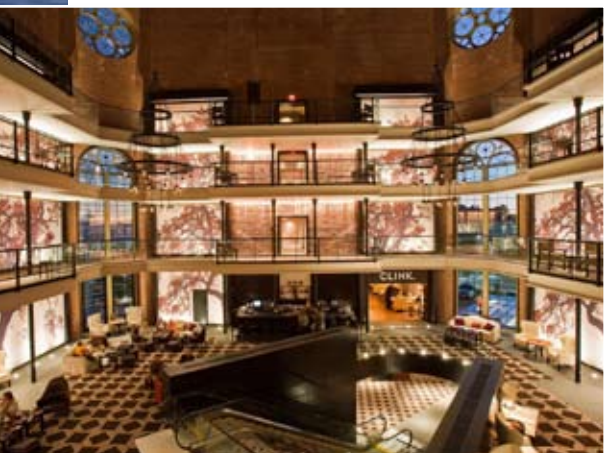


BOSTON OR BUST

OK! visits America's most European town...



The cosmopolitan city of Boston is often referred to as America's most European town, both in terms of attitude and architecture. There are fascinating neighbourhoods – such as the historic Beacon Hill, Little Italy and Chinatown – and America's oldest park, Boston Common. It's very much a walking city but you can always take the 'T' (the train system which runs over and underground) if you want to explore the suburbs, such as Cambridge, which is home to Harvard University as well as hip boutiques, bookstores and bars. It makes for an ideal long weekend shopping and sightseeing break but also, as the gateway to New England and the Atlantic-facing beach resorts, there's plenty else on offer for longer stays.



Above: OK! loved the Liberty Hotel, which was once a jail. A mugshot of Paris Hilton (top centre) hangs in the bar. Top left: Shopping at Faneuil Hall Marketplace and Newbury Street (above right) is a must

WHEN SHOULD I VISIT?

Visit in April and you'll be right on time for the start of the baseball season – local boy Ben Affleck is a huge Red Sox supporter. The whale-watching season starts this month too. October is a great time to take in the wonderful autumnal foliage of New England or enjoy an early Christmas shopping trip and take advantage of the favourable exchange rate. Or if you can wait until March, you can join the St Patrick's Day celebrations. It's a cause for celebration here as there's a large Irish community.

WHERE WILL I SEE A CELEB?

Thanks to TV shows such as *Cheers* (you'll recognise the Bull & Finch pub's exterior on 84 Beacon Street from the show), and films such as *Good Will Hunting* and *Legally Blonde*, the city seems very familiar. Recent films or those currently being filmed in the city include *The Departed* with Leonardo DiCaprio, *The Great Debaters* starring Denzel Washington, Kate Hudson's *My Best Friend's Girl* and *The Box* with Cameron Diaz.

WHERE SHOULD I STAY?

Boston's super-cool Liberty Hotel (www.libertyhotel.com) was once the infamous city jail where Malcolm X was incarcerated. Today the inmates are more likely to be Mick Jagger or Meg Ryan, who stayed while filming *The Women* and had a party in the presidential suite. For breakfast, order The Slammer at the cool Clink restaurant. At night pop into the swanky Alibi bar where OK! sampled a Jail Bait cocktail (a pomegranate mojito). Paris Hilton popped in last month and was amused to see her police mugshot on the wall.

For a smaller, equally stylish hotel try Nine Zero (www.ninezero.com) where Pink, Pamela Anderson and Gwen Stefani have all stayed. Located right on Boston Common, it's a hipster's hang out and OK! loved the snazzy KO Prime upmarket steakhouse and bar.

WHERE SHOULD I EAT?

Justin Timberlake and Ben Affleck have sampled the tasty delights at Dante (www.restaurantdante.com). With views over the Charles River and gigantic sandwiches, it's a great lunch stop. OK! devoured pasta carbonara and an indulgent chocolate cake!

In Cambridge, we popped into the cool Grafton Street pub (www.graftonstreetcambridge.com) for a crab cake starter followed by a hearty bowl of chicken linguine. Keep an eye out for Natalie Portman and Bruce Springsteen, who've both visited. The nearby OM (www.omrestaurant.com) is a hip lounge-style restaurant favoured by Scarlett Johansson and Ben Stiller. After our lavender martini, we headed upstairs where our waiter Tyrone persuaded us to try the sampling Asian-infused menu with blue prawns pad Thai, sweet potato ravioli and big eye tuna – simply delicious!

Across town, the lively Eastern Standard (www.easternstandardboston.com), a hip brasserie, is the place to rub shoulders with Nick Lachey and the Boston Red Sox players. Other fashionable haunts include the upmarket Italian Rocca Kitchen & Bar (www.roccaboston.com) and Stix (www.stixboston.com), where you can nibble on Asian-flavoured nibbles on wooden skewers.



WHERE CAN I SPA?

You'll find one of Boston's best day spas, Exhale (www.exhalespa.com), just off Boston Common. Here you can sign up for core fusion, an intense yoga-style workout beloved by Cameron Diaz and Jessica Biel. If you want harbour views as well as treadmills and treatments head to the spa in the plush Boston Harbor Hotel (www.bhh.com) – Gwen Stefani and Rihanna are fans. They can lend you a gym kit so there's no excuse!

WHERE CAN I SHOP?

For designer brands, head to Newbury Street in the city's Back Bay district. Just a little walk away is the swish new Copley Place Mall with more than 100 stores including a glitzy Louis Vuitton store. For more designer clothes check out Louis Boston, housed in the former Natural History building on Berkeley Street. Another must is Boston's waterside equivalent of Covent Garden, Faneuil Hall Marketplace, where you'll find boutiques, food stalls and street entertainers. Filene's Basement, at Downtown Crossing, is a Boston institution where you can pick up designer clothes at discount prices.



WHAT MUST I SEE?

For panoramic city views take the lift up to the Observatory floor of the John Hancock Tower or head to the Skywalk on the 50th floor of the Prudential Center shopping mall. History lovers should follow the 2.5 mile Freedom Trail (start on Tremont Street by the Visitors Centre), marked by a red line on the pavement, which leads you around the 16 landmarks that recall the struggle for American independence. Thrillseekers should hop aboard the wild, wet and noisy speedboat Codzilla tour (www.bostonharborcruises.com) around Boston Harbour. If you prefer terra firma, sign up for the Boston Movie Walking Tour (www.bostonmovietours.net), which takes in 30-odd city movie locations.



Above: The roof of the Liberty is great for sunbathing and views of Boston (main). Top right: Boston-born Ben Affleck and his wife Jennifer Garner at a Red Sox game



HOW DO I GET THERE?

KLM (08705 074 074; www.klm.com) fly up to three times daily from London Heathrow to Boston (via Amsterdam) from £299 return. KLM offers a choice of 14 UK departure points including Edinburgh, Manchester, Bristol and Birmingham. Room rates at the Nine Zero (www.ninezero.com) start at £132 per night. Stay at the Liberty Hotel (www.libertyhotel.com) from £164 per night. Rent a car with Dollar (0800 252 897; www.dollar.co.uk) from £112.25 per week. **OK!**

REPORT BY ROWENA CARR-ALLINSON EDITED BY ANNABEL MACKIE, OK! TRAVEL EDITOR PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAMY, GETTY IMAGES, PHOTOLIBRARY.COM, WIRE IMAGE

WHERE IS BOSTON?



Visit www.bostonusa.com for more on hotels, restaurants and sightseeing or pick up a copy of the *Time Out Guide To Boston*.