

The refuge is full, now what?

Alternative Beaches

Salisbury Beach/Salisbury State Reservation

Opposite the North end of Plum Island, Salisbury beach sits at the mouth of the Merrimack River. The state reservation offers beach access, fishing, camping, and a boat launch, and north of the state park, the town offers food and novelty shops for all your beach day needs. *Dogs are permitted from Sept. 16th - Mar. 31st.*

Crane Beach

Just across Plum Island Sound opposite the southern end of Plum Island sits Crane Beach in Ipswich, MA. Crane Beach offers hiking trails, a museum, access to the historical Castle Hill, all in addition to miles of beach access. The trails available are a part of the Bay Circuit Trail and total about 5.5 miles. *Dogs are permitted from Oct. 1st - Mar. 31st.*

Hampton Beach/ Hampton Beach State Park

Hampton Beach is located on the southeastern edge of New Hampshire roughly 10 miles from our Visitor Center and contains miles of sandy beach. North of the state park, shops, restaurants, bars, arcades and casinos can provide entertainment for all. *Dogs are permitted from Oct. 1st - Apr. 30th.*

Other Outdoor Options

Maudsley State Park

Located just over 5 miles down the road from our Visitor Center, this local state park offers several miles of trails to explore both on foot and bike. With lush 19th century gardens and views overlooking the Merrimack River, the varied environment make Maudsley the perfect place for a picnic or walk with the family. *Dogs are permitted year-round.*

Rough Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary

Managed by Mass Audubon and Essex County Greenbelt, Rough Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary contains 1.6 miles of trails weaving through coastal woodlands with excellent views of the Great Marsh. The sanctuary is located on Patmos Rd in Rowley, MA, a short 10 minute drive from the Parker River Visitor Center and is a designated Important Bird Area. *No pets allowed.*

Old Town Hill

Located on Newman Rd in Newbury, MA, roughly 3 miles from our Visitor Center and cared for by the Trustees, the central feature of this unique, half-upland and half-marine reservation is the 168-foot drumlin known as Old Town Hill which provides excellent views of both Parker River National Wildlife Refuge and the Isles of Shoals. Additionally, Old Town Hill includes 3 miles of trails leading through salt marsh, small tidal creeks, open fields, and woodlands. *Dogs are permitted year-round.*

Deer Island

With limited parking, Deer Island is located on the Amesbury-Newburyport border and sits in the middle of the Merrimack immediately north of Chain Bridge. A short loop trail explores the forested part of the island and offers both eagle viewing and fishing opportunities. *Dogs are permitted year-round.*

Spencer Pierce Little Farm

In Newbury, MA, right around the corner from our Visitor Center, visitors can experience a colonial American farm complete with a manor house dating back to 1690. Visitors can spend time with friendly farm animals, enjoy a multitude of hands-on learning activities, and attend expert led tours and other family events which are held at the farm year-round. Their visitor center houses a museum gift shop offering books, gifts and local products. The farm also contains picnic areas and a quiet network of nature trails. *Dogs are permitted outside the farm buildings year-round.*

Indian Hill Conservation Area

Located in West Newbury, this 315 acre Greenbelt property includes wetlands, meadows, and woodlands with trails offering everything from a moderate climb up the hill to a spot known by birders everywhere as “Warbler Alley”. *Dogs are permitted year-round.*

Cashman Park

Adjacent to the Merrimack River near downtown Newburyport, Cashman Park offers a boat launch and a nautical themed playground in addition to basketball and tennis courts and baseball and soccer fields. *Dogs are permitted year-round.*

Explore Newburyport

Clipper City Rail Trail

Beginning at the Newburyport MBTA station and ending at the base of the Oak Hill Cemetery on Parker St (a .5 mile walk between the two can make the trail a loop), this urban trail occupies space once home to roaring locomotives hence its name, the Clipper City Rail Trail. Distinctive art and public gardens border the wide path popular with families, runners, and the like. Because the trail borders the Merrimack and downtown Newburyport, walking a stretch can be an excellent part of a day spent exploring this seaside town. The trail is currently about 3.9 miles but will eventually be part of the 18 mile Border to Boston Trail. *Dogs are permitted year-round.*

Waterfront and Market Square

Historic waterfront boardwalk, which is itself part of the Rail Trail serves as a pedestrian highway to boat tours and shops in the downtown square area. The market square area features a variety of dining, shopping, and cultural assorted vendors.

Newburyport Farmers Market

Open on Sundays for a few short but sweet hours (check their website for specifics; will depend on the season) regardless of the weather and located in the main parking lot of the Tannery Marketplace on Water Street, the Newburyport Farmers Market allows those inclined to indulge in locally grown seasonal fruits and vegetables and an array of scrumptious goods from local food preparers and artisans.

Indoor Educational Experiences

Parker River NWR Visitor's Center

Learn about refuge history and biology through an exploration of our interactive exhibits meant to be enjoyed by the whole family. Typically open from 8-4, volunteers are eager to greet visitors and answer any questions you might have.

Massachusetts Audubon's Joppa Flats Education Center

Located just across the street from the Parker River NWR Visitor Center, the Joppa Flats Education Center offers educational content for people of all ages. Bird watching tours, activities for children, open viewing of the Merrimac River and a visitors exhibit area are all available from this facility.

Custom House Maritime Museum

Located in downtown Newburyport this historic building constructed in 1835, with the very same architect as the Washington monument and the US Treasury Building, is home to an extraordinary maritime museum. This museum acts as both an educational center and a research facility eager to teach the public about the history of the US Coast Guard and showcase displays of famous shipwrecks and maritime art.

Plum Island Lighthouse

With grounds accessible to the public year-round, the Plum Island Lighthouse, located at the Northern tip of Plum Island, serves as a valuable reminder of Plum Island history. Volunteers allow visitors inside the lighthouse during open houses which occur the third Sunday of every month from May- September.

Plum Island Airport

Situated on Plum Island Turnpike right beside our Visitor Center, the Plum Island Airport offers glider rides, instruction, and travel to the general public. Volunteers maintain the historical accuracy of the airport and educational offerings that the airport provides including its two museums. The Working Museum showcases restoration work being done and the Burgess Aviation Museum focuses on the history of the Plum Island Airport.