

A QUIET STROLL ON CAPE COD

Sometimes we can forget that an easy walk in a beloved destination is an adventure in and of itself. **BY MADELINE BILIS**

SUMMER ON CAPE COD might feel like it's all bumper-to-bumper beach traffic and endless ice-cream-stand lines, but you don't have to travel far to find a more peaceful side. A few miles from the center of Wellfleet, a quaint town near the northern tip of the Cape, is a leisurely hike called the Great Island Trail. Spend a few hours walking here, and the only other soul you encounter may be a harbor seal.

I've passed many summers on the Cape and frequently sought out this pocket of stillness. (I also recently wrote about it in my book, *50 Hikes in Eastern Massachusetts*.) The Great Island Trail lies within the Cape Cod National Seashore, a 43,000-acre swath of protected coastline, established by Congress in 1961, that runs along the Atlantic from Provincetown to Chatham. But the trail is in the only section of the national seashore that faces Cape Cod Bay. A sandbar connects Great Island, no longer technically an island, to Wellfleet.

TRIP PLANNER

Bilis, T+L's assistant editor and a Massachusetts native, recommends the pita wraps at the **Box Lunch** (boxlunchcapecod.com) in Wellfleet for the perfect mid-hike picnic. After your outing, wind down with a plate of the day's catch at **Mac's Shack** (macsseafood.com; *entrées* \$19–\$32). Then turn in at the **Wagner at Duck Creek** (thewagneratduckcreek.com; *doubles from \$185*).

The almost seven-mile hike begins along the flat shores of a tidal river before climbing into a pitch-pine forest, in which branches frame cliff-top views of the water. The trail emerges from the woods and traverses the sandy dunes leading to Great Beach Hill, then closes along a completely empty stretch of sand—quite possibly the only beach in town not blanketed in summer by towels and umbrellas. ➔

The beginning of the Great Island Trail, in Wellfleet, Massachusetts.