

# The 13 best hikes in New England

[Lonely Planet Editors](#)

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New England offers a wide range of hikes, from quick strolls to all-day mountain climbing challenges. [quiggyt4/Shutterstock](#)

Hundreds of miles of trails lace through [New England](#)'s forests, up the spines of its mountains and along its shorelines. You can set your sights on an epic traverse – like the Appalachian Trail or [Vermont's Long Trail](#) – or pack in a few day hikes amid other adventures. Nature is ever at hand in this region of the [US](#): New England is home to scores of state parks, forest preserves and [Acadia National Park](#).

Many trails are well marked, but hikers should take steps to stay safe when venturing into the great outdoors. No matter where you're heading or in which season, it's sensible to travel with a good map (not just your cell phone), along with drinking water and enough food to fuel your hike, rain gear (the weather in New England is highly variable), layers for drops in temperatures, and decent walking shoes.

Black bear sightings are possible, although attacks are rare. Make sure you know what to do if you cross paths with a bear. More dangerous are ticks, which can carry diseases. Inspect yourself and your travel companions carefully after your hike. Once you're prepared and ready to go, dive into these best New England hikes.



Spot birds like the Eastern bluebird on this walk through a New England conservation area. Michael T. Bonanza/Shutterstock

## 8. Hanging Rock (Norman Bird Sanctuary)

### **Best for bird-watching**

*2 miles roundtrip, 1 hour, easy*

[Norman Bird Sanctuary](#) is 300 acres of diverse habitat where conservation efforts include the restoration of grasslands and the annual installation of 300 nest boxes for tree swallows and Eastern bluebirds. Non-native plants have been removed and replaced by native fruit-bearing shrubs to support the New England cottontail, a threatened species of rabbit that's been reintroduced to [Rhode Island](#), [New Hampshire](#) and [Maine](#) in recent years. Visitors to Norman Bird Sanctuary can enjoy the quiet, wooded property on a 1-mile hike to Hanging Rock for ocean views, or bring binoculars for bird-watching from the cliffs of Nelson Pond Trail.

**Planning tip:** The sanctuary hosts regular activities to facilitate education and connection to the area, from outdoor yoga classes to free nature walks. Check their [calendar](#) for upcoming programs before you visit.

## 9. Cliff Walk (Rhode Island)

### **Best hike to combine nature and architecture**

*3.5 miles one way, 2-3 hours, easy to moderate*

You're never far from the ocean in Rhode Island, but the Cliff Walk is one of the loveliest ways to be right next to it, enjoying the caw of gulls and the crash of waves on rocks. Start your walk at one of seven entrances, depending on how much of the 3.5-mile path you want to cover. Along the way, you'll enjoy the ocean to one side and views of the iconic [Newport](#) mansions to the other. This National Recreation Trail in a National Historic District is a unique tour of both wildlife and architecture. Springtime walks, although possibly cold, are especially beautiful with wildflowers in bloom.

**Planning tip:** The northern portion of the walk is very easy with flat, level trails. The southern portion becomes rocky and you'll want steady shoes to traverse the sometimes slippery surfaces.