

BOSTON BEATS

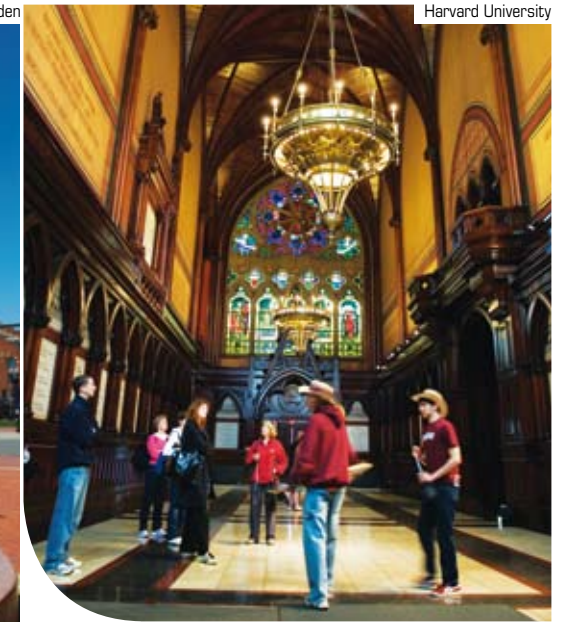
BOSTON HAS LONG CAPTIVATED VISITORS WITH ITS COMBINATION OF HISTORY AND CULTURE. DETERMINED TO UNCOVER THE BEST THE CITY HAS TO OFFER, **PETER MATTHEWS** PUTS ON HIS WALKING SHOES AND FOLLOWS THE FREEDOM TRAIL



North End



Rose Kennedy Garden



Harvard University



Aer Lingus flies to Boston daily from Dublin and Shannon

THE FREEDOM TRAIL IS THE GRANDDADDY OF BOSTON'S WALKING TOURS, WITH AWE-INSPIRING SIGHTS SPANNING THE 17TH TO THE EARLY 19TH CENTURIES



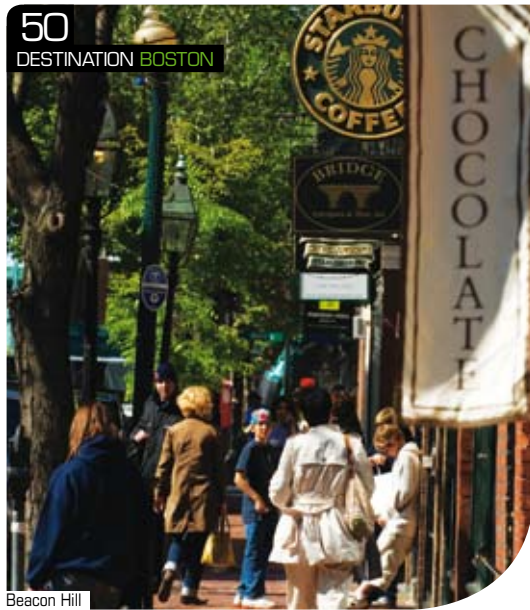
Quincy Market

WHILE PULSING WITH a vital, modern energy, Boston is also legendary for the wealth of history coursing through its veins. The capital of Massachusetts vividly evokes the past through its old houses, venerable traditions and grand buildings – this is a city that boasts more intact colonial era sites than any other in America. Even as Boston pushes bravely into the 21st century with giant feats of civic engineering such as the colossal Big Dig (a mega 5.6km tunnel under the city), the burgeoning Financial District and such futuristic eye-candy as Frank Gehry's MIT-based Ray and Maria Stata Center, the city firmly maintains its rich heritage.

And there's no better way to see the city's glorious attractions than on foot. Walkers here are at a real advantage: Boston is compact enough to make discovering the city's rich treasures this way a real joy. What's more, there is a great selection of tour maps available in visitor centres and online, with trails such as the Freedom Trail, the Black Heritage Trail and the Irish Heritage Trail.

If you want to start big, go for the Freedom Trail. This is the granddaddy of Boston's walking tours, with awe-inspiring sights spanning the 17th to early 19th centuries. Along the route you can learn all about the most decisive places and people in American history. After World War II, the Freedom Trail was formalised in an attempt to draw people back into Boston's commercial district during a major demographic shift out to the suburbs, but these days it's more than just a clever >

PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER MATTHEWS



Beacon Hill



Houston's Bar and Restaurant

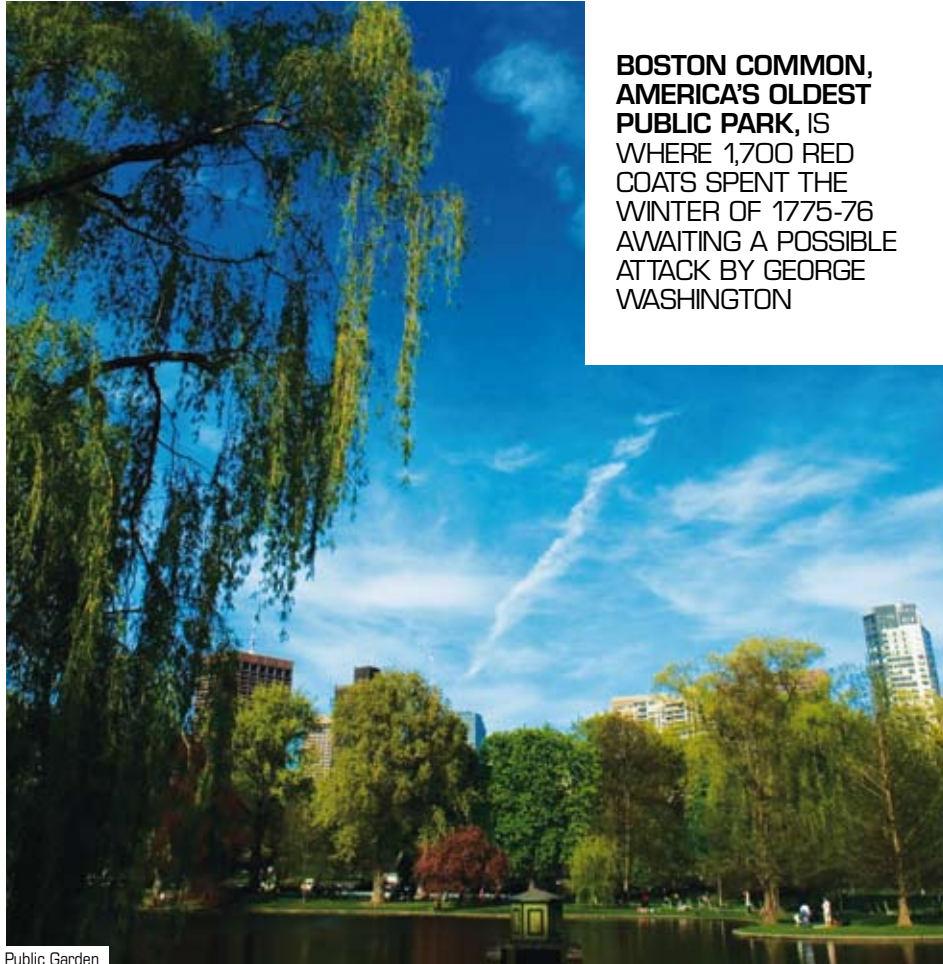
rouse to get folks thronging the downtown. Consisting of 16 sites linked together by a 4km-long thread of red bricks or thick paint that stretches over the pavements, the trail kicks into action at Boston Common before culminating at either the Bunker Hill Monument or the USS Constitution.

Exploring the trail is the quintessential way to unlock Boston's most vital historic events through museums, old colonial buildings and atmospheric cemeteries. To get the most out of the Freedom Trail, hook up with one of the frequent tour groups that regularly depart from the visitor centre in Boston Common. Led by suitably costumed guides that look like they've fallen out of an 18th-century painting, the tours can last upwards of three hours, but during this time you'll be stuffed full of fabulous historical tidbits, anecdotes and a wealth of entertaining myths and legends.

Taking the Trail

Following in the footsteps of the leisurely ladies and gents of the 17th century, the trail starts at Boston Common – America's oldest public park, which dates back to the 1630s. This is also an important historical spot: Boston's first settler grazed his cattle here, and more than 1,700 Red Coats (British Army soldiers) spent the winter of 1775-76 in the park in preparation for a possible attack by George Washington. Public hangings were held in Boston Common until 1817, but although it's now a green and pleasant park, it can't compete with its westward neighbour, the more atmospheric and verdant Public Garden (1837).

The first stop on the Freedom Trail is not actually associated with the "struggle for freedom" against the British Empire. Completed in 1798, the Massachusetts State House sits grandly above the common and sports a 23-carat gold dome. Inside, the



Public Garden

BOSTON COMMON, AMERICA'S OLDEST PUBLIC PARK, IS WHERE 1,700 RED COATS SPENT THE WINTER OF 1775-76 AWAITING A POSSIBLE ATTACK BY GEORGE WASHINGTON

business of state is still conducted, and you can tour the interior alone or with a guide.

The next stop is the Park Street Church followed by the Old Granary Burying Ground, a cemetery of etched slabs beneath which some of colonial America's brightest luminaries rest. Among the underground revolutionary-era folk are Paul Revere, Samuel Adams, John Hancock and James Otis, as well as the five victims of the Boston Massacre and Benjamin Franklin's parents. Although city traffic often shatters the tranquility, and a few

modern office buildings throw shadows, this cemetery undoubtedly gives visitors a chance to connect with the denizens of this Elysian Field.

Just across the street is the King's Chapel and Burying Ground. It is here that Mary Chilton, the first pilgrim to alight on Plymouth Rock, is buried, as is John Winthrop, the first governor of Massachusetts. In later days, Nathaniel Hawthorne wandered among these tombstones and is said to have found inspiration for his novel *The Scarlett Letter*. >



BUILT IN 1741, FANEUIL HALL AND ITS SURROUNDINGS HAVE NOW BEEN TAKEN OVER BY TASTEFUL SHOPPING MALLS, PUBS, EATERIES AND MARKETS – IT'S A GREAT BUZZ TO HANG OUT HERE



Sightseeing trolleybus



Quincy Market



Tour guide at Granary Burying Ground

Key events and figures on the road to freedom

Boston Massacre: Five civilians died at the hands of British troops on 5 March 1770. It was a culmination of tensions between civilians and the military, and helped spark the rebellion in some of the British colonies in America.

The Boston Tea Party: On 16 December 1773, the American colonists took a direct stand against Great Britain when they destroyed crates of tea bricks on ships in Boston Harbour. The incident helped to spark the American Revolution.

Battle of Bunker Hill: This battle took place on 17 June 1775 as part of the Siege of Boston during the American Revolutionary War. General Israel Putnam commanded the revolutionary forces; Major-General William Howe commanded the British forces. Although the British were victorious they suffered colossal losses.

Paul Revere (1734-1818): American national folk hero Paul Revere was glorified after his death because of his role as a messenger in the battles of Lexington and Concord.

Samuel Adams (1722-1803): An instrumental figure in getting the support of the colonies for rebellion against Great Britain, Adams was a statesman, politician, brewer and one of the Founding Fathers of the United States.

John Hancock (1737-1793): A prominent patriot whose flamboyant signature graces the Declaration of Independence.

James Otis (1725-1783): This prominent lawyer in Massachusetts held political views that contributed to the American Revolution. The phrase "Taxation without representation is tyranny" is generally attributed to him.

The next major site, across the way from the Old Corner Bookstore, built in 1718, is the Old South Meeting House (1729). Now housing a museum, this is a spot that's central to Boston's history: Benjamin Franklin was baptised here, and it was here that Samuel Adams fired up the crowds for the Boston Tea Party, which went a long way towards kicking off the American Revolutionary War.

Amble a few blocks further north and you'll come across the Old State House. Prior to the Revolution, this 1713 building was the seat of colonial government, where John Otis rallied colonists against the British authority's practice of searching private property. This is also the place where the Declaration of Independence was first publicly read in Boston. Now much of the building is given over to informative exhibits; among them you'll find a jacket John Hancock wore, as well as tea from the Boston Tea Party.

Beyond the Boston Massacre Memorial plaque there's a far livelier scene at Faneuil Hall and its surroundings. Built in 1741, this meeting space is known as "the Cradle of Liberty," as citizens used to gather here to debate and discuss their growing animosity towards the British Crown. These days the entire area has been given over to the tasteful shopping centres of Quincy, North and South Markets, as well as the souvenir shops found in Faneuil Hall's ground floor. It's a great buzz just to hang out here – sampling pricey snacks, dining outdoors, catching a live gig at a pub, watching a break-dance troupe busking, souvenir shopping or getting serious at one of the higher end clothing outlets.

The Freedom Trail continues on from here, but if you've an appetite head to the nearby Ye Olde Union Oyster House (41 Union Street; tel: + 1 617 227 2750; unionoysterhouse.com). America's oldest restaurant in continuous use serves up delectable seafood or grilled meat. Lobsters and oysters are specialties here and Daniel Webster and John F Kennedy – whose favourite booth you can dine in – were regular customers. It's no wonder this place glows with a yesteryear aura.

More food, in this case fresh produce, tumbles from outdoor stalls along Blackstone Street. Across from here is a pleasantly manicured park, built where an inner-city highway once ran, but which is now snuggled deep below ground thanks to the costly Big Dig project. On the other side, begins the colorful North End and through which the Freedom Trail continues. >

Once an Irish neighborhood, the North End turned Italian some decades ago. Along Hanover Street you'll find dozens of options for pasta, pizza, *calzone*, cappuccino and *gelato* at great prices – at the family-run Galleria Umberto, a slice of pizza costs a mere \$1.35! The opening hours, however, are limited as dough is baked daily in the morning, and when it runs out, this popular cafeteria closes its doors.

Just off Hanover Street, the Trail leads to Paul Revere House, the oldest private residence in Boston. Built around 1680, Paul and clan lived here from 1770 to 1800. The house is open to the public and includes rooms furnished in period style. A short stroll down the leaf-canopied Paul Revere Mall leads you to Old North Church – dating back to 1723, it's the city's oldest church.

From here, climb up Hill Street to Copp's Hill Burying Ground. The earliest dated

Fact File

Jurys Boston Hotel

This solid 1920s building, formerly the headquarters of the Boston Police, makes for a very comfortable four-star stay. It's centrally located between Copley Square and the Public Garden. On the ground floor buzzes one of the city's most lively pubs, Cuffs. 350 Stuart Street; tel: + 1 617 226 7200; jurysdoyle.com

Ye Olde Union Oyster House

Offering supremely fresh and well-prepared seafood, this place will rock your palate without rocking your wallet. As America's oldest continuously operated restaurant, since 1826, you'll not just be sucking up oysters, lobster and microbrew beers, but also history in this most pleasant of dining locales. 41 Union Street; tel + 1 617 227 2750; unionoysterhouse.com

Miel-Brasserie Provencale

Have you ever found yourself at 3am wondering where you can get a first-class gourmet meal? If so, Miel is undoubtedly the place to go. Offering super fresh and innovative cuisine, immaculately prepared and presented, Miel is open 24-hours a day. The brasserie is located in an atmospheric dining salon in the ultra-modern five-star Intercontinental Boston Hotel. This is new Boston at its most classy. Beside Miel you can get a drink at Rumbas, a first-rate cocktail bar. If quality sushi is more to your taste, then Sushi-Teq awaits another couple of steps away. 510 Atlantic Avenue; tel+ 1 617 217 5151

ONCE AN IRISH NEIGHBOURHOOD, THE NORTH END TURNED ITALIAN SOME DECADES AGO. HERE YOU'LL FIND DOZENS OF PLACES FOR PIZZA, PASTA, CALZONE AND GELATO



Grave of John Hancock



Tour guide at Granary Burying Ground

tombstone reads 1659, and patriot Robert Newman and Salem "witch" killer Cotton Mather are buried here.

Crossing the Charlestown Bridge, the trail leads on to its final two sites: the Bunker Hill Monument and the USS Constitution, both in relatively serene Charlestown. The 67-metre monument marks the site of the first major battle of the American Revolution. The well-tended lawn is a fine place to rest and affords marvellous views of the surroundings.

The USS Constitution is the oldest commissioned warship in the world. Launched in 1797, it soon earned the nickname of Old Iron Sides as it consistently defeated British naval ships in cannonade combat. As a military ship, its crew comprises US naval personnel, but their job includes providing historical and nautical information to tourists while decked out in period uniforms.

Other walking tours such as the Black Heritage and the Irish Heritage Trails leave a lot more to the imagination as the majority of their sites consist of statues, memorials and facades with locked doors. That said, these two separate trails lead one through some of Boston's most lovely, leafy neighbourhoods and green spaces.

So if you're in Boston and someone tells you to "Take a hike", don't take offence – put on your walking shoes and take their advice. □

