

## Real Life Favorite Spots in this Fiction Writer's World

My novels always reference New England. No surprise. I grew up in—and return time and again to—Massachusetts. The varied landscapes and local touchstones are the places I see most clearly when my characters and their actions develop and take shape. Here are a few special spots north and a little west of Boston.

**Plum Island:** [Parker River National Wildlife Refuge](#) and Sandy Point State Reservation

Excellent walks and birding opportunities in the wildlife refuge with a simply beautiful and peaceful state reservation beach at the end of the peninsula.

**Amesbury:** [Amesbury Public Library](#)

The library where I began doing library advocacy work. A circa 1900 Richardsonian-style building right in downtown Amesbury.

**Rockport:** [Halibut Point State Park](#)

An old granite quarry on coastal Rockport. A great site for a family hike. Take a picnic and sit on the granite slabs at the ocean's edge to eat.

**Manchester-by-the-Sea:** [Singing Beach](#)

The go-to beach in college and post-graduation because my friends and I could take the train from Boston to Manchester and walk in. A truly lovely spot, easy to walk its length because it's not as large as the area's better-known beaches like Good Harbor and Crane.

**Ipswich:** [Appleton Farms](#)

A working New England farm managed by the Trustees of Reservations. Take your pick of programs, enjoy fresh and local produce from the food store, or walk or ride your horse around the extensive trails.

**Essex and Ipswich:** [Woodman's](#) and [Clam Box](#)

Fried clams. There's other fried food on both menus (and Clam Box's lobster rolls are very good!). But Ipswich and Essex are known for their clams, so don't miss.

**Beverly:** [Bonny Breads](#)

The baker here knows what she's doing with bread. Try the cardamom buns.

**Middleton:** [Richardson's Ice Cream](#)

Grape-Nut or Moose Tracks? I never veer from one of my two favorites. Best ice cream in Massachusetts, don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

**Arlington:** [Quebrada Baking Company](#)

Quebrada gave me a job years ago baking on weekends when I had never baked commercially before. Consistently tasty baked goods made with quality ingredients.

