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Arranging an affordable funeral or cremation in New England

The cremation rate in the United States continues to climb. It has now reached a national average of nearly 55%, although the New England states tend to have a higher than average cremation rate. Three states in New England; Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont have cremation rates of over 60% are among the top 10 states with the highest cremation rates.

New England may be considered a more affluent region within the U.S., oftentimes leading the way in health care initiatives. ***The six states of New England rank within the top 13 “healthiest states” of the U.S, with the highest percentage of residents covered by health insurance. So how does this compare to death care in the New England region? Does this focus on health care extend into end-of-life care?***

What is the cost of a funeral in the New England states?

The National Funeral Directors Association state that the average funeral in the U.S. costs \$7,360 (excluding any cemetery costs) and the average cremation costs around \$3,500. Of course, these are just simple ‘benchmark’ figures based on surveys made across the nation. In general funeral costs for a traditional funeral in the New England region are similarly in line with the national average. You can arrange a simple funeral package for between \$6,000 and \$10,000, depending on the type of service you select [graveside, chapel, or memorial], and the casket you select.

Connecticut is the only New England state where residents must employ a funeral director by law.

Why is cremation such a popular choice for New England residents?

Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont have all witnessed a significant rise in the cremation rate over the last decade, whilst Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Islands’ cremation rate is around the national average. The idea of a ‘traditional funeral’ has significantly changed in this region over recent years. Cost is claimed to be one key reason why New England residents choose cremation, which is understandable when it can save over 50% of the cost for a traditional burial. However, it is not simply just price, cultural attitudes, religious beliefs (or an increasing secular community) and a more transient population are all attributed as to why the cremation rate is increasing across the New England region.

Local funeral businesses are stepping up to the plate. The number of crematories in Maine has doubled in the last 6 years, as families demand more cremation alternatives. A number of new “cremation only” companies have established themselves to cater to this demand for affordable cremation services. Even Bio-cremation is legal in Maine. This is a ‘*greener cremation*’ alternative where the body is dissolved in lye and water and is also referred to as ‘*aquamation*’. Does this signify that New England residents prefer cremation as a more ecologically sound choice?

What is the cost of direct cremation across the New England states?

In our experience in researching funeral costs in New England, it appears the average cost of a direct cremation is higher than average across the New England states.

In all 6 states the cost of a basic, direct cremation is higher than most other metro areas across the U.S. The direct cremation prices listed below for each state are the lowest cost direct cremation packages offered for an 'at need' basic cremation service by a local, family-owned funeral business.

Connecticut – Direct Cremation Cost \$2,000 [Call \(203\) 864-6010](tel:2038646010)

Maine – Direct Cremation Cost \$995

Massachusetts – Direct Cremation Cost \$1,395 [Call \(617\) 221-7497](tel:6172217497)

New Hampshire – Direct Cremation Cost \$1,595

Rhode Island – Direct Cremation Cost \$1,485

Vermont – Direct Cremation Cost \$1,275

This means that *the average cost of a direct cremation across New England is \$1,318*. The average cost of a direct cremation nationally is \$1,110 (according to the National Cremation Research Council, although there are now many areas in the U.S. where a direct cremation can cost less than \$800).

State/County assistance for burial and cremation expenses

Residents of some areas of New England are fortunate that there is an 'above average' availability of state assistance for funeral expenses. This reflects to some degree the higher standard of living and state welfare/healthcare in this region.

Watch out for corporate death care companies

Service Corporation International SCI (the largest corporate death care company in North America) certainly has a presence in the New England region, as one would expect being an affluent area where the cost of death care is higher than average. The Dignity Memorial brand operates a number of funeral home and cemetery locations, and if you want to keep funeral and cremation costs down, you should certainly ensure you compare any prices quoted against the same funeral service from a local, family-owned funeral home.

SCI do not operate their budget cremation brands, such as the Neptune Society and National Cremation Society, out of New England. However, they do run one Advantage Funeral & Cremation Services location out of Portland, Maine. As with many of their other family-sounding funeral locations, Advantage Funerals of Portland appears on the surface to be a 'Mom and Pop' business. This is typical of how SCI can insidiously penetrate into an area and draw in trust-based upon a community value when the revenue they generate ends up back in Houston and in the pockets of shareholders.

If you are comparing costs, especially with a view to securing 'affordable' funeral services – then we would recommend you make yourself very aware of who the corporate funeral homes and crematories are in your area.

Affordable and dignified death care should be a basic human and civil right. Unfortunately, as it is still considered somewhat taboo in our culture to discuss end of life care, many of us find ourselves caught off-guard, unprepared and vulnerable. You can prevent this by doing some simple research and preplanning. The funeral landscape is being 're-surfaced' as you read this article. You have more choices, and YOU are in the driving seat! Make yourself informed of what average costs to expect for a cremation or funeral in your area, and you can save yourself and your family from undue expense or distress.

If you have any questions about arranging a funeral or cremation in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island or Vermont, please contact us.

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