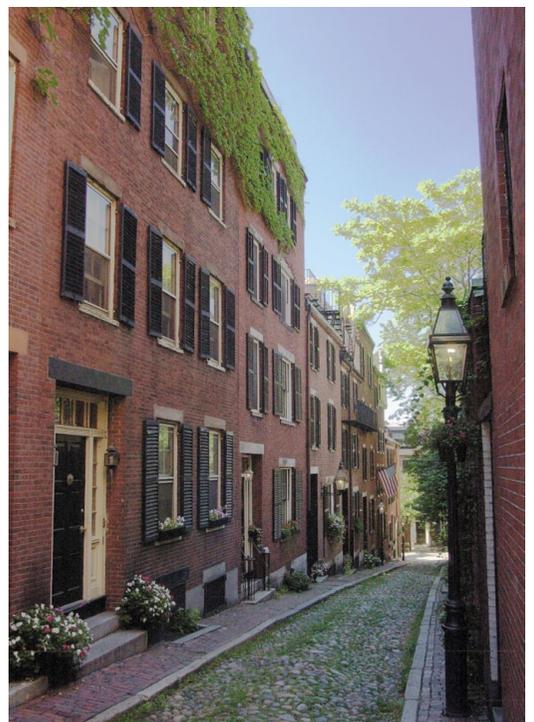


# Our American cousins

**THAT FAMOUS CHRISTMAS TREE IS JUST ONE OF THE LINKS BETWEEN HALIFAX AND BOSTON—THE NEW ENGLAND CITY IS A DESTINATION OF CHOICE FOR TRAVELLING HALIGONIANS**

BY JANET MENDELSON



PHOTOS: GREATER BOSTON VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU



**“Is lobster sweeter in Boston?” That’s all the man from Toronto** wanted to know about my hometown, his next destination after Halifax. I could have told him that we’re sports fanatics ready to talk hockey, baseball, football—you name it—with anyone from anywhere. Or that Boston is a beautiful walkable city celebrated for its history, culture, universities and neighbourhoods redolent with foods from many lands.

Often reminding visitors of Europe, Boston and Cambridge, just across the Charles River, are easy to explore. And given the many parallels to Halifax—cities on hills, ports of entry to a vast continent, with working harbours, long English bloodlines and people who are independent, entrepreneurial and proud of all things local—Nova Scotians are apt to feel right at home. And like Halifax, great seafood is a given. What else is special there?

## GAME ON

Nothing beats the excitement of pro hockey at TD Garden when the Boston Bruins take the ice. Unless it’s when the perennial NFL Super Bowl contender New England Patriots command Gillette Stadium in Foxboro, 50 kilometres away. If your trip is a sports pilgrimage, make sure you have your tickets before you book your flight—they can be hard to secure. Try agencies like [www.stubhub.com](http://www.stubhub.com). Once you are in town, your hotel concierge might be able to help you out. TD Garden, near Amtrak’s North Station, is also the legendary Boston Celtics’ home court. Basketball’s regular season begins here October 29. In Foxboro, Jermaine Jones, star of the U.S. national team during the FIFA World Cup, now plays for the New England Revolution.

## BASEBALL’S HOLY GROUND

Frustrated members of Red Sox Nation are already looking to 2015 but 60-minute guided tours of Fenway Park continue year-round. In the century-old ballpark, you can touch the Pesky Pole and sit atop the Green Monster. Fact: When Fenway Park opened on April 20, 1912, team owners expected to capture headlines but their plans sank that week along with the *Titanic*.

## MAKING WAVES

The world’s largest two-day rowing competition marks its 50th year on October 18 and 19. Some 400,000 spectators are expected to watch 11,000 rowers from around the globe, rain or shine. Bring a picnic and find a spot on the banks of the Charles River, in the shadow of Harvard University. Youth, collegiate, masters, para-rowing and Olympic athletes compete in 61 events. Tip: This event gobbles up hotel rooms. Advance reservations are a must.

## MEAL CALL

For Early American authenticity, and lobster, the Union Oyster House has been a favourite since 1826. Waterside, The Barking Crab is a lively urban clam shack while upscale Legal Seafood (multiple locations) has catered U.S. presidential inaugural feasts. But you can find local seafood employed in a variety of global cuisines as well. A perfect Boston evening might begin with a pre-game dinner in the North End, heavily Italian and the city’s oldest neighbourhood, scented by the aroma of simmering tomatoes and garlic from dozens of cafés. It’s hard to get a bad meal here. Stop in at Mike’s Pastry or Modern Bakery for cream-filled cannoli for dessert to go. The U.S.’s third largest Chinatown begins at colourful Chinatown Gate. It’s a labyrinth of confusing streets dotted with restaurants. Now the center of Asian-American life in New England, the community began in the late 1800s when Chinese labourers came here for construction jobs.

## THE FREEDOM TRAIL

Locals get a kick out of tourists glued to their maps and guidebooks, never straying off this two-brick-wide path. Allow at least two hours to walk the self-guided route to 16 historic sites covering 300 years of U.S. history. Go off the path to explore landmarks like the lobby of the Parker House Hotel where Ho Chi Minh was a baker from 1911 to 1913, and Malcolm X was a busboy during the 1940s. In December, Boston’s Christmas tree, a grand gift from Nova Scotia, commands the city from Boston Common, near the State House, one stop on the trail. Two others are in Charlestown, where during the Battle of Bunker Hill it took three assaults by almost 3,000 British Redcoats to overwhelm the Colonial militia of in the first major battle of the Revolutionary War. At the harbour below, step aboard the USS *Constitution*, nicknamed “Old Ironsides” during the War of 1812. It’s the oldest active-duty ship in the U.S. Navy.

## SEEING SIGHTS

The nonprofit Boston By Foot offers walking tours led by well-informed volunteers. Themes range from literary landmarks to elegant Beacon Hill architecture, Boston’s dark side and a 90-minute tour of the Freedom Trail. Prefer to ride? Several bus and trolley companies offer pricier narrated tours of the highlights, including Back Bay, a beautiful neighbourhood of mansions from the late 1800s that was created by landfill. Among the best are Old Town Trolley, which allows you to hop on and hop off at 35 designated stops, and amphibious Boston Duck Tours that leave the streets for a short cruise in the Charles River.

## HIGHER LEARNING

There are 35 colleges and universities in Greater Boston, 60 if you include technical and for-profits, educating more than 250,000 students. Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) rule the roost. Both are in Cambridge, sprawling, and offer free campus tours for visitors.

## THE T

Known as "The T," the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority operates the oldest subway system in North America. It is inexpensive, clearly marked and a great way to get around Boston. Buy a one-day LinkPass for \$12 US, or \$19 US for seven days, at vending machines inside over 500 stations. The passes give you unlimited travel on the subway, local buses, some commuter rail, and an inner harbor ferry.

## LIVE MUSIC

In world famous Symphony Hall, which offers behind-the-scenes tours, the equally celebrated Boston Symphony Orchestra currently is presenting its 133rd season. In December, they pause for the Boston Pops' month-long Holiday Pops concert series. Purchase tickets in advance at [www.bso.org](http://www.bso.org). Cutting-edge Berklee College of Music might be the Harvard of jazz. The genre's leading artists frequently play the Berklee Performance Center, or at two Cambridge jazz clubs, Scullers and RegattaBar. For acoustic folk, jazz, blues and poetry, Club Passim in Harvard Square is the place.

## THE THEATRE DISTRICT

National touring companies of major Broadway shows regularly come to town competing for audiences with top-notch local companies such as the Huntington Theater and Lyric Stage. But lately some of the most exciting work is on stage at the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge. Several ART productions have gone on to win Tony Awards in New York.

## GREAT ART

The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston is world class. The Institute of Contemporary Art has a spectacular view of the harbor. The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is quirky, Victorian and waiting for return of paintings stolen in one of the world's most famous art thefts. Their empty frames hang on the walls. Harvard University Museums range from fine art to natural sciences. Or browse galleries along trendy Newbury Street. Lesser known is the MIT Museum where the future of technology will blow your mind. Really. Go there. **[E]**

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