

## Off the Beaten Path: Alternate Routes and Destinations

Steve Smith, March, 2010

Now that the ubiquitous GPS units have taken the fear out of being lost (“recalculating”), we are free to venture out and explore places off the beaten track without the fear of being stuck in some permanent purgatory.

Southeastern Massachusetts is loaded with hidden gems. We have drives and destinations that rival anywhere for scenery and interest but are unfamiliar to many local residents. So whether it’s a Sunday afternoon drive or an alternate route to a regular destination, consider these variations when driving around the region.

### ALTERNATE ROUTES

Rather than following the same old same old when traveling from point A to point B, try these variations. But remember – only use your GPS if you’re lost, because it will simply direct you back to the highway. GPS units have no imagination or romantic inclination.

#### Route 105, Marion to Lakeville

Tired of the monotony of interstates 195 and 495? Try the scenic and educational Route 105 alternative. It takes about 15 minutes longer, but is well worth it. The farms and fields of Rochester are a welcome sight, and the 2 minute diversion to Eastover Farms is recommended. But the eye-popping stretch of this route is through the Lakeville Ponds complex. As you weave between Great and Little Quitticas Ponds, you’ll see the historic granite buildings for the New Bedford water supply. Farther along, you pass right by the City of Taunton water supply intake on Assawompsett Pond. In between are winding roads, old houses and horse farms.

#### Route 118, Swansea to Attleboro

There is a shorter and infinitely more pleasant route that connects I-195 to I-95 (North), avoids the traffic and hassle of going through Providence, and lowers your blood pressure by a measurable amount. Starting at the Swansea Mall, Route 118 winds north for 19 miles, mostly through Rehoboth, and reconnects with I-95 in Attleboro. Along the way is a semi-rural landscape that was preserved when the state decided not to build I-895 along this route in the 1970’s. When you cross Route 44, take a two minute diversion to the east and check out Anawan Rock, the National Historic Register site where King Philip’s War officially ended in 1676.

#### Riverside Ave. and Pleasant St., Somerset and Dighton

Follow the Taunton River instead of Route 138 for about 7 miles and you’re in for a treat. You’ll pass through the historic villages of Somerset that were built along the river in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Boatyards, marshes, and historic homes line the route. In addition to the natural beauty of the Taunton River, you will drive through two more historic districts in Dighton before rejoining Route 138.

#### Fall River State Forest/Southeastern Massachusetts Bioreserve

This is only for those who will drive on occasional dirt roads with almost no landmarks or directional signs. The best bet is to drive north for 5 miles from Hixville Village in Dartmouth along Yellow Hill Road to Wilson Road in Fall River. The detour to the Copicut Reservoir (Fall River water supply) is an interesting diversion. If you are feeling truly adventurous, continue another 3 miles past Fighting Rock Corner along Bell Rock Road into Freetown. You will see very little civilization along this entire route. It is not for the faint of heart.

#### ENTICING DEAD ENDS

The best treats are often at dead ends. Here are a few of the better ones.

##### Acoaxet (Westport)

You have to drive into Rhode Island to get there, but Acoaxet village along the west branch of the Westport River and the Atlantic Ocean is a beautiful side trip, even in the dead of winter. Starting in Adamsville, RI, where the Rhode Island Red monument stands, follow River Road to the ocean and watch egrets and ospreys and you pass by centuries old farmhouses and summer cottages. This area is truly a hidden gem.

##### Fort Taber, New Bedford

Follow JFK Highway to the end and then Rodney French Boulevard until you can go no further south and you will arrive at Fort Taber at the southern tip of New Bedford. Walk around the fort and out to the point and take in the expanse of Buzzards Bay that opens up before you. The most traffic you'll see from this incredible spot are the scallop draggers moving in and out of New Bedford harbor. A special treat on a summer evening.

##### Ned's Point, Mattapoisett

If you can tear yourself away from beautiful Mattapoisett village, follow Ned's Point Road for one mile to the end when you get to the lighthouse and landing. You won't want to leave this romantic spot. Bring someone special.

These are just a few of the tremendous assets all around which get lost in the blur as we whiz by at 65 mph. You owe it to yourself to break from your routine and make the occasional side trip. You'll be pleasantly surprised at what you find.

Stephen C. Smith  
Executive Director, SRPEDD