museum for you, then two more conventional destinations are located in the southern region of the Granite State.

The **Strawbery Banke Museum** in *Portsmouth* recreates life in **Puddle Dock** from the late 1600s to the 1950s, and offers a glimpse into four centuries of experience in this New Hampshire coastal community.

Many of the neighborhoods of *42 buildings* are on their original foundations and offer a wonderful trip through Portsmouth's history as a major trading post through its decline and rise again as a commercial hub.

The *Strawbery Banke Gardens* also provide a rich and unique opportunity to walk through centuries of garden history in the preserved landscapes, and makes a delightful outdoor experience to complete your visit.

Squam Lakes is another favorite destination in the central Lakes Region at the foothills of the White Mountains. Here at *Holderness* is the **Squam Lakes Natural Science Center** where the family can discover the varied animals and their habitats local to the wilderness areas of New Hampshire.

DAY FIVE/SIX - LAKE CHAMPLAIN AND GREEN MOUNTAINS, VERMONT:

The state of Vermont has always been a little different. One of the last to join the original union it held out as a republic for the longest time. Today the state continues to celebrate its farming heritage, its battles for independence, and its conservation leadership, in its museums. Three to include on any trip to Vermont is **Shelburne Farm** on the shores of *Lake Champlain*, **Billings Farm and Museum** near the timeless village of *Woodstock*, and the **Bennington Museum** at the scenic town of *Bennington* in the southern portion of the **Green Mountain National Forest**.

Best described as a diverse experience, **Shelburne Museum** is located in Vermont's scenic **Lake Champlain** valley. Part art museum and part craft museum with a healthy sprinkling of American Folk art, its spread out over 39 exhibition buildings placed in a village-like setting. Many of the buildings have been relocated from New York and other New England states and include houses, barns, a meeting house, covered bridge, and a jailhouse. Open from early May through fall only.

At the **Billings Farm and Museum** in *Woodstock*, visitors can attend the *afternoon milking of the herd* along with checking out the authentic and restored **1890 Farm House**, and the many exhibits housed in the 19th century barns.

Take in the film "*A Place in the Land*" as an orientation to the history of the farm at the visitor center.

A day at Billings Museum is about getting engaged and programs such as *churning butter*, *making ice cream*, *getting to know the herd*, *how to keep a sheep*, and *training young oxen*, are offered throughout the week.

The **Bennington Museum** is located in the charming village of *Bennington* in the shadow of Vermont's southern *Green Mountains*. The museum was founded to celebrate the town's Colonial past and the Revolutionary War battle of 1777, but now houses a large collection of paintings and sculptures and military artifacts from Vermont artists and historical past. The museum also has nature trails on its property with places to rest and picnic for a refreshing outdoor activity.

New England is famous for its quaint villages and towns and historical significance to the country. It's no surprise the region has thousands of museums, and this has been a limited portal to some perennial favorites of visitors.

NEW ENGLAND MUSEUM RESOURCES:

[Maine Maritime Museum](#)

[Maine Lighthouse Museum](#)

[Historic Forts in Maine](#)

[Strawbery Banke Museum](#)

[Squam Lakes Natural Science Center](#)

[Shelburne Museum](#)

[Billings Farm and Museum](#)

[Bennington Museum](#)

[7 New England Museums to Visit](#)

[New Hampshire Vacation Guide](#)

[Vermont Vacation Guide](#)

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