

Library Lines by Dennis May, Kirkland Town Library staff

Is there anything better than the sweet smell of the ocean and the sound of waves crashing on the shore? And is there anything more relaxing than sitting in a beach chair while digging your toes into the sand, a drink in one hand and a book in the other? Every summer, my wife and I pack up our car with board games, blankets, and bags and bags of books, and we drive up to Wells, Maine to spend a relaxing week on Drakes Island soaking up the sun with my in-laws. It's a tradition that they have kept up for thirty plus years, and although I've only been joining them for the past seven years, it's one of my favorite times in the summer season.

What I love most about this vacation is watching my wife finish one book after another in seemingly no time at all. She will finish two novels before I have read three chapters of my first book. It's not just her either; her father and sister are able to read multiple books before the trip is over. I, on the other hand, choose two novels: one that I have been reading prior, and one that I hope to start after I finish with the first one. I almost never get around to that second book, and prior to a couple of years ago, I struggled finishing the one I brought.

It's entirely my fault; I'm not a very fast reader, being easily distracted by other activities, and my books of choice have hardly been the appropriate choice for a relaxing week on the beach. During past vacations I've struggled through novels like Stephen King's *IT*, Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, and pretty much everything. Most of the books I try reading in Maine, I successfully read back home. This was until I decided to embrace books that are best described as "beach reads."

*The Great Alone* by Kristin Hannah. Ironically, this is a book I have been struggling to read for about a month now, having begun when the weather in New York started changing from the gloomy cold to bright and sunny spring. The novel's setting in the harsh Alaskan bush just didn't jive with the new warmth in my house, so I decided to set it aside for the time being. Even more ironically, however, I found myself ready to dive back in when we set up camp on the Maine shore. This novel about love, loss, pain, redemption, and finding happiness in a bleak and uninviting world is beautiful. Watching the main character, Leni Allbright, grow up in the vastness of Alaska while trying to protect her loved ones from predators in the wild and within her home fills you with such anxiety and hope that you can't bring yourself to put it down for even a second. I recommend it as a beach read because it's so beautifully written and easy to read, and you'll be thankful that you are by the warm sunny ocean and not in the Alaskan wilderness.

Sophie Kinsella is a master of the lighthearted genre, and any of her books is a great addition to a vacation stack, but nothing is quite as popular as her *Shopaholic* series. Starting with *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, the series follows financial journalist, Becky Bloomwood, who can't seem to put her own financial stability ahead of finding the best deals. While the premise might sound shallow, these books pack a wholesome punch, including humor, romance, and an inevitable happy ending. Highly recommended for a breezy beach day.

Emily Henry has written several amazing summer reads, but the appropriately titled *Beach Read* just has to be included in this list. This novel follows romance novelist January Adams as

she navigates writer's block, her grief at the loss of her father, and the disappointment of finding out some long-hidden family secrets. While hiding from the real world in her father's old beach house, she reconnects with her former rival, Augustus Everett, and they challenge each other to write a novel in the other's genre. No spoilers, but it's romantic, sexy, and – you guessed it – a super quick and easy read.

Here's the thing: I like the dense reads like Stephen King, and the surrealism of Murakami, but they aren't the best choices if I want a relaxing week curling my toes in the sand. I want easy, cheesy, and (of course) beachy, and the aforementioned titles are perfect for the occasion. What are your favorite beach reads?