

Active Outdoors

Cape paddling, pedaling

Pochet Island a unique trip



Circumnavigating Pochet Island in Pleasant Bay on Cape Cod with Jonathan Palino and Jodi Swain of Cape Kayaking (Tim Jones photo)

By [Tim Jones](#)

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We love Cape Cod (and the islands!) and try to get there every year, usually in early June or in the fall. It's quieter then, the weather is usually cooler, most businesses are open and there's plenty to do outdoors. We hadn't been to the Cape for a couple of years, and in the meantime, Marilyn had become a kayak fanatic. So we had our two bright yellow, 16-foot sea kayaks on top of the car along with our trusty fat-tire tandem bicycle. Yes, our car is always easy to spot in a parking lot when we are on vacation.

But our first paddling adventure would leave the kayaks in their cradles on the car. We arrived on the Cape and drove straight out to the Bass River on the Dennis/Yarmouth line to go Stand-Up Paddleboarding (SUP) with Kim Reilly of Cape Cod Paddle Surf (capecodpaddlesurf.com). A few weeks earlier, I'd taken a SUP lesson in New Hampshire and enjoyed it thoroughly. Marilyn read my story on that and decided she wanted to try it. Bass River is the largest saltwater river on Cape Cod. Parts have strong currents and lots of boat traffic. Other parts are quiet inlets. That's where we started. Kim had taught a lesson earlier and a couple of her students tagged along for more practice. First she showed Marilyn how to paddle from a kneeling position, then how to stand. Marilyn took to it naturally, stood up in minutes and never fell. She's not a strong swimmer, and even wearing a PFD she admits she was nervous. Our lesson was supposed to last an hour, but we ended up exploring a couple of miles of the river and its beautiful side bays for over an hour and a half. With no lesson following, Kim took her time with us, giving us pointers as needed and letting us just enjoy the paddling most of the time.

Here's how Marilyn described the experience:

"There really is nothing difficult about SUP. You start on your knees and getting to a standing position is so very easy! When you first stand up, your knees are constantly trembling, making you feel like you might fall over, but the board is very stable. The only thing causing the trembling is your own uncertainty. "It took about 10 minutes for the 'shakes' to go away, then it was smooth sailing, so to speak. The water was so beautifully clear, you could actually look down and see fish, something you don't get to enjoy in a kayak. From then on, you take in the beautiful views, watch the fish and crabs swim, and move forward at a leisurely pace. "Standing, keeping your body stable and paddling works your core muscles, shoulders, arms, obliques and legs. The next day, my whole body was pleasantly humming from the experience of a fabulous workout and an enjoyable adventure, trying something new and different. SUP is the fastest-growing water sport? Just about anyone can do it. What about you, what are you waiting for?"

She's right, this was a wonderful experience, so what are you waiting for? Life isn't a spectator sport. Get out and enjoy!

Paddling Pochet

That afternoon, we settled into a beautiful room at The Platinum Pebble (platinumpebble.com), a lovely boutique inn in West Harwich about a half mile along a quiet street from the beach and a mile along an even quieter side road from the Cape Cod Rail Trail. This was a "splurge" for us and absolutely worth it. Innkeepers Simon and Annabelle are truly gracious hosts and we loved every minute there (especially breakfast!). Marilyn decided she wasn't doing anything more that day, so she relaxed while I took a quick swim in the pool, a quick nap (this was vacation, after all) and then headed to Orleans for an evening kayak paddle with Jonathan Palino and Jodi Swain of Cape Kayaking (capekayaking.com). Jonathan is a kayak instructor, a wilderness first responder and a top-notch tour leader. With just the three of us, a high tide and a beautiful evening, we could enjoy a rare treat, a circumnavigation of Pochet Island, which can only be done on a high tide. We were the only boats on the water when we launched on a quiet corner of Pleasant Bay. Most of what we paddled over would be mud flats at low tide. We had to paddle against the incoming tide a short way, then we turned and rode the current up a fairly narrow

channel that kept getting narrower and narrower. Midway around the island, we stopped at a little wooden bridge, pulled out the kayaks to wait for high tide and, while we waited, strolled out onto Nauset Beach to watch the seals at play. Back into the kayaks, we rode the last of the incoming tide onto an open pond, then into a channel through the marsh grass that kept getting narrower and narrower. Without Jonathan as a guide, I couldn't have found the passage. At one point we were paddling 16-foot kayaks through S curves in a channel barely wider than the boats. It was, without any doubt one of the most memorable kayak paddles I've ever been on. I was actually sad when the channel began opening up to allow us to paddle across open water to the launch. Great experience, highly recommended. Don't worry, Jonathan assesses your kayaking abilities before you go out and won't take you anywhere too difficult for you. I'm just really glad he felt my skills were up to this paddle.

And pedaling, too

We had two nights at the Platinum Pebble. The first morning there, after breakfast, we went out and rode eight miles on the CCRT. We got back just as the skies opened up for an all-day rain. Nap time! The second morning, we got up really early and rode the Old Colony Rail Trail (which intersects the CCRT) all the way into Chatham and back before breakfast. Cape Cod vacationing at its finest, with plenty more fun ahead. Stay tuned!