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## BOSTON TODAY

Bostonians are going to be talking about the Big Dig for a long time. Considering that their city was a gigantic construction site for more than 15 years, running up bills in excess of \$15 billion, they have a lot to talk about. Even upon completion, the famous Central Artery/Tunnel Project provides fodder for newspaper scoops and general outrage, as the tunnels continue to spring leaks and require repairs. Opinion about the project reached an all-time low in 2006, when a ceiling panel crashed on a car and killed a motorist.

At the same time, the city is finally reaping the benefits of this controversial construction project. Traffic has never flowed more freely (with the notable exception of the Ted Williams Tunnel, still closed for repairs at the time of research). The beautiful Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge spans the Charles in an impressive display of engineering and elegance. Neighborhoods like the North End, West End and Waterfront are being rediscovered and reconnected to the rest of the city by a network of green parks and inviting plazas. One can only hope that these positives will eventually outweigh the negatives of this much-maligned endeavor.

The Big Dig is only one of the many changes sweeping the city streets. The South End has become Boston's trendiest destination for creative cuisine and avant-garde art, while the West End is also reaching out beyond its traditional sports-fan clientele. The Leather District is now 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 now the city's hottest real-estate market. Even out-of-the-way Allston, site of Boston's 'student ghetto,' is slated for a complete overhaul at the expense of its wealthy neighbor across the river, Harvard University. From Downtown to Chinatown, Boston's neighborhoods are enjoying the fruits of revitalization efforts that celebrate their distinct characters.

Revitalization means hip restaurants and clubs and valuable community services. It means renovation of buildings and an influx of new residents. It also means increasing property values and rising rents. And inevitably, it means forcing out less affluent longtime residents who can no longer afford to stay.

In Boston, this conflict is invariably perceived as one of class and ethnicity: yuppies are scooping up properties in formerly tight-knit ethnic enclaves like Southie and Somerville, while middle-class Irish families split for the suburbs; and developers are building high-rise hotels and luxury condos all around Chinatown, forcing many Asian immigrants to flee to the South End and Dorchester.

Meanwhile, immigrants continue to pour into Boston and surrounding cities, especially from Brazil, Haiti and Vietnam. Immigrants from this new wave are setting up their own ethnic enclaves in Somerville, Jamaica Plain and Dorchester. And the cycle begins again and the stew in the melting pot thickens.

### LOWDOWN

- Population: 590,000
- Time zone: Eastern Standard
- Three-star room: \$140
- Movie ticket: \$9.25
- New England Aquarium admission (adult): \$17.95
- Boston Sunday Globe: \$3

### HOT CONVERSATION TOPICS

- You pay how much rent per month?
- What road is closed for Big Dig repairs this month?
- What did you think of the new exhibit at the ICA?
- Does Romney have a chance if he runs in 2008?
- Did the Sox win?

## CITY CALENDAR

### JANUARY & FEBRUARY

The deepest, darkest part of winter. Expect snow and cold temperatures – great weather for sledding and skating. Public holidays include Martin Luther King Jr's birthday, celebrated on the third Monday of January, and Presidents' Day, celebrated on the third Monday of February.

#### DANCE ACROSS THE CITY

[617-532-1263; www.danceacrossthecity.org](http://www.danceacrossthecity.org)  
The Wang Center sponsors one day of free classes and performances in every type of dance. Held at venues around the Theater District on the first Saturday in January.

#### CHINESE NEW YEAR

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

### MARCH

Boston is officially sick of winter. March 17 is Evacuation Day, the day the British pulled out of Boston Harbor in 1775.

#### ST PATRICK'S DAY

[617-268-7955; www.saintpatricksdaysparade.com](http://www.saintpatricksdaysparade.com)  
On March 17, 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 (or 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 the decision to exclude gay and lesbian Irish groups from marching.

### APRIL

Spring arrives, signaled by the emerging of crocuses and the blooming of forsythia. Baseball fans await Opening Day at Fenway Park. Temperatures range from 40°F to 55°F, although the occasional snowstorm also occurs.

#### PATRIOTS' DAY

[www.battleroad.org](http://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 reenact the battle on Lexington Green (11 miles west of Boston) at 5:30am. Concord (17 miles west of Boston) hosts a commemoration ceremony at 8:30am at the North Bridge. Parades and parties occur throughout the weekend.

#### BOSTON MARATHON

[617-236-1652; www.bostonmarathon.org](http://www.bostonmarathon.org)  
Later in the morning on Patriot's Day, thousands of runners compete in this 26.2-mile run – the longest-running marathon in the world. The race starts at 10am in Hopkinton and finishes on Boylston St in front of the Boston Public Library. See the boxed text, p197 for more info.

#### INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL OF BOSTON

[www.iffboston.org](http://www.iffboston.org)  
During the last week in April, venues around the city host independent films, including shorts, documentaries and drama produced locally and nationally.

### MAY

May is one of Boston's most beautiful months, as the sun comes out on a semi-permanent basis and the magnolia trees bloom all along Newbury St and Commonwealth Ave. Memorial Day, the last Monday in May, officially kicks off the summer season.

#### MAYFAIR

[www.harvardsquare.com](http://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](http://www.arboretum.harvard.edu)  
On the third Sunday in May, 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.

**ONLY IN BOSTON**

**Boston Tea Party Reenactment (p16)** Witness grown men with painted faces dump crates of tea into the water

**Harborfest (below)** Eat clam chowder and hear the Pops – what's more Boston than that?

**Head of the Charles (p16)** Row, row, row your boat

**Pumpkin Festival (p16)** Okay, also in Keene, New Hampshire (world record holder for 14 years prior to 2006) but nowhere else

**JUNE**

Temperatures range from 55° to 70°F, with lots of rain. Student calendars are packed with end-of-academic-year events and graduation ceremonies. Then they depart the city, causing a noticeable decline in traffic and noise.

**BOSTON PRIDE FESTIVAL**

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

During the first week in June, Boston does its part for this now-national celebration, kicking off with a rainbow-flag-raising 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**

On June 17, Charlestown reenacts the crucial Battle of Bunker Hill and celebrates with a parade.

**JULY**

The city empties out, as students vacate for the summer and Bostonians head to their summerhouses. July is Boston's hottest month. Temperatures range from 70°F to 85°F, but there's always a week or two when the mercury shoots to the high 90s.

**HARBORFEST**

☎ 617-227-1528; [www.bostonharborfest.org](http://www.bostonharborfest.org)

The week-long Independence Day festival starts on the last weekend in June. One

day 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**

☎ 888-484-7677; [www.july4th.org](http://www.july4th.org)

On July 4, Boston hosts a line-up of free performances that culminates with the Boston Pops 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](http://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**

Summer in the city continues. Only at the end of August do we begin to feel fall coming back on.

**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. So people celebrate by eating mooncakes, made from ground lotus and sesame seeds and containing secret messages.

**BOSTON CARIBBEAN CARNIVAL**

☎ 617-296-7083; [www.bostoncarnival.org](http://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](http://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, p82). Major celebrations include the Fishermen's Feast (<http://fishermansfeast.com>) on the third weekend in August and St Anthony's Feast (<http://stanthonysfeast.com>) on the last weekend in August.

**RESTAURANT WEEK**

[www.restaurantweekboston.com](http://www.restaurantweekboston.com)

This week is two weeks, really. At the end of August, participating restaurants around the city offer prix-fixe menus: \$20 for lunch, \$30 for dinner. The menus are usually excellent value – an awesome opportunity to sample some restaurants that are otherwise out of your price range.

**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.

**BOSTON FILM FESTIVAL**

☎ 617-523-8388; [www.bostonfilmfestival.org](http://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.blustrust.com](http://www.blustrust.com)

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

**BEANTOWN JAZZ FESTIVAL**

☎ 617-747-2261; [www.beantownjazz.org](http://www.beantownjazz.org); Columbus Ave btwn Burke St & Massachusetts Ave

The Berklee College of Music 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.

**NEMO MUSIC FESTIVAL**

[www.nemoboston.com](http://www.nemoboston.com)

Also on the last weekend in September, NEMO is dedicated to showcasing up-and-coming indie and alt-rock artists. Hundreds of musicians perform at venues around the city; buy one badge and hear them all.

**OCTOBER**

Boston's best month. The academic year is rolling; the weather is crisp and cool; and the trees take on shades of red, gold



*Head of the Charles Regatta (p16)*

and amber. Columbus Day falls on the second Monday in October, and Halloween is October 31.

### LOWELL CELEBRATES KEROUAC

LCK; ☎ 877-537-6822; [lck.org.tripod.com](http://lck.org.tripod.com)  
During the first weekend in October, Lowell (34 miles northwest of Boston) 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/oktoberfest](http://www.harvardsquare.com/oktoberfest)  
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](http://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 the boats.

### PUMPKIN FESTIVAL

[www.lifeisgood.com](http://www.lifeisgood.com)  
The third Saturday in October is also the Saturday before Halloween. Local company Life is Good (p216) invites everyone to bring a pumpkin to the Boston Common and carve it for a cause. Well, two causes: first, to raise money for Camp Sunshine; also, to try to beat the record for

the most lit jack-o'-lanterns (30,128 and counting).

### HAUNTED HAPPENINGS

☎ 877-725-3662; [www.hauntedhappenings.org](http://www.hauntedhappenings.org)  
Salem (16 miles north of Boston) 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. Oooh, that's scary.

## NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

Winter is coming, and you can feel it in the air. You may see snow flurries in November, and there is usually 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.

### BOSTON TEA PARTY REENACTMENT

[www.oldsouthmeetinghouse.org](http://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 p88.

### FIRST NIGHT

[www.firstnight.org](http://www.firstnight.org); admission \$15  
New Year celebrations begin early on December 31 and continue past midnight, culminating in fireworks over the harbor. Purchase a special button that permits entrance into events citywide.

The largest ethnic group is still the Irish, who constitute about 16% of the population. Boston's Irish identity is felt strongly in Jamaica Plain (p113), Somerville (p119) and most noticeably South Boston (p120). Italians – most visible in the North End (p81) – account for about 8% of the population. These ethnic enclaves remain from the earliest waves of immigration, when newcomers established insular communities as a defense mechanism against the discrimination they were enduring.

In the 21st century, Boston continues to attract immigrants – now mostly from Brazil, Haiti, Vietnam and China. The Brazilians are settling in Somerville, while Haitian and Asian communities are growing in the South End, Dorchester and Jamaica Plain. Chinatown (p94) continues to be a focal point for the Asian community. These new immigrants have established their own shops selling specialty food items and foreign-language videos; they have opened their own clubs playing Brazilian samba and restaurants serving Creole cooking.

Racial tension has diminished significantly since the 1970s, when forced desegregation of Boston public schools incited violent reactions from all sides. However, the city is still noticeably segregated, which is one reason why these diverse groups are able to coexist more or less peacefully.

Many old Boston families cling to their identity as Boston Yankees – the descendants of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the blue-blooded Brahmins who built the city. Well educated and well funded, these would-be aristocrats have blended into Boston's professional class. They may recognize each other's names, but nobody else does.

Boston's student population also represents a distinct identity group, overlapping with the others. Students may think they are poor, but they often have outside sources of financial support (read: parents). By definition, they are educated, which means they have job prospects and will soon join the ranks of the professional class.

Which brings us to the 'yuppies.' Boston has more than its fair share of young urban professionals, thanks to the strong economy and the endless supply from area universities. An estimated one-third of private-school students and two-thirds of public-school students remain in Boston after graduation. Yuppies are often blamed for driving up real-estate prices and diluting communities, especially as they move into formerly closed neighborhoods like the North End, Jamaica Plain, Somerville and South Boston.

Many people in these old enclaves welcome newcomers, recognizing the advantages of diversity and development. But others resent being invaded by outsiders, whether immigrants or yuppies; and who needs development if it means they can't pay the rent?

## LIFESTYLE

Bostonians are culture vultures. Whether it's Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra or *I Will Survive* performed by a drag-queen Gloria Gaynor, Boston is into creating and consuming art of every variety (see p28).

Bostonians are also sports fans. Sure, almost everybody loves to watch the Sox; but Bostonians also recognize that life is not a spectator sport. They are just as likely to be playing on the company softball team as watching the boys on TV. Pick a sport and Boston has an intramural league; find an open space and you'll see someone throwing a Frisbee. Bike paths, basketball courts, boathouses and beaches are always in use by Boston's young, energetic population (p194).

Bostonians are liberal thinkers. At least that's what the numbers say, as the city votes Democratic in elections on almost every level. While the reality is always more complex than the numbers, Boston has emerged ahead of the pack on issues from gay marriage to universal healthcare (p23).

Bostonians are education addicts. Perhaps there is something in the water – and perhaps the local universities and colleges put it there – but residents of Boston have an unquenchable thirst for learning at all ages. The Cambridge Center for Adult Education is the country's oldest community education program, but Boston and Brookline also have similar line-ups (see p272 for courses). Many local institutions – including Harvard, BU and Northeastern – have 'continuing education' programs for non-degree students. Whether it's belly dancing, poetry or astronomy, classes cater to curious folks who seek to develop new skills and interests.

## CULTURE IDENTITY

At the end of WWII, nearly 800,000 people lived in Boston, the majority of whom were Irish. Urban renewal and suburban flight reduced those numbers, but the core of the city was never abandoned. Today, Boston is home to about 590,000, making it the 20th-largest US city. More than 3 million people inhabit Greater Boston.

As of the 2000 census, the breakdown goes like this: 54% Caucasian (or white), 25% African American, 14% Latino, 7% Asian, and less than 1% trace their ancestry to Native American peoples.

## FASHION

Fashion has never been Boston's top priority. Maybe the high-minded population has been too busy writing books, solving equations and getting PhDs to consider such trivialities as how they look while they are doing it.

This general trend is showing signs of change, however. It is thanks, in part, to Boston's increasingly international population, many of whom arrive with a Euro-chic style sensibility. Boston's own beautiful people also play a role, as they try to keep up with their more modish counterparts in NYC.

In recent years, Newbury St has become designer row: you'll have no problem procuring Diesel jeans, Mark Jacobs boots, La Perla lingerie, a Fendi bag or an Armani suit. Even the *Boston Globe* has become more fashionable, with a new weekly 'Style & Arts' section targeting vogue-conscious Bostonians.

This newfound awareness of style is not so noticeable across the river in Cambridge, where residents are perhaps still busy getting PhDs. Cantabrigians do not experiment too much beyond the ever-popular jeans-and-fleece look and the long-standing tweed-jacket-no-tie look.

Fashionistas continue to take their cues from New York, but a few local designers are trying to put Boston on the map à la mode. Recognizing Boston's conservative tastes in clothes, the styles tend to be relatively down-to-earth and decidedly wearable compared to what you might see in *Vogue* magazine.

Cibeline Sariano identifies herself as a New York designer because she hails from the city. But she works right here in Somerville, where she puts innovative twists on classic clothing designs. Abigail LeBay is a swimwear designer (based in Maine) who aims to create sexy styles without sacrificing comfort or quality. Turkish-born Nirva Derbekyan trained at the Massachusetts College of Art before launching her fashion house, which specializes in playful skirts made from natural cottons, wools and silks. Based in Cambridge, Gypsy Moon features graceful, internationally inspired styles that appeal to the romantic in practical Boston. But the brand also emphasizes that the clothing is designed 'to fit and flatter the bodies of real women.'

## SPORTS

There might as well be signs on I-90 and I-93 reading 'Now Entering Red Sox Nation.' The intensity of baseball fans has only grown since the Boston Red Sox broke their agonizing 86-year losing streak and won the 2004 World Series. For many folks around the country, this band of scruffy players came to symbolize triumph over adversity. In successive years, the Sox have not fared quite so well, and fans curse them for it. Nevertheless, Fenway Park, the home of the Red Sox, continues to sell out every game. They'll wait another 86 years if they have to.

Sports fanaticism is not limited to baseball. This is evident from the face painters and beer bellies that brave subzero temperatures to watch the Patriots play football. Super Bowl champions in 2002, 2004 and 2005 – that's a 'three-peat' for football fans – this team put individualism aside and pulled together to beat others who looked better on paper. They also took one game at a time, season after season.

Sports fandom in Boston crosses lines of class, education and ethnicity. Again, it comes back to baseball. It was the renowned evolutionary biologist and paleontologist Stephen J Gould who argued that baseball is an intellectual's sport – a game of strategy, not just strength; brains more than brawn. Gould supported the NY Yankees, forgive him, but his sentiments strike a chord with Boston fans, who count among their ranks members of the literati like John Updike and Stephen King. John Cheever went so far as to declare that 'all literary men are Red Sox fans.'

Since the 1990s, the ball club has overcome the legacy of racism that plagued it for many years (see the boxed text, p195). Not too many black American players have played for Boston. But many of the team's biggest stars have been Latino players, especially from the Dominican Republic. And as many colors (and countries) are represented on the bench, are represented in Red Sox Nation.

## WE DON'T NEED ANOTHER HERO, JUST ANOTHER WORLD SERIES

Boston loves its sports teams. The local sports culture has been described as passionate and well informed by some; psychotic and boneheaded by others. It is probably all true. Suggesting a list of Boston's all-time sports heroes might seem like an innocent enough exercise, but if you do it in a local bar, get ready to fight or run.

- David 'Big Papi' Ortiz – Boston baseball has been very good to the Big O, and the Big O has been very good to Boston baseball. The indomitable DH from the DR, with the big smile and big bat, is the most feared Red Sox hitter since Ted Williams. His incredible knack for game-winning home runs is already the stuff of baseball lore.
- Tom 'Terrific' Brady – the coy quarterback with the California cool has led the Patriots to three Super Bowl victories and garnered two big-game MVPs for himself. Since the GQ cover boy took the helm, the longsuffering Pats are patsies no more, but now reign among football's elite.
- Larry 'Legend' Bird – the Hick from French Lick took the already starry and storied Boston Celtics to new basketball heights in the 1980s. The Celts simply owned the town. With deft passing and deadeye shooting, Bird led the team to three championships and earned three MVPs.
- Robert Gordon 'Bobby' Orr – forever etched in the minds of Bruins fans is the image of Number Four, soaring through mid-air in celebration after scoring 'the goal' that brought Boston its first Stanley Cup in twenty years. The Pride of Parry Sound revolutionized hockey with his incredible speed, strength and skill. Voted league MVP three times and best defenseman eight times. Seeing was believing.

Unfortunately, Sox ownership does not reach out to this diverse community in basic ways. Games are not shown on network TV, but on the local cable sports station. And tickets – when available – are prohibitively expensive. So the hometown team is actually less accessible, even as its appeal extends to new audiences.

## MEDIA

America's first newspaper, the unauthorized *Publick Occurrences, Both Foreign and Domes-tick*, was published in Boston in 1690, then immediately suppressed. The *Boston News-Letter* was the first regularly published periodical, starting in 1704. The *New England Courant*, published by Benjamin Franklin's older brother James, added an outlet for news and fiction in 1720.

Three hundred years later, there are still two major newspapers in Boston. The most prominent daily is the *Boston Globe*. Widely read and widely respected, the Globe is Boston's top media organization. In the early 2000s, Globe reporters were instrumental in uncovering the Catholic Church abuse scandal, for which they were awarded a Pulitzer Prize. Like all respectable newspapers, the Globe is sometimes accused of having a liberal bias. Its competitor, the tabloid *Boston Herald*, has a smaller circulation, perhaps due to its conservative editorial stance.

Boston's independent media offer a refreshing alternative to these two mainstream papers. *The Boston Phoenix* ([www.bostonphoenix.com](http://www.bostonphoenix.com)) is a sassy weekly with a fresh perspective on local politics and trends. The Independent Media Corporation ([www.boston.indymedia.org](http://www.boston.indymedia.org)) also addresses events and issues that are often overlooked.

## LANGUAGE

You won't be long in this town before you hear the broad vowels of the famous Boston accent. 'Pahk the cah in Hahvahd Yahd' is the overused example (translation: Park the car in Harvard Yard). Locals scoff at this attempt to imitate their speech patterns, as everyone knows that cars are prohibited in Harvard Yard.

But this distinct dialect rings out loud and clear on Boston streets, particularly among working-class and middle-class Irish, Italian and Portuguese residents. The letter R frequently disappears at the end of words ('chowdah' instead of chowder); then mysteriously reappears on the end of other words ('ideer' instead of idea). You are most likely to hear it when you ask directions from your bus driver or the local policeman.

## BOSTONESE GLOSSARY & PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Here's your guide to talking like a local (see also the boxed text, p48).

- Pisser (pissah) – super cool
- Wicked (wikkid) – very (as in 'wicked pisser')
- Gloucester (gloster or glostuh) – a fishing town on the North Shore, also a street in Back Bay
- Tremont (treh-mont) – the street bordering the Boston Common
- Worcester (wooster or woostuh) – a city west of Boston
- Boston Garden – the old basketball and hockey arena that was torn down in the 1980s, now sometimes called 'the old Garden'
- Banknorth Garden – the new basketball and hockey arena (formerly called the Fleet Center)
- Public Garden – the public garden between Back Bay and Beacon Hill
- The Garden (gah-den) – any of the above

If you really want to demonstrate that you are down with the Boston dialect, use the more appropriate (and accurate) sentence: 'The weathah heah is wikkid bizah.'

## RELIGION

The colonists who founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony were Puritans, adherents to a strict form of Calvinism that sought to 'purify' the church of the excesses of ceremony acquired over the centuries. They believed the Bible was not to be subjected to elaborate theological interpretations.

Few traces of these fundamentalist beliefs are found in Boston today. More visible are the spiritual descendants of Boston's 18th- and 19th-century philosophers. Believers who questioned the concept of the trinity split off to found the first Unitarian Church at King's Chapel in 1782; the Unitarians were strongly influenced by transcendentalism, which flourished in Boston and Concord from 1836 to 1860. The belief that God 'transcended' all people and things attracted the era's greatest philosophers, including Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne and Melville. Its modern incarnation is Unitarian-Universalism. In 1866, Mary Baker Eddy founded the Christian Science Church, which professes personal healing through prayer. The 'mother church' is in Boston, but it has some 2000 churches internationally.

The immigrants that arrived in droves throughout the 19th century changed Boston's religious makeup. They were mostly Irish, Italian and Portuguese – all strongly Catholic. Nowadays, almost 70% of city residents who claim a religious identity claim Catholicism. Conservative Catholics have sometimes come into conflict with more liberal-thinking elements in society; for example, the annual St Patrick's Day Parade in overwhelmingly Irish South Boston still does not allow gays to march, even though the Commonwealth of Massachusetts allows them to marry.

But recently, the more prominent controversies are *within* the Catholic Church in Boston. In recent years, the horror at the reports of child molestation by local parish priests was outdone only by the outrage at the cover-up by the archdiocese. Following that scandal, the archdiocese has been forced to close many community churches, causing further heartbreak within the parishes (see the boxed text, p97).

Although relatively few in numbers, Eastern European Jews have also made their mark on Boston neighborhoods. Their descendants have created a notable Jewish cultural enclave in Brookline (see p103) and an internationally recognized education facility, Brandeis University, just outside of Boston in Waltham, Massachusetts.

## EDUCATION

With 35 institutions of higher education and the country's highest number of students per capita, Boston is what you might call a 'college town.' Kenmore Sq and Fenway are home to the Boston University behemoth, as well as myriad smaller colleges and professional schools. In the western reaches of the city, sections of Allston and Brighton have been

## BOSTON: COLLEGE TOWN

The greater Boston area has many, many college campuses – too many to mention here. The vibrancy of the student population is one of the defining characteristics of this youthful city. Cultural and sporting events are often open to the public (see p194).

**Berklee College of Music** (Map pp308–9; ☎ 617-747-2222; www.berklee.edu; 1140 Boylston St; 🚶 Hynes) One of the country's finest music schools.

**Boston University** (BU; Map pp308–9; ☎ 617-353-2000, 617-353-2169; www.bu.edu; 881 Commonwealth Ave; 🚶 BU Central) West of Kenmore Sq, enrolls about 30,000 graduate and undergraduate students, and has a huge campus and popular sports teams.

**Harvard University** (see p117)

**Massachusetts College of Art** (Massart; see p103)

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology** (see p118)

**Northeastern University** (Map pp306–7; ☎ 617-373-2000; www.northeastern.edu; 360 Huntington Ave; 🚶 Ruggles or Northeastern) Boasts one of the country's largest work-study cooperative programs.

**University of Massachusetts, Boston** (UMass; ☎ 617-287-5000; www.umb.edu; 100 Morrissey Blvd; 🚶 UMass/JFK) Host to the John F Kennedy Library & Museum (see p121).

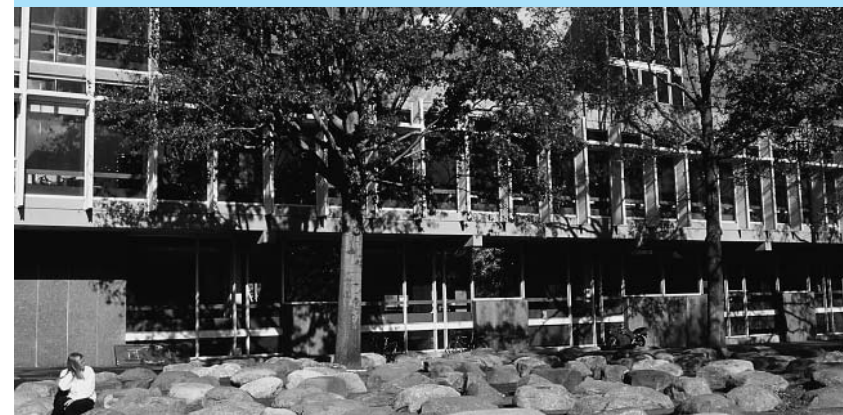
Other well-established colleges and universities on the city's fringe:

**Boston College** (BC; Map pp298–9; ☎ 617-552-8000; www.bc.edu; 140 Commonwealth Ave/MA 30, Chestnut Hill; 🚶 Boston College or Cleveland Circle) The nation's largest Jesuit community. The large green campus has Gothic towers, stained glass, a good art museum and excellent Irish and Catholic ephemera collections in the library. Its basketball and football teams are usually high in national rankings. Take the green B-line to Boston College or the C-line to Cleveland Circle.

**Brandeis University** (Map pp298–9; ☎ 781-736-2000; www.brandeis.edu; South St, Waltham) A small campus that includes the Rose Art Museum, specializing in New England art. Take the MBTA commuter rail from North Station to the Brandeis/Roberts stop.

**Tufts University** (Map pp298–9; ☎ 617-628-5000; www.tufts.edu; College Ave, Medford) Home to the acclaimed Fletcher School of International Affairs. Take the Red Line to Davis Sq, then a free Tufts shuttle across from the station takes you directly to the campus.

**Wellesley College** (Map pp298–9; ☎ 781-283-1000; www.wellesley.edu; 106 Central St, Wellesley) A Seven Sisters women's college that has a hilly, wooded campus and the excellent Davis Museum & Cultural Center. Walk from the MBTA commuter rail or drive MA 16 to MA 135.



Harvard Yard, Harvard University (p117)

dubbed the 'student ghetto' for their low-rent apartments that attract students from BC and BU. And across the river, Cambridge is home to scholarly superstars Harvard and MIT, as well as a handful of smaller schools.

This abundance of colleges and universities guarantees a constant youthful presence in Boston; residents age 19 to 24 represent 16% of the population. Many students remain in Boston after graduation, bolstering the highly educated workforce. The young, educated population ensures a vibrant music scene (p33), an innovative art scene (p31) and a hot singles scene (37% of households are 'individuals': read 'available').

## ECONOMY & COSTS

The greater Boston area is the seventh-largest regional economy in the United States, with a gross regional product of \$255 billion in 2005. The Boston economy is fueled by its educational institutions, which are major employers in their own right. They also provide a permanent source of employees for thriving private-sector industries.

The technology and biotechnology industries have spawned from university research labs (quite literally, as MIT researchers developed the first computer in 1928). Wang Computers, Digital Computers, Prime and Data General all began in the Boston area. Cambridge, especially Central Sq and Kendall Sq, is a center for the pharmaceutical industry, hosting companies like Millennium and Biogen.

Boston is home to at least six major hospitals. Again, the hospitals form collaborative relationships with universities for teaching and research. The world-class facilities at the Longwood Medical Area and Massachusetts General Hospital are affiliated with the Harvard Medical School, while the New England Medical Center maintains a relationship with Tufts University. Boston institutions receive more funding than those in any other urban area from the National Institute for Health.

Finally, Boston is a major center for financial services. Mutual funds originated in Massachusetts and became an enormously popular investment tool for individual retirement plans, due in part to promotion by Boston-based Fidelity Investments. Insurance and venture capital are also significant.

Much of this white-collar industry developed in the 1980s and 1990s – breathing new life into a city that was suffering from the decline of its manufacturing sector. This economic turnaround is sometimes called the 'Massachusetts Miracle.'

The result today is a robust economy that continues to grow. The downside of the city's prosperity, of course, is its high cost of living. Some reports estimate that Boston is the most expensive metropolitan area in the country. Housing prices are prohibitively high, having increased more than 80% in the first five years of the new millennium. This concerns companies and schools who want to attract talent from elsewhere. Recruiters lament the low- to moderate-income family being frozen out of the housing market, as do the low- to moderate-income families.

Boston is also 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 \$100 to \$125, while hostels cost \$25 to \$40 for a bed. See p226 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 p134 for some suggestions on how to eat and save.

### HOW MUCH?

**Bike rental** (24 hours) \$25  
**'Boston: Wicked Pissah'**  
**T-shirt** \$20  
**Bowl of clam chowder** \$3.75  
**Cappuccino** \$3.50  
**Cover charge** Abbey Lounge \$8-12  
**Gallon of gas** \$2.80  
**Liter of water** \$2.50  
**Pint of Sam Adams** \$5  
**T-ride** \$1.70  
**Red Sox ticket** bleacher seat (face value) \$23

Keep in mind that Boston offers many opportunities to save money. See the boxed text on p98 for some suggestions.

## GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

The late Thomas P 'Tip' O'Neill, Boston native and respected Speaker of the House, coined the phrase 'All politics is local.' So for example, if the mayor can keep control of the day-to-day practicalities of the functioning of the city, he's 'in like Flynn' (the long-serving Irish-Catholic mayor Ray Flynn, that is).

Boston's current chief is Thomas Menino, the city's first Italian-American mayor (and first non-Irish mayor since 1884). Fondly called 'Mumbles Menino' for his poor diction, Menino is nonetheless well liked. By the time he completes his current, fourth term in office, he will be the longest-serving mayor in Boston history. His popularity is due to his hands-on approach to managing the city. Trash pick-up and snow removal are reliable, somehow a sign that all is right with the world; the city's parks are green and well maintained, and if they're not, the parks department has a hotline where you can call to complain.

Despite Menino's positive standing, the city administration faces criticism on several fronts. The lack of affordable housing is a huge issue, as neighborhood gentrification continues to drive up real-estate prices. Also on the rise is violent crime, on par with a nationwide trend in urban areas.

Even if Tip O'Neill was right, Boston continues to play an important role in national politics. On that front, Boston is often considered the epitome of the 'liberal East Coast.' And it's true that the city strongly supports Democratic candidates. Massachusetts has been at the forefront of countless 'liberal' issues, including anti-smoking legislation (Massachusetts banned smoking in the workplace in 2003), same-sex marriage (legalized in Massachusetts in 2004), and healthcare (as of 2007, health insurance is required for all state residents and subsidized for low-income residents).

Conservatives argue that these progressive values are out of touch with mainstream America. Indeed, when Massachusetts Senator John Kerry ran for president in 2004, his opponents portrayed him as a member of the 'East-Coast elite', which likely contributed to his defeat. Bostonians, for their part, have come to accept that perhaps they are out of touch with mainstream America; but considering what's going on in mainstream America, they're okay with that.

There is much speculation that Massachusetts politicians will also be involved in the 2008 presidential election. At the time of research, Governor Mitt Romney had not declared his intentions to run, but he had spent plenty of time giving speeches and shaking hands in crucial primary states. Of course Romney also belongs to the East-Coast elite; whether or not that will be held against him remains to be seen.

## ENVIRONMENT

### CLIMATE

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 April. During this period, visitors can expect temperatures below freezing and plenty of snow.

## THE LAND

The city of Boston was founded on Shawmut, a peninsula that protruded into the natural harbor of the Massachusetts Bay. On the western side of the peninsula, the wide back bay eventually gave way to the Charles River, which wound its way west. When European settlers arrived in the 17th century, they congregated on the peninsula itself (now the North End, West End, Beacon Hill and Downtown) and all along the north shore of the Back Bay and Charles River (now Cambridge and Charlestown).

In those early days, the peninsula's topography was defined by three hills (which explains the origins of street names like "Tremont"). Beacon Hill, the smallest of the three, is the only hill that remains today – though it too used to be much higher.

In the 19th century when Boston was experiencing a population boom, the city undertook a massive expansion project, filling in much of the swampy, marshy bay on the back side of the peninsula; Shawmut's three hills became the source of landfill. So Boston built the south shore of the Charles River. What once was marshland became the neighborhoods known as the Back Bay, Kenmore Sq and Fenway.

The city continued to expand west and south, so that Boston today occupies 48.4 square miles.

## GREEN BOSTON

Bostonians have the great fortune to witness the greening of their city, quite literally. The Central Artery is underground, out of sight, soon to be replaced by the Rose Kennedy Greenway (boxed text, opposite). The new park will provide a pleasant counterpart to the Charles River Esplanade (p198), on the south shore of the river, and the Emerald Necklace (boxed text, p104), stretching from the Boston Common to Franklin Park. And certainly after 15 years of construction, the greenway is a welcome addition to an otherwise concrete landscape.



Bridge over the lake on the Boston Common (p77)

## BEYOND THE BIG DIG

All federal highway projects are local. And few road-improvement schemes have been so infamously linked with a locality as the Central Artery/Tunnel project is with the city of Boston. The Big Dig, as it is better known, is now well into its second decade of construction and well past its 15th billion dollar in cost. The project, which is finally nearing completion, has won acclaim and been defamed. Boston motorists have gone from infuriated, to confounded, to fearful (see p58).

The project involved the dismantling of the Central Artery, the perpetually congested raised highway that cut through the downtown. In its place, the Big Dig built more than 40 miles of subterranean superhighway. To undertake a massive public-works project in the heart of the city, according to the former project director, was like 'performing by-pass surgery on a patient while he continues to work and play tennis.'

The Big Dig is more than just a long and winding underground road; it also dramatically changed the face of the city and improved the quality of life. Just north of this high-tech cavern, the highway meets the Charles River. The graceful Leonard Zakim Bridge, named for a local civil-rights activist, spans the water. Against the historic backdrop of Bunker Hill, it is the widest cable-stayed bridge in the world. To the south, the Big Dig includes a new harbor tunnel, connecting Interstate-90 with the airport and north shore. The Ted Williams Tunnel, named for a local leftfielder, was considered an engineering feat (at least until its roof collapsed).

Finally, the project will reclaim about 27 acres of industrial wasteland for parks and civic plazas. Where the hulking Central Artery once created barriers and shadows, Bostonians will soon enjoy a tree-lined open space, the Rose Kennedy Greenway, named for a local matriarch.

When everything is functioning properly, the new network of subterranean highways dramatically reduces commuting times and facilitates airport traffic. That the various tunnels require periodic closing for repairs is a source of frustration and scorn. Above ground, the Rose Kennedy Greenway is still in the conceptual stages. Environmental regulations require that 75% of the reclaimed land must be devoted to parks or open space, while other segments will be developed for visitor facilities and other buildings.

One stretch near the Fort Point Channel has been designated for the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, which proposed building a conservatory and a botanical garden. Further south, between Chinatown and the Leather District, the new space will constitute an Asian-accented park to complement Chinatown Gate. Other parcels call for civic plazas with fountains and lawns, sculpture gardens, cafés and cultural facilities.

It sounds lovely, and Bostonians look forward to the day when they can walk along a ribbon of green from North Station to South Station. That said, if they've learned anything from the Big Dig, they have learned not to hold their breath.

Other ongoing environmental initiatives are also coming to fruition. For hundreds of years, the Boston Harbor was a dumping site for sewage, earning its reputation as the most polluted waterfront in the country. In the mid-1980s, the city was ordered by the EPA to clean up its act.

The 11-year effort is finally reaping benefits. For the first time in over a century, water quality in the harbor is safe for swimming; beaches are clean and enjoyable places to play; and thanks to the HarborWalk (p198), the Waterfront has become a wonderful area for strolling.

A similar effort is underway in the Charles River, inspiration for the Standell's song *Dirty Water*. Improvements have been significant. In 2006 – for the second year in a row – the Charles River Initiative received a B+ on its report card from the EPA, a vast improvement from the D it received a decade ago. A local advocacy group saw fit to celebrate the good report card by organizing the first-ever Charles River Swim, a tradition that will hopefully continue as water quality continues to improve.

Another green goal in Boston is reducing the number of cars on the roads, thus diminishing greenhouse gas emissions. Boston-based Zipcar – the country's largest car-sharing company – encourages urbanites to shed cars, drive less and use other forms of transportation. This trend complements the city's long-term transportation plans to extend the subway and build more bike paths ('long-term' being the operative word). Whether or not they realize it, T-riders, bike riders and Zipcar drivers are all contributing to the greening of Boston.

## ON THE HORIZON

What's that on the horizon, a crane? Here are a few more major development projects that are underway:

- Allston initiative – Harvard University intends to radically alter Allston's landscape, creating a new urban campus and community environment.
- Green-line extension – one condition for receipt of the Federal funding for the Big Dig is extending the green line from Lechmere out to Medford via Union Sq.
- Northpoint Cambridge – city residents and urban planners hope this real estate development and green space will revive East Cambridge.

## URBAN PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Downtown Boston has long felt like one giant construction project. With the completion of the Big Dig (see p25), residents and visitors can finally breathe a sigh of relief and enjoy some quiet. But not for long, as the next major development project is already underway.

In recent years, the Seaport District has been transformed with the construction of the convention center, the Moakley Federal Courthouse and the new ICA on the waterfront. But that's only the beginning. To cater to the business people attending conventions, luxury hotels are sprouting up all over this area. Two prominent pieces of property along Northern Ave are slated for development for housing, condos, offices, shops and restaurants.

# The Authors

## 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 Somerville, Boston, with her husband and her cat. Mara spent several years pushing papers and tapping keys at Harvard University, but she has since embraced the life of a full-time travel writer. She is often spotted sipping Sam Adams seasonals in Union Sq and pedaling her road bike along the Charles River.

Mara is a frequent contributor to the *Boston Globe* Travel. She has also worked on Lonely Planet's guides to *Cape Cod & the Islands* and *New England*.

## MARA'S BEST DAY IN BOSTON

It's a sunny morning in early autumn, and I wake up in Somerville. I hop on my bicycle and pedal over to Harvard Sq for my daily fix from Darwin's (p156). After fueling up, I follow my favorite riding route along the banks of the Charles (p126), stopping to catch a few morning rays on the Esplanade. I drop off my bike and head back into the city for some reading and eating at Trident Booksellers & Cafe (p151), where I lose a couple of hours to the huge selection of magazines.

After lunch, it's time for a little 'kultchah,' so I head to the Museum of Fine Arts

(p103) to check out the Paul Gauguin exhibit, especially 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 (p197) to Kenmore Sq.

I meet up with friends for a pre-game drink on the outdoor patio at Eastern Standard (p153). Then we follow the crowds to Fenway Park (p101) to watch the Sox spank the Yankees and clinch their spot in the playoffs (we can dream, can't we?).

After the game, we head back to the other side of the river to devour a savory pizza at Cambridge, 1 (p157). I have saved room for dessert so I can stop at Christina's (p52) for her irresistible pumpkin ice cream on my way home.

## John Spelman



John Spelman grew up in a boring town outside Boston. His early years featured many trips to the city, where he was admonished to not touch subway station walls (people pee on them) and passed productive

days at the children's museum, aquarium and Quincy Market. He later enjoyed the fate of many area teenagers who think that they are artists, and began wearing awkward clothes as a pseudo-punk regularly hanging out in Harvard Sq and on Newbury St. As an adult living in Cambridge, he developed slightly better fashion sensibilities and became very sentimental about the Boston/Providence rock scene.

More recently, John earned a Masters in Design Studies from Harvard's Graduate School of Design and is now a PhD student studying architectural and urban history at the University of Virginia, where he is working on a dissertation about Boston. He has written for multiple Lonely Planet titles, including *New England*.

## LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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