

INTRODUCING BOSTON



Enjoy views of the Boston skyline from the Longfellow Bridge (p119)

Exiting Kendall Square, the red-line train emerges from the tunnel into the daylight. It trundles over the Longfellow Bridge, offering up 360 degrees of river, sky and city.

The sun glints off the Charles River, framing the sailboats that float silently in the basin. The handsome Back Bay brownstones line up along the shore in an orderly fashion, while the backdrop is a haphazard assembly of skyscraper spires. In the east, the gold dome of the Massachusetts State House peaks out from its perch on Beacon Hill. And in the west shines the Citgo sign. The passengers on the T take a momentary break from their commute to marvel at their city.

If Boston is lovely to look at from afar, she is even more intriguing up close. These narrow streets recall a history of revolution and transformation, and still today, Boston is among the country's forward-thinking and barrier-breaking cities. This is most evident politically, where Boston is at the forefront of controversial issues like same-sex marriage and universal healthcare. It's also visible in the changing landscape of the city, as Boston and environs are now home to some of the country's most cutting-edge architecture and innovative urban planning projects. Culturally, Boston is shedding its staid and stodgy reputation, as contemporary art and film flourish. Its universities and colleges continue to attract scholars, scientists, philosophers and writers who shape the city's evolving culture.

Now the train has pulled into Park St T station. Elbows out. Eyes alert. Let's see what Boston is all about.

BOSTON LIFE

For the past several decades, Boston has been quite the boomtown. Real estate values soared and neighborhoods thrived as developers poured money into revitalization efforts. And the investments paid off, because Bostonians were coming out in droves to experience everything their city had to offer.

The city is looking fantastic thanks to these efforts and investments. With the completion of the Big Dig, neighborhoods like the North End, West End and waterfront have been rediscovered and reconnected to the rest of the city by a network of green parks and inviting plazas. Gentrification has transformed the South End, which is now Boston's trendiest destination for creative cuisine and avant-garde art. The Leather District has become an up-and-coming area with cool, contemporary clubs and loft condominiums. And the Seaport District – once an industrial warehouse zone abandoned to the artists – is the city's latest hot spot.

All that said, the numbers show that Boston is not immune to the recession that is making its way around the world. Fortunately, medicine and academia are largely 'recession-proof,' which means that Boston might weather this economic storm better than others.

Nonetheless, some areas have been left in the lurch by the sudden onset of recession. Downtown Crossing suffered from the closing of its centerpiece department store, Filene's. Developers planned to preserve the historic facade of the old building and build a skyscraper behind it, creating new hotel, retail and office space. Unfortunately construction had come to a standstill at the time of research, leaving the Filene's facade teetering on the edge of an abyss. West of center, Allston was targeted for a complete overhaul at the expense of its wealthy neighbor across the river, Harvard. The university has since announced that the project will be delayed, and Allston is left with great swimming pool potential.

Despite the hard times, Boston continues to exude an upbeat atmosphere. The young population exhibits an energy and exuberance that is hard to suppress. And no matter how far the economy falls, Bostonians still have their sports teams. The recent championships by the Red Sox, Patriots and Celtics have earned Boston the title 'best sports city in America.' Now that's something to cheer about.



Cool off in the city's green parks and inviting plazas

THE AUTHOR

Mara Vorhees



Born and raised in St Clair Shores, Michigan, Mara traveled the world (if not the universe) before finally settling in the Hub. She now lives in a pink house in Somerville, Massachusetts. She spent several years pushing

papers and tapping keys at Harvard University, but she has since embraced the life of a full-time travel writer, traveling to destinations as diverse as Russia and Belize. When in Boston, she is often spotted sipping Sam Seasonal in Union Sq and pedaling her road bike along the Charles River.

The pen-wielding traveler is the coauthor of Lonely Planet's guide to *New England*, among others. She has also written for *National Geographic Traveler* and *Boston Globe Travel*. Follow her adventures online at www.maravorhees.com.

MARA'S TOP BOSTON DAY

I wake up in Somerville. It's Tuesday, so I head to Karma Yoga (p216) for my daily dose of downward-facing dogs. Suitably stretched, I grab a Karma cupcake and head out into the world. I spend the rest of the morning perusing the offerings at the Harvard Book-

store (p144) and the Globe Corner Bookstore (p144).

Lunch is at Café Pamplona (p174), hopefully accompanied by a new book. I ask for garlic soup, with an egg, even though it's not on the menu. They have it.

After lunch, it's time for a little 'kultchah', so I head to the Museum of Fine Arts (p91) to check out the exhibit on offer. I never leave without visiting Paul Gauguin and examining his provocative *Where did we come from? What are we? Where are we going?*. I contemplate those questions as I stroll through the Back Bay Fens (p212) to Kenmore Sq.

I meet up with friends for a drink on the outdoor patio at Eastern Standard (p165) or in the cozy basement at the Lower Depths (p183).

Music is on the menu for the evening. We might saunter over to the House of Blues (p191) if we know who is playing there. Otherwise, we figure we can't go wrong at Church (p190), where the cover charge is \$10 and the bands are wicked local. After the show, we make our way to Audubon Circle (p166) for another round of drinks. I order grilled cheese and tomato soup, even though I've already eaten soup today. Okay, maybe I order something a little fancier.

After dinner, we make our way back to Somerville. I have saved room for dessert so I can stop at Christina's (p152) on the way home. I order a scoop of coconut chip, unless it's fall, in which case I go for the pumpkin.

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GETTING STARTED

The hardest part about planning a trip to Boston is deciding what to do while you are here, as the choices for food, entertainment and activity are infinite. A trip to Boston requires little advance planning, though you may wish to make a hotel reservation, especially if you are visiting in summer or fall. During special events such as the Boston Marathon, Head of the Charles Regatta and university graduations, there are few empty rooms in the city's hundreds of hotels. Budget travelers, especially, should book accommodation in advance, since the affordable options are limited (and therefore always busy).

WHEN TO GO

Here's a promise: at least once during your visit to Boston, somebody will say: 'If you don't like the weather, wait a minute!' With the ocean to the east and mountains to the north and west, Boston's weather is subject to extremes.

Besides the day-to-day (or minute-to-minute) fluctuations, Boston enjoys wonderful seasonal variations. Spring brings temperate weather and blooming trees, usually in April. This mild weather often lasts until mid-June, but it is also accompanied by plenty of rain. July and August are hot and humid. Autumn is Boston's most glorious season. Weather usually remains warm throughout September, while cooler temperatures in October bring out the colorful foliage. Winter lasts too long for most people's tastes, stretching from December to March, with the occasional snowstorm in April. During this period, visitors can expect temperatures below freezing and plenty of the white stuff.

FESTIVALS

The months of January and February represent the deepest, darkest part of winter. Expect snow and cold temperatures – great weather for sledding and skating. By March, Boston is officially sick of winter, and on March 17 the city celebrates Evacuation Day, when the British pulled out of Boston Harbor in 1775. Emerging crocuses and blooming forsythia signal the arrival of spring in April, when baseball fans await opening day at Fenway Park (p94). Temperatures range from 40°F to 55°F, although the occasional snowstorm also occurs. In May, one of Boston's most beautiful months, the sun comes out on a semi-permanent basis and the magnolia trees bloom all along Newbury St and Commonwealth Ave.

Memorial Day, on the last Monday in May, officially kicks off the summer season.

June brings temperatures ranging from 55°F to 70°F, and lots of rain. Student calendars are packed with end-of-academic-year events and graduation ceremonies. Then the students depart the city, causing a noticeable decline in traffic and noise, and by July the city has emptied out, as they vacate for the summer and Bostonians head to their summerhouses. It's also Boston's hottest month, with temperatures ranging from 70°F to 85°F, and there's always a week or two when the mercury shoots to the high 90s. Summer in the city continues in August; only at the end of the month do we begin to feel fall coming. By September the humidity disappears, leaving slightly cooler temperatures and a crispness in the air. The students return and the streets are filled with U-Hauls during the first week. The first Monday in September is Labor Day, the official end of the summer season. October is Boston's best month. The academic year is rolling; the weather is crisp and cool; and the trees take on shades of red, gold and amber. November and December signal that

top picks

ONLY IN BOSTON

- **Boston Tea Party Reenactment (p23)** Witness grown men with painted faces dump crates of tea into the water.
- **Harborfest (p22)** Eat clam chowder and hear the Pops – what's more Boston than that?
- **Head of the Charles (p23)** Row, row, row your boat.
- **Pumpkin Festival (p23)** Okay, also in Keene, New Hampshire (world record holder for 14 years prior to 2006) but nowhere else.

winter is coming, and you can feel it in the air. You may see snow flurries in November, and there is usually at least one good snowstorm in December. Thanksgiving Day – the third Thursday in November – kicks off the holiday season. In early December, the huge Christmas trees at the Prudential Center and the Boston Common are lit, lending the city a festive air that remains throughout the month.

January & February

CHINESE NEW YEAR

In late January or early February, Chinatown lights up with a colorful parade, firecrackers, fireworks and lots of food.

March

ST PATRICK'S DAY

Mar 17

www.saintpatricksdaysparade.com/boston
Ireland's patron saint is honored by all those who feel the Irish in their blood and by those who want to feel Irish beer in their blood. Everyone wears green (if you don't you might get pinched). The large and vocal South Boston Irish community hosts a parade on West Broadway St, but since the mid-1990s it's been marred by a US Supreme Court decision to allow the event organizers to exclude gay and lesbian Irish groups from marching.

RESTAURANT WEEK

www.restaurantweekboston.com

This week is two weeks, really. At the end of March, participating restaurants around the city offer prix-fixe menus: \$20 for lunch, \$30 for dinner. The menus are usually excellent value, providing an awesome opportunity to try out some restaurants that might otherwise be out of your price range. This event repeats in August (so that actually makes it four weeks).

April

PATRIOTS' DAY

www.battleroad.org

On the third Monday in April, history buffs commemorate the start of the American Revolution. Stoic riders follow the route of Paul Revere and William Dawes' historic rides and the Lexington Minutemen re enact the battle on Lexington Green (11 miles west of Boston; [p236](#)) at 5:30am. Concord (17 miles west of Boston; [p237](#)) hosts

a commemoration ceremony at 8:30am at the North Bridge. Parades and parties occur throughout the weekend.

BOSTON MARATHON

[☎ 617-236-1652](tel:617-236-1652); www.bostonmarathon.org

Later in the morning on Patriots' Day, thousands of runners compete in this 26.2-mile race – the longest-running marathon in the world. It starts at 10am in Hopkinton and finishes on Boylston St in front of the Boston Public Library. See the boxed text, [p212](#) for more info.

INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL OF BOSTON

www.iffboston.org

During the last week in April, venues around the city host screenings of independent films, including shorts, documentaries and drama produced locally and nationally.

May

MAYFAIR

www.harvardsquare.com

When the sun comes out, so do the good folks in Harvard Sq. On the first or second Sunday in May, artists, merchants and restaurants set up booths on the streets, while children's events and live entertainment take place on stages around the square.

LILAC SUNDAY

www.arboretum.harvard.edu

On the third Sunday in May, the Arnold Arboretum celebrates the arrival of spring, when more than 400 varieties of fragrant lilac are in bloom. It is the only day of the year that visitors can picnic on the grass.

June

BOSTON PRIDE FESTIVAL

[☎ 617-262-9405](tel:617-262-9405); www.bostonpride.org

During the first full week in June, Boston does its part for this now-national celebration, kicking off with the raising of a rainbow flag on City Hall Plaza. Events occur throughout the week. The highlight is the Pride Parade & Festival on the second Sunday in June, attracting tens of thousands of participants, decked out in outrageous costumes and showing off their gay pride, culminating in a huge party on the Boston Common.

BUNKER HILL DAY

Jun 17

Charlestown reenacts the crucial Battle of Bunker Hill. The city celebrates with a parade and a road race.

LIFE IS GOOD FESTIVAL

www.lifeisgood.com

The local company (p51) with the optimistic outlook sponsor a day of music and fun on the Boston Common. Families are invited to play backyard games, ranging from homerun hero to seed spitting, from potato-sack races to pie-eating contests. Proceeds are donated to Project Joy, a local charity that provides therapy for children who have suffered a trauma.

July**HARBORFEST**

☎ 617-227-1528; www.bostonharborfest.com

The week-long Independence Day (July 4) festival starts on the last weekend in June. One of the days is Children's Day, with face painting, balloons and children's entertainment at venues around the city. The tastiest part of the festival is Chowderfest, where you sample dozens of fish and clam chowders prepared by Boston's top chefs.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Jul 4

www.july4th.org

Boston hosts a line-up of free performances that culminates with the Boston Pops (p198) playing Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, complete with brass cannon and synchronized fireworks. Half a million people descend on Boston to watch it live. The event traditionally takes place on the Esplanade.

SOMERVILLE ARTBEAT

☎ 617-625-6600; www.somervilleartsCouncil.org
Davis Sq goes bohemian on the third weekend in July. Three stages host live performances, while artists and food vendors set up shop on the streets.

August**AUGUST MOON FESTIVAL**

The Chinese harvest celebration takes place in mid-August in Chinatown. It also commemorates the overthrow of the Mongolian Yuan dynasty in the 14th century, when rebels apparently communicated with each other by smuggling messages

inside small cakes; people now celebrate by eating mooncakes, made from ground lotus and sesame seeds and containing secret messages.

BOSTON CARNIVAL

www.bostoncarnival.org

Spanning two weekends in August, Boston's Caribbean community re-creates Carnival, a celebration of Caribbean culture complete with spectacular costumes, sultry music and spicy cooking. The third weekend in August is usually the Kiddies Carnival Celebration, while the last weekend in August is reserved for the annual King & Queen Show and the all-out, over-the-top 'Trini-style' Carnival parade.

ITALIAN FESTIVALS

www.northendboston.com/news-religious.htm

Throughout July and August, the North End's religious societies sponsor feasts and processions honoring their patron saints (see the boxed text, above). Major celebrations include the [Fisherman's Feast](http://fishermansfeast.com) (<http://fishermansfeast.com>) on the third weekend in August and [St Anthony's Feast](http://stanthonysfeast.com) (<http://stanthonysfeast.com>) on the last weekend in August.

September**BOSTON FILM FESTIVAL**

☎ 617-523-8388; www.bostonfilmfestival.org

For 10 days in mid-September, all Bostonians become film critics, as they are invited to attend screenings of some 50 different films at theaters around the city.

BLUES TRUST

www.bluestrust.com

Feeling blue? Don't miss the last weekend of September, when the Blues Trust sponsors two days of (free) live jazz music at the Hatch Memorial Shell (p190). Performers are veteran musicians and local bands. The Blues Trust event is the culmination of Boston Blues Week, which features live acts at clubs around the city.

BEANTOWN JAZZ FESTIVAL

☎ 617-747-2260; www.beantownjazz.org;

Columbus Ave, btwn Burke St & Massachusetts Ave
The Berklee College of Music (p192) sponsors this free two-day festival in the South End. Three stages show performances by jazz

greats as well as local artists and Berklee students. Panel discussions, food vendors, kids activities and all that jazz.

October

LOWELL CELEBRATES KEROUAC

LCK; <http://lckorg.tripod.com>

During the first weekend in October, Lowell (34 miles northwest of Boston; see p39) hosts a weekend of events dedicated to Beat writer Jack Kerouac, featuring tours of many places in his novels, as well as panel discussions, readings, music and poetry. Literature buffs travel from around the world for this unique event.

OKTOBERFEST

www.harvardsquare.com

On the first or second Sunday in October, Harvard Sq artisans and entertainers take to the streets. This annual street fair is great for kids, with puppet shows, face painting, fair rides and dance troupes.

HEAD OF THE CHARLES REGATTA

☎ 617-868-6200; www.hocr.org

During the third weekend in October, the Charles River hosts the world's largest rowing event, drawing more than 3000 collegiate, club and independent rowers. Fans line the banks of the river, lounging on blankets and cheering on the boats.

PUMPKIN FESTIVAL

www.campsunshine.org

On the Saturday before Halloween, good-deed doers and good gourd-carvers descend on City Hall Plaza to carve pumpkins for a cause. The cause is Camp Sunshine, a year-round program for children with life-threatening diseases. Boston currently holds the record for the most lit jack-o'-lanterns (30,128 and counting!).

HAUNTED HAPPENINGS

www.hauntedhappenings.org

Salem (16 miles north of Boston; p238) takes Halloween seriously – that's everyone, not just the witches. The city celebrates for much of the month of October, when there are special exhibits, parades, concerts, pumpkin carvings, costume parties and trick-or-treating. It all culminates on October 31 with the crowning of the King and Queen of Halloween.

November & December

BOSTON TEA PARTY REENACTMENT

www.oldsouthmeetinghouse.org

On the Sunday prior to December 16, costumed actors march from Old South Meeting House to the waterfront and toss crates of tea into the harbor. For more information see p77.

FIRST NIGHT

Dec 31

www.firstnight.org

New Year celebrations begin early and continue past midnight, culminating in fireworks over the harbor. Purchase a special button (see the website for button vendors) that permits entrance into events citywide.

COSTS & MONEY

Boston is an expensive place to visit. Once in town, the bulk of your expenses will be for accommodation. Fancy hotels in Boston can cost as much as you are willing to pay, but it is possible – taking advantage of discounted web rates – to stay in a respectable, central hotel for \$125 to \$175 (per night, per double room). Guesthouses and budget hotels run to between \$100 and \$125, while hostels cost \$30 to \$40 for a bed. See p218 for more details.

Eating is also not cheap. Three sit-down meals a day, including one at an upscale restaurant, will easily cost \$60 per person. Forgoing drinks or grabbing a meal at a less expensive venue trims that estimate to \$40. At best, self-catering and cheap eats make it possible to eat for about \$20 per day. See p152 for some suggestions on how to eat and save.

HOW MUCH?

Bike rental (24 hours) \$25-35

'Boston: Wicked Pissah' T-shirt \$20

Bowl of clam chowder \$4.50

Cappuccino \$3.50

Cover charge Lizard Lounge \$8-12

Gallon of gas \$1.75

Liter of water \$2.50

Pint of Sam Adams \$5

T-ride \$1.70

Red Sox ticket (bleacher seat, face value) \$26

ADVANCE PLANNING

If you are the organized type you'll want to take care of a few things before you arrive in Boston.

- Reserve a place to stay, especially if you are coming during the late spring or the fall. Budget travelers, this means you! See [p218](#).
- Catch up on the latest news and find out about special events by checking out [www.boston.com](#).
- Buy your tickets for the Boston Symphony Orchestra ([p198](#)), the Boston Red Sox ([p208](#)) or your favorite Boston band ([p190](#)).

Boston offers many opportunities to save money, including sights ([p71](#)), activities and entertainment ([p190](#)) options that are free of charge. Students and seniors often get reduced rates with a valid ID, while kids are often admitted free of charge, depending on their age.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Blogs, chats and other internet randomness for your entertainment and edification:

Boston ([www.bostonusa.com](#)) The official website of the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau

Boston Globe ([www.boston.com](#)) The online presence of the Boston Globe, with up-to-date weather, blog posts and extensive entertainment listings.

Boston Blogs ([www.bostonblogs.com](#)) Links to more than 1000 blogs about various aspects of Beantown life.

Boston Central ([www.bostoncentral.com](#)) A fantastic resource for families, with listings for activities, outings, shopping and restaurants that are good for kids.

Boston Independent Media Center ([www.boston.indymedia.org](#)) An alternative voice for local news and events.

Boston Online ([www.boston-online.com](#)) Source of valuable info such as public restroom reviews and an English-Bostonese glossary.

DogBoston ([www.dogboston.com](#)) Everything man's best friend needs to know about Boston.

Sons of Sam Horn ([www.sonsofsamhorn.com](#)) Dedicated to discussion of all things Red Sox. Curt Schilling has been known to occasionally post.

Universal Hub ([www.universalhub.com](#)) Bostonians talk to each other about whatever is on their mind (sometimes nothing).

SUSTAINABLE BOSTON

All across the city, institutions and individuals are taking steps to reduce their impact on the environment. In the last decade, Boston has made major improvements in its immediate environment, with the clean-up of the Boston Harbor, the ongoing clean-up of the Charles River and the construction and planting of the Rose Kennedy Greenway. See [p49](#) for more information about Green Boston.

So what about you? What are you going to do to support the cause? Consider driving instead of flying to reach your destination. Even better, consider taking the train instead of driving. Consider offsetting your carbon emission using a website such as **Climate Care** ([www.climatecare.org](#)).

Once in Boston, spend your money at the businesses listed in our GreenDex ([p279](#)). For more information and options, check out **Boston Green Tourism** ([www.bostongreentourism.org](#)), a group of environmentally savvy leaders in the tourism industry who have teamed up to promote the use of environmentally sustainable practices by offering workshops and seminars. The group also sponsors a program to certify hotels, restaurants and other companies that make the green grade. Check the website to learn about the criteria and which venues are certified.

IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN

Sure it is! We've all heard about ecotourism, but what does that mean in an urban destination such as Boston? Here are some simple steps you can take to enjoy and protect Boston's natural beauty.

- Get around town by walking, biking ([p248](#)) or taking the T ([p251](#)). Never mind the driving woes and parking tickets, you'll also reduce carbon emissions. It's a win-win-win.
- When out and about, stuff an extra tote in your purse or backpack so you won't need a plastic bag for your purchases. Bring your drink bottle so you won't need to buy bottled water.
- Check out the climate-change exhibit at the Harvard Museum of Natural History ([p109](#)), and learn how global warming is affecting the creatures of the sea at the New England Aquarium ([p77](#)).
- Visit the South Boston beaches ([p101](#)) or the Boston Harbor Islands ([p80](#)) to appreciate the fresh air and clean water of the pollution-free harbor.
- Spend a day cleaning up a park, planting a community garden or helping at a farmers market. See **Boston Cares** ([p262](#)) for all these opportunities and more.

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