

The Ultimate

# Beach Finder

*Point Pleasant Beach,  
New Jersey*

Hot dogs or pierogies? Surfing or cruising? A sea of humanity or just the cool, blue sea? To find the stretch of sand that suits you, play our handy recommend-o-matic.

**By Lane Brown**

**How soon would you like  
to be at the beach?**

**ABOUT AN HOUR**

**ABOUT 2 HOURS**

**ABOUT 3 HOURS**

Are you actually planning on going in the water?

How do you prefer your surfing?

What do you look for most in a beach?

AN ACTIVE BOARDWALK

A GAY PICKUP SCENE AND/OR UNOFFICIALLY SANCTIONED TOPLESSNESS

HUGE CROWDS

What would you like for lunch?



SELF-CAUGHT FISH



PIEROGIES



68 HOTDOGS

**SOUTH BEACH**  
Booze and picnics in the literal shadows of the Verrazano bridge. 🚗 1 hr. 20 min. via Staten Island Ferry and S51 bus  
🆓 Free  
⚠️ The harbor water is questionable, but kids can cool off at the spray park at the nearby Midland Beach.

**BRIGHTON BEACH**  
Coney Island's less kitschy, more Russian boardwalk neighbor. 🚗 1 hr. via B/Q to Brighton Beach  
🆓 Free  
⚠️ A good-eating beach: The Gold Label Deli, just two blocks from the sand, has the best meat pies.

**CONEY ISLAND**  
Nathan's, Shoot the Freak, the Cyclone, and now a new classic: Luna Park. 🚗 1 hr. via D/Q/F/N to Coney Island-Stillwell Ave.  
🆓 Free  
⚠️ The Brooklyn Cyclones are back: Cheap seats just \$8!

**JACOB RIIS BEACH**  
Spaciousness plus shabbiness equals semi-legal clotheslessness. 🚗 1 hr. 30 min. via 2 to Flatbush, transfer to the Q35  
🆓 Free  
⚠️ The pickup scene heats up on the far east end of the beach.

**GUNNISON BEACH**  
Clean sand, plentiful wildlife, and many a carefree nudist. 🚗 1 hr. on the Seastreak Ferry, 10 minutes on the shuttle  
🆓 \$40 round trip (\$5 bike fee)  
⚠️ Cyclists love the five-mile bike trail; canned beer is welcome.

**LONG BEACH**  
Action-packed boardwalk jammed with cyclists, surfers, and rollerbladers. 🚗 1 hr. via LIRR to Long Beach  
🆓 \$19 round trip plus beach pass  
⚠️ Good swell? Long Beach Surf Shop rents boards for \$40.

Which potential annoyance is not a deal-breaker for you?



EVERYTHING ABOUT CONEY ISLAND



LACK OF AMENITIES  
**FORT TILDEN**  
Former U.S. Army fort slowly being reclaimed by nature. 🚗 1 hr. 30 min. via 2 train to Flatbush Ave., transfer to Q35 bus  
🆓 Free  
⚠️ No lifeguards so beware of riptides. Bring food and water—and toilet paper.

SUN-BLOCKING HIGH-RISES  
**ROCKAWAY BEACH**  
The quintessential urban beach—and a fine place to barbecue. 🚗 1 hr. 30 min. via A train to Rockaway  
🆓 Free  
⚠️ Near Beach 103rd St. there's a wider strand, and past Beach 73rd St., a quiet conservation area.

AEROSMITH CONCERTS  
**JONES BEACH**  
There's something for everyone, which is why everyone is here. 🚗 1 hr. 15 min. via LIRR to Freeport, transfer to N88  
🆓 \$16.50 round trip  
⚠️ Stick to the East End and Zach's Bay for swimming; West End is closed for the season.

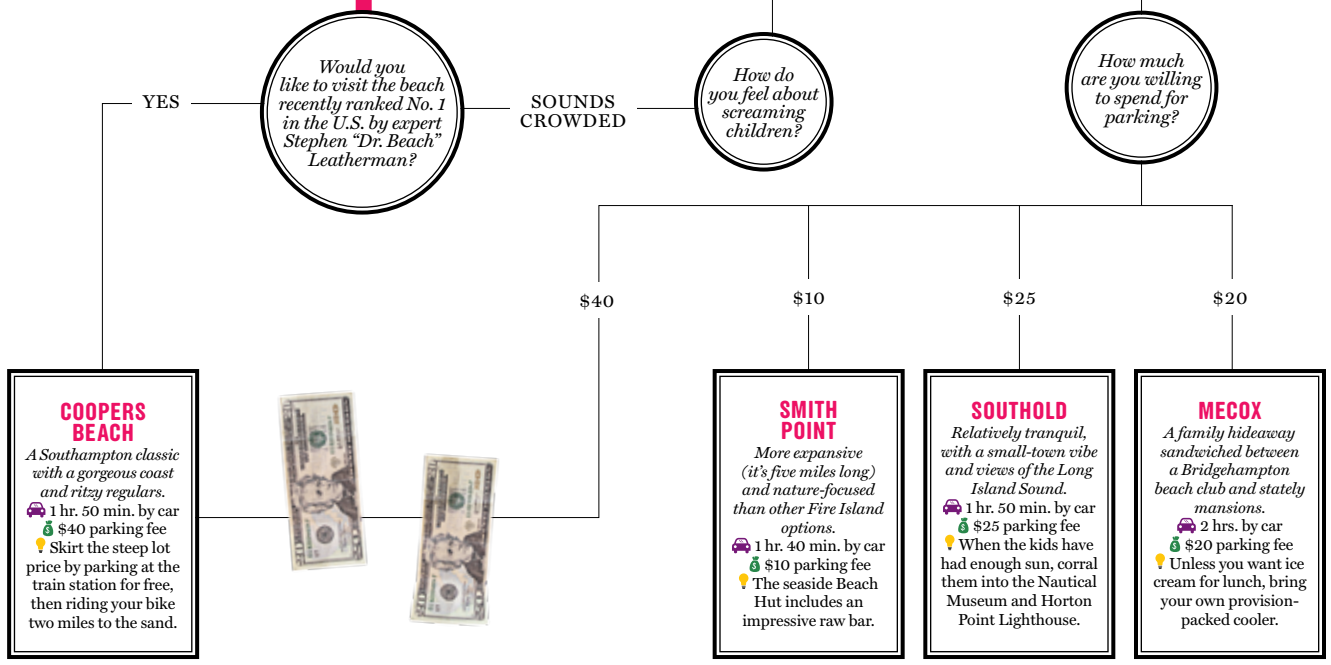
Gunnison Beach



Long Beach

PHOTOGRAPHS: PREVIOUS SPREAD, THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX; THIS SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT, AMY TOENING/GETTY IMAGES; NEW YORK MAGAZINE; CARYN ROUSSEAU/AP; NEW YORK MAGAZINE; CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR/GETTY IMAGES; MAYELA LOPEZ/AP/GETTY IMAGES; ELIZABETH WEINBERG

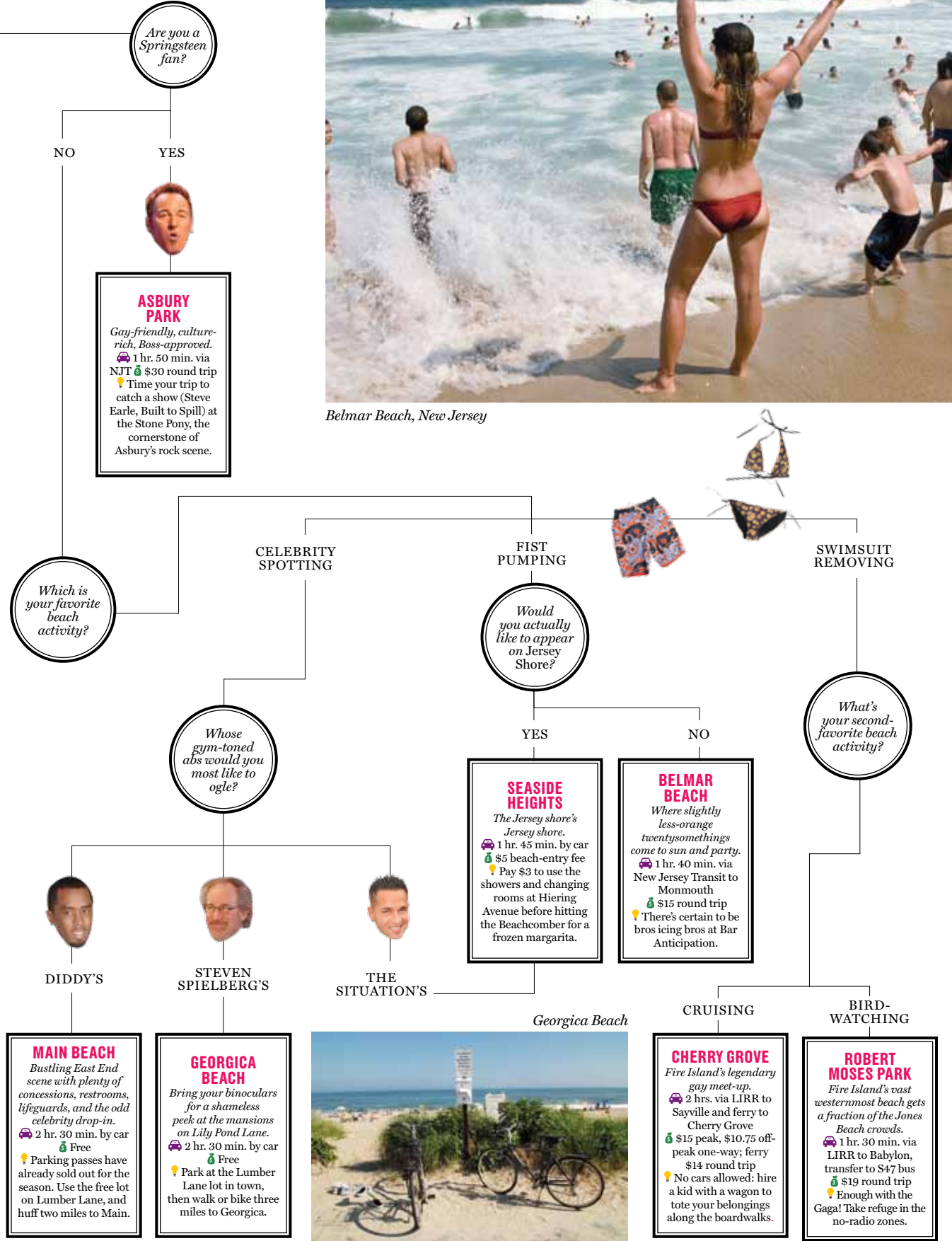
**ABOUT 2 HOURS**



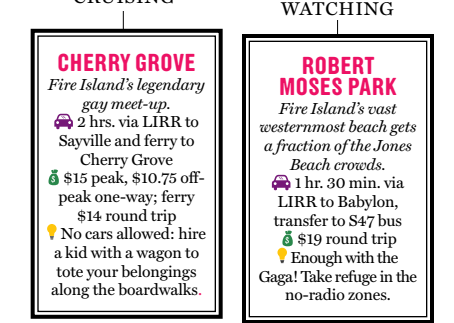
Southold



PHOTOGRAPHS: THIS SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: LLOYD ZIFF; NEW YORK MAGAZINE; JEFFREY UFERG/WIREIMAGE; COLIN ARCHER/AGENCY NEW JERSEY; NEW YORK MAGAZINE (2); GORDON M. GRANT/PHOTOSHELTER; PATRICK McMULLAN (2); JEFF KRAVITZ/FILM MAGIC



Belmar Beach, New Jersey



**ABOUT 3 HOURS**

Which out-of-town oddity is most worth the drive?

FREE PARKING

EXOTIC WILDLIFE

RED SOX FANS

But at what cost?

Which undomesticated creature would you most like to encounter?

From where would you prefer to taunt them?



NO LIFEGUARDS

TOURISTS

**HIGBEE BEACH**

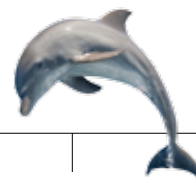
A dog-friendly wildlife preserve in Cape May, N.J., with an aggressive tide. 🚗 3 hrs. by car  
 🆓 Free  
 📌 Pack bug spray, and keep your clothes on: Undercover cops have been known to arrest nude sunbathers.

**ATLANTIC CITY**

Unlimited gambling, boozing, and shopping beats the actual beach. 🚗 2 hrs. 30 min. by car  
 🆓 Free  
 📌 Less than desirable sand is no problem with a drink in hand, ideally at the Chelsea Hotel's pool or Trump Plaza Beach Bar.



Atlantic City, New Jersey



MONSTERS

A 65-FOOT-TALL WOODEN ELEPHANT

DOLPHINS

ALEC BALDWIN

**DITCH PLAINS**

Surfer haven with reliable waves and the occasional washed-up alien creature. 🚗 3 hrs. via Jitney to Montauk, 10 min. cab to beach.  
 🍷 \$53 for Jitney, \$10 for cab  
 📌 Don't miss the veggie sandwich at the Ditch Witch truck.

**MARGATE**

No scene to speak of, but exceedingly clean beaches. 🚗 2 hr. 40 min. by car, 🍷 \$15 beach pass  
 📌 Park near the Benson Ave. entrance, close to Lucy (that six-story elephant) and one of the few public bathrooms.

**NORTH WILDWOOD**

Frenzied boardwalk with activities galore, including whale- and dolphin-watching. 🚗 3 hrs. by car  
 🆓 Free  
 📌 Stargazers welcome: the beach stays open until 10 p.m.

**INDIAN WELLS**

White-sand spread swarmed by the postgrad summer-share set. 🚗 2 hrs. 40 min. by car  
 🆓 Free  
 📌 Channel your inner Baldwin with a post-sun BBC (Banana Bacardi Cooler) from Cyril's on the edge of Amagansett.

PHOTOGRAPHS: CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT, GORDON M. GRANT/PHOTO-SHELTER; J. MERIC/GETTY IMAGES; MIKE HILL/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTOGRAPHS: FROM TOP, JOE VIESTI/PHOTOSHELTER; BERND JONKMANNS/LAIF

Indian Wells



A BOARDWALK WITH AN AMUSEMENT PARK

**OCEAN BEACH PARK**

A Connecticut family magnet, with an arcade, mini-golf course, and water park. 🚗 2 hr. 40 min. by car  
 🍷 \$18 parking fee  
 📌 Tuesday movie nights screen kid flicks on the boardwalk.

NATURE TRAILS AND CAMPSITES

**ROCKY NECK STATE PARK**

Secluded, small beach in East Lyme, Conn., favored by fishermen and campers. 🚗 2 hr. 20 min. by car  
 🍷 \$22 parking fee  
 📌 Secure a camping pass (from \$17) in advance if you want to barbecue or pitch a tent.

The Ditch Witch food truck on Ditch Plains



Additional reporting by Kat Ward