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America’s Favorite Beach Towns

It's time to finalize those summer plans.



Christopher Seufert Photography/Getty Images

by
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Boston restaurateur Brian Piccini has been coming to Provincetown, Massachusetts nearly every summer since he was a boy. “You’re surrounded by water, and at sunset when the light shines over the dunes and reflects off the boats, it’s spectacular,” says Piccini. “Even as a kid, I could sense the magic.”

And Piccini isn’t alone. In this year’s America’s Favorite Places survey, *Travel + Leisure* readers voted the town at the tip of Cape Cod America’s favorite beach town. A winning trifecta of gorgeous natural scenery, charming architecture, and an everyone-is-welcome cultural scene, earned P-Town top honors. In the words of Piccini, “it hits the nail on all heads.”

In the annual America's Favorite Places survey, readers of all stripes evaluate hundreds of [cities](#) and [towns](#) across a range of categories, from the friendliness of the locals to the quality of the pizza. Unlike *Travel + Leisure's* [World's Best Awards](#), which encourages readers to weigh in on travel experiences across the globe, the America's Favorite Places survey is a way for locals to share what their hometowns do best.

As the results make clear, American beachgoers are looking for more than just expanses of sand on their summer vacations. Some travelers are looking for resorts with a longstanding tradition of leisure.

That’s the case for one California beach town, which is celebrating one hundred years as a haven for sun-seekers this year. Others have a more of-the-moment feel, including an up-and-coming Midwest destination that’s traded sawmills and canning factories for hip wineries and beach umbrellas.

Read on for this year’s ranking of America’s favorite beach towns, and get that sunscreen ready.



No. 15: Carmel-by-the-Sea, CA

“A village in a forest overlooking a white sand beach,” says the town plan for Carmel-by-the-Sea, founded as an arts colony in 1916. Fast forward a hundred years and the bohemian beach town has stayed true to its word, with storybook houses, charming inns, and top-notch art galleries. A popular stopover for roadtrippers on California’s State Highway One, it’s just twenty minutes north of Big Sur’s majestic cliffs, and makes the southern terminus for Pebble Beach’s famous 17-Mile Drive. Carmel also scores highly for its pet friendliness: restaurants, hotels, and the gorgeous Carmel Beach all welcome four-legged friends.