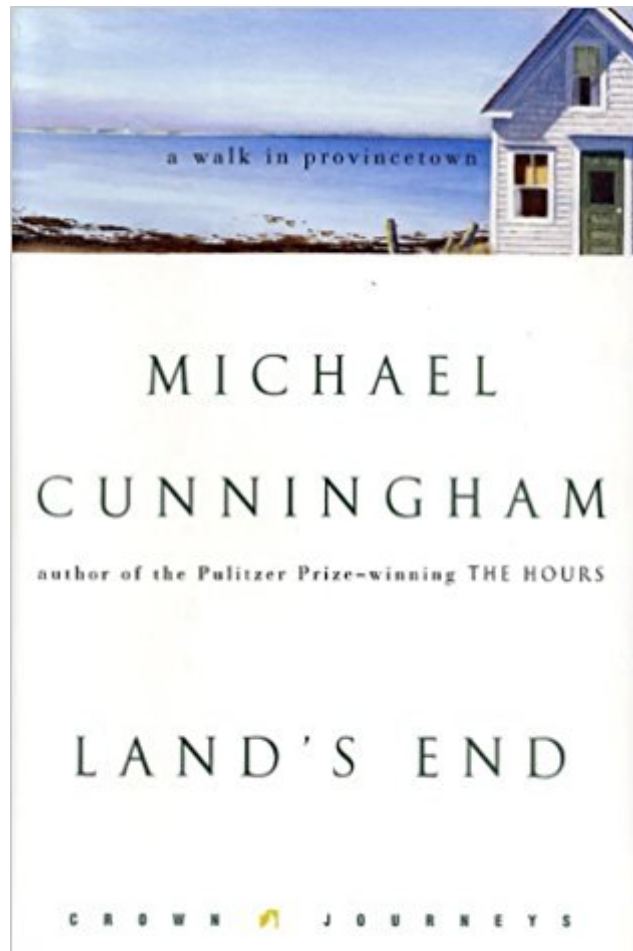


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# Land's End: A Walk In Provincetown (Crown Journeys)



## Synopsis

In this celebration of one of America's oldest towns (incorporated in 1720), Michael Cunningham, author of the best-selling, Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Hours*, brings us Provincetown, one of the most idiosyncratic and extraordinary towns in the United States, perched on the sandy tip at the end of Cape Cod. Provincetown, eccentric, physically remote, and heartbreakingly beautiful, has been amenable and intriguing to outsiders for as long as it has existed. "It is the only small town I know of where those who live unconventionally seem to outnumber those who live within the prescribed bounds of home and licensed marriage, respectable job, and biological children," says Cunningham. "It is one of the places in the world you can disappear into. It is the Morocco of North America, the New Orleans of the north." He first came to the place more than twenty years ago, falling in love with the haunted beauty of its seascape and the rambunctious charm of its denizens. Although Provincetown is primarily known as a summer mecca of stunning beaches, quirky shops, and wild nightlife, as well as a popular destination for gay men and lesbians, it is also a place of deep and enduring history, artistic and otherwise. Few towns have attracted such an impressive array of artists and writers—from Tennessee Williams to Eugene O'Neill, Mark Rothko to Robert Motherwell—who, like Cunningham, were attracted to this finger of land because it was . . . different, nonjudgmental, the perfect place to escape to; to be rescued, healed, reborn, or simply to live in peace. As we follow Cunningham on his various excursions through Provincetown and its surrounding landscape, we are drawn into its history, its mysteries, its peculiarities—places you won't read about in any conventional travel guide.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Cunningham (*The Hours*) takes the reader on a leisurely, idiosyncratic tour of the fabled town at the tip of Cape Cod. He makes the rounds of his favorite haunts, from the beaches, marshes and dunes to businesses like the halfheartedly modernized Adams Pharmacy, which has a soda fountain from the 1940s; the Marine Specialties store, a repository of the overlooked, the lost, the surplus, the irregular, the no-longer-needed, and the outmoded; and the Atlantic House, a bar that is sexy in a damp, well-used way. The fish and whales that live in the ocean around the town have a place in his excursion, as do the dogs, cats, skunks, opossums and occasional coyotes that wander the streets. People interest him most, however the old-timer who sits in his yard, shouting, Hello hello hello, to everyone who passes by; the disheveled man who walks the main street night and day; and the more famous eccentrics, the refugees, rebels, and visionaries who have been coming to the town for nearly 400 years. There is also a large gay population, and Cunningham is especially fascinated by this community's flamboyant individuals, who add color even to the local A&P. His quirky guide, part of the Crown Journeys series, presents a very personal view of Provincetown, but at the same time it manages to convey the peculiar, inscrutable intensity characterizing the love so many people have for the place. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Clinging to a sandbar at the very tip of Cape Cod, Provincetown is a haven for the artistic and unconventional. Cunningham, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his novel *The Hours* (1998), first came to the small, sandy town with its astonishingly liquid and moody light 20 years ago, and he fell in love with this mercurial "eccentrics' sanctuary," where the bustle of summer gives way dramatically to the brooding silence of winter. In the first of what promises to be a penetrating series in which writers write about place, Cunningham, whose prose has never been more gorgeously poetic, and whose fascination with the peculiarities of our species inspires tender and funny riffs on Provincetown's thriving gay and lesbian communities, presents an enchanting history and walking tour of his beloved home, charting, along the way, its powerful and diverse artistic legacy, which includes the work of Edward Hopper, Eugene O'Neill, Norman Mailer, and Mary Oliver. Donna Seaman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

This is a memorable and interesting book. I grew up taking the ferry from Boston to Provincetown

with my parents for fresh air and ice cream on Sunday afternoons. Later, a friend said "I can't believe your socially-conservative parents took you to Provincetown." I said "what? it's a nice little touristy place on Cape Cod." She said "No, it's a center of gay life." Well, after reading this book I realized that we were BOTH right. I enjoyed reading about all the different ways one might see and experience this little town, and the writing is evocative and absorbing. I definitely recommend it.

Could apply to any small town. But this town is a very interesting subject for a book. It's a Bohemian, pirate ghost, gay twink, fishing community far from the reaches of civilization. Inhabited over 50,000 years ago, and then again by Vikings before Columbus. It wasn't until the Pilgrims arrived from Plymouth, England that they decided to sign America's first democratic document here; the Mayflower Compact. Now, the town has more art galleries per capita than anywhere on Earth. It's a fascinating place for the senses. There's an R-rated version of the town and PG-13, it just depends on what you're looking for. If you go during the summer, you'll see Cunningham gathering new material for his books in saloons, taverns, house parties, and on the wild streets of decadence and bliss. Unlike any other place in the world, let alone America. Must see place, and if you do - a must read book.

While visiting my friend in Truro, she handed me Land's End and said that it was an incredible read that she gave to every one of her friends. I immediately took it with me to read on Herring Cove and Race Point beaches, reading about the very images before me, and I found myself comparing them-spot on- then so transfixed by the very images that I was nearly hypnotized. Ever afterward, in difficult times in my life, I have recalled his words, which had the power to put me right back there, transfixed by his imagery, right onto that same beach, seeing those images. I recommend that you buy several copies, if you have Cape Cod loving friends or those who simply love the sea, the natural landscape, or just being transported to a lovely place via this wonderful read. Cunningham's travelogue celebrates the waxing and waning of the summer light, the Provincetown crowds, and the ever-changing shoreline. His inclusion of such authentic details as the muttering man in the plaid shirt (we have seen him several times) is so accurate, that reading it put me right there in the heart of P'town in a second. I have read excerpts from Land's End to my middle and high school English students, most of whom have been to Cape Cod, and they hang on Cunningham's every word. This book rarely sits on my shelf, but when it does, it sits next to Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Thank you, Michael.

Michael Cunningham loves Provincetown and conveys that love in every sentence in this beautifully written book about a great town. He ably does what every travel writer should do: he convinces those who have never been to Provincetown to visit and makes those who have been there want to return. Mr. Cunningham does a thorough job of describing the town's geography as well as both the famous artists who lived there in the past and those of the present, also the "town characters" one can run into on the busy streets on any summer day. There is also poems by Mark Doty, Stanley Kunitz, Robert Pinsky and Melvin Dixon, among others included throughout the book. Finally Mr. Cunningham discusses the effect AIDS has had on the gay population of Provincetown in a chapter called "Death and Life" and pays tribute to a friend named Billy who died from AIDS. "Provincetown has been widowed by the AIDS epidemic. It will never fully recover, though it is accustomed to loss. . . Provincetown possesses, has always possessed, a steady, grieving competence in the face of all that can happen to people. It watches and waits; it keeps the lights burning. If you are a man or woman with AIDS there, someone will always drive you to your doctor's appointments, get your groceries if you can't get them yourself, and take care of whatever needs taking care of." Is there any wonder why this writer loves Provincetown?

This slight book reads like a leisurely travel article from a magazine that offers good wine with the article. Cunningham gets the facts and history of Provincetown straight but he adds to his narrative his personal anecdotes. This is what wonderful writing is: a perfect blend of the factual and the personal. Having lived in this place that is heaven on earth---Provincetown---I was touched deeply by this little book. Many times while reading it and certainly when I finished I wished I could leave cloudy Los Angeles for the golden perfect light of Cape Cod. Bravo, Mr. Cunningham, for another lovely piece of writing.

This man writes such exquisite prose. I bought this book (a giveaway for one cent) on the recommendation of a writing colleague. For the entire time of the reading I felt as if I were back in Provincetown, experiencing the town, its history, its geography and culture, all over again. A small, lovely gem. How could anyone sell it, and sell it for a penny yet?

The statement "Books can take you to places you've never been or travel to places you'll never be able to go" is definitely true of this book. It transports you to another place, to one man's observations of a town where he has grown to become a member of its community. I bought the book because it was Michael Cunningham, but this is a very different, more travel oriented, book

than I was expecting. Not the normal genre for Michael, but definitely well written and beautiful.

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