

Travel & Outdoors

WISH YOU WERE HERE



Photographs: Kyle Klein

Spirit of freedom

Combine a stay in buzzing Boston with visits to well-heeled Cape Cod for a memorable taste of New England, writes **Bernadette Fallon**

There's a whole lot of history in Boston, where tiny taverns and colonial buildings sit side by side with gleaming skyscrapers and glass towers. The city's founding fathers, Paul Revere, John Hancock and Samuel Adams, were the forerunners of the American Revolution and the instigators of the Boston Tea Party that pretty much kicked it all off.

You can relive the events of that famous shindig at the Boston Tea Party Museum (\$29.95/\$18) and you'll also meet the lads on the city's famous Freedom Trail – a walking tour of 15 historic city landmarks that you can follow by yourself or with a guide. (\$14/\$8).

Dressed in full revolutionary-era costume – no joke in temperatures of over 30-degrees – our guide plays the part of John Singleton Copley, whose father-in-law was the unfortunate owner of the tea that ended up in the

harbour. Copley moved to the UK to escape the unrest and wound up his days in Croydon, South London, where he is now buried. Less than two miles away from my own flat it turns out.

Boston is that sort of place, a place of connections and local colour that is smaller, cosier and more intimate than you expect. Where people chat to you on the subway and in restaurants. And where the history comes alive on the streets. You can drink Samuel Adams beer in every bar, including America's oldest restaurant, Union Oyster House, travel on the Paul Revere shuttle buses and admire the soaring 60-storey Hancock Tower, Boston's tallest building.

But its observation deck has been

We went completely native at Fenway Park, cheering on the Red Sox to victory



Aerial view of Boston, main; a Cape Cod beach, above

closed since the attack on the Twin Towers so on the night we arrive, we make our way to the top of the city's second tallest tower, the 52-floor Prudential Building (\$20/\$14). We get amazing views of a beautiful city sunset and also the history of its immigrants in an exhibition that tells us, here, all are welcome.

It's a poignant admission in the middle of public rages about walls and Mexicans, Muslims and travel bans. But you can't walk around Boston and not be reminded of its immigrants. We get a detailed look into the life of one of them the next day, when we take the Paul Revere

shuttle bus from the JFK/UMass station to the John F Kennedy Library on the edge of the bay at Columbia Point (\$14/\$10). The story of the political rise of the 35th President of the United States pretty much started when his great-grandparents left Ireland in the early 1800s to escape the effects of the Irish famine.

But not all immigrants who came were penniless. Over in Cambridge, you can hang out in the green squares and red-bricked buildings of Harvard university and remember the British Puritan John Harvard who willed his fortune to it. The fortune was made by selling his mother's alehouse in London's notorious Southwark area, a rather unlikely beginning for the Puritan foundation of one of the most famous centres of learning in the world.

We know plenty about the immigrants and colonists but not so much about the people their arrival displaced. Down the road from the JFK Museum in Hyannis on Cape Cod (a more intimate telling of the 'Camelot' legend through rare family photos and papers), we meet Iyannagh, sitting contemplatively on

the village green. This statue to the leader of the Mattachiest tribe pays tribute to the American Indian chief who helped the Mayflower Pilgrims when they landed on Cape Cod on the way to Plymouth. He is the man responsible for the name Hyannis, and also part of the reason Americans sit down to eat Thanksgiving turkey every year.

To visit Boston and not spend time on Cape Cod would be a big mistake. While Boston is that most fantastic of urban spaces, a city with access to beaches, the Cape has over 500 miles of coast and it's very easy to get there on public transport (daily bus service from South Station to Hyannis \$19, summer weekend train \$22). Spending our first night in Hyannis at the Cape Codder resort – ideal for families with its big water-park (family suites from \$359) – it was a one-hour ferry ride from Hyannis Port to the beautiful island of Nantucket the next morning (\$25).

Nantucket measures just 14 miles by 3.5, has 82 miles of coastline and over 800 pre-Civil War homes, more than anywhere else in the USA. It hosts celebrity holiday homers like Tommy Hilfger, Ben Stiller and Google's Eric Schmidt, while Bills Clinton and Gates are frequent visitors. Famous as the whaling capital of the world from the 17th century, visit the Whaling Museum (\$20), close to the harbour to get the history of this affluent island.

The nearby island of Martha's Vineyard is also worth a trip for the beautiful Gingerbread Houses in Oak Bluffs, brightly coloured 19th century cottages that began life as temporary tents in the Methodist summer campground, established after the American Civil War. Afterwards, head for the artists' colony at Sconset, with its flower-bedecked cottages and long beaches, a 20-minute bus ride from Main Street.

Insiders know that the best way to Martha's Vineyard from Cape Cod is on the Island Queen ferry from Falmouth, an easy half-hour journey (\$22). We're staying near the harbour at Shoreway Acres Inn, in a house that was once the home of a sea captain, a short walk from both beach and Main

St (family rooms from \$119).

But despite the history and reminders of home, whenever we hit the restaurants, bars and diners of New England, we are all American, big time. I mean where else would you get a burger served with fried banana, peanut butter, cinnamon and bacon? (Boston Burger Company, Cambridge). Or rock up for breakfast to a diner that's happily serving cocktails before 10am with a menu that is veering towards the length of *War and Peace*? (The Friendly Toast, Back Bay).

We ate doughnuts from Kane's that are ranked 'top 10 in America', sitting by the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway, the former highway-turned-park by the Charles River. We munched seafood on the opposite side of the river at the Barking Crab, fun, raucous and partly open to the elements.

We sampled authentic Italian in the North End, compared the Sicilian cannoli pastries from arch rivals Mike's and Modern Pastry and chose the local Boston Public food market over the more touristy Quincy next door. And we went completely native at Fenway Park, cheering on the Red Sox to victory in what was – we were reliably informed – one of the best baseball games of the season.

We based ourselves in the heart of the city: first at the Boston Park Plaza, a fashionable city centre location in the buzzy Back Bay area (family rooms from \$229); and then in the stylish Langham Hotel, close to the financial district (family rooms from \$359). Both are well located for shopping at nearby Newbury and Boylston streets with their beautiful Victorian brownstone buildings and knock-down bargain finds at Nordstrom Rack.

And everywhere we went we were met with great welcome. The US may be going through a difficult period, but the people there are still friendly, open, curious and delighted to chat to strangers. It's a testament to the spirit and welcome of this great city. ■

Bernadette Fallon is a travel journalist and writes extensively about her trips on Travellingwell.net



The Boston Tea Party Ship and Museum

STAYCATION



Many happy returns

Forty years after opening as a health farm, Stobo Castle is a national treasure, finds Alison Gray

As Scotland's only destination spa Stobo Castle celebrates its 40th birthday this month, here are 10 reasons to book in to the Borders resort.

1) The treatments

There are so many to choose from including a range from Neom, Phytomer and Caudalie, but one of the most popular must be the Top to Toe Face and Body Glow from Stobo's signature treatments menu which incorporates a full body exfoliation as well as an Express and Glow facial. Or if it's a de-stressing experience you are looking for, try the full body massage to iron out all those troublesome knots.

2) The rooms

At its launch in 1978 there were just 16 bedrooms with shared avocado bathroom suites. Today there's every possible combination from singles to triples and even two lodges so you can find something to suit your party whether you are temporarily checking out of the rat race, on a solo sojourn or one of five giggly hens.

3) The food

In the early days of its health farm incarnation Stobo weighed guests on arrival and meals were calorie counted. Thankfully times have

changed and the eating experience at Stobo is now almost as much of a draw as the treatments. There are three dining rooms and you can have breakfast, lunch and dinner in your robe, should you wish. The desserts are amazing – especially the dark chocolate cup with white chocolate and ginger, and the sticky toffee pudding. It's fine – just take the aqua fit class in the morning.

4) The ground floor toilet facilities

This is like no ladies restroom you have ever visited before. There's a lovely lounge area for starters with linen velvet embroidered fabric on the walls and stylish textured soft furnishings, pulled together by regular Stobo designer Lizzie Bell. With a wash and blow dry function in the loos – understood to be a first for Scotland – expect hysteria from the neighbouring stall as confusion reigns and they push all the buttons at once.

5) The Cashmere Suite

Probably the swankiest hotel room in Scotland when it was launched in 2004, a night in this twin double suite with a beautiful patio and views across the grounds, is still a luxurious experience today. Product junkies will be in their element – you can choose from the entire range of Molton Brown's oeuvre. Slosh some of those fabulous potions into the

suite's famously giant limestone bath, installed at a cost of around £10,000 and weighing over a ton.

6) The pleasure of swanning around in a white bathrobe when everyone else is at work

This value of this as part of the Stobo experience cannot be underestimated. As you toddle from aromatic steam room to laconium to outdoor hot tub, you'll find yourself beaming inanely at walls and fellow spa-goers alike. This is brilliant, you'll think to yourself. I need to do this more often.

7) Little extras that mean so much

They wash your car for you while you're indoors, erm washing yourself.

8) The grounds

There's so much to do inside Stobo Castle, that it's easy to overlook the grounds. But one of the key attractions of this place is its bucolic location and it would be a shame to miss the opportunity to take the short stroll to the restful Japanese Water Gardens. Or simply wander outside from main reception and take in the rolling hills and ever changing sky.

9) The gift shop

If you loved a product used during your treatment, you can pick it up here. Their own brand range of shampoos and body lotions has been expanded and has just been redesigned in cool slate grey packaging. A special souvenir to

Clockwise from main: Stobo Castle; the Spa Courtyard; the Japanese Water Garden; the 25m Ozone pool

mark the 40th birthday is a limited edition scarf in a Stobo tartan by Lochcarron of Scotland in 100 per cent lambswool.

10) The cocktail lounge

The jungle themed cocktail bar threw open its doors late last year in the upper space that used to be devoted to the nail bar. With the increasing popularity of shellac and gel manicures it seemed that customers were getting their nails done before coming to Stobo. So the entrepreneurial owner Stephen Winyard decided to react to the market and put in a bar. Right decision. We can highly recommend the classic mojito or Raspberry Kiss (Chambord and prosecco).

So happy birthday Stobo. Here's to the next 40 years. ■

An overnight stay at Stobo Castle costs from £145pp including dinner, breakfast, lunch and use of the spa facilities, or £309pp for The Cashmere Suite with a bottle of Bollinger and chocolates on arrival. The Celebration Spa Day experience, launched to celebrate 40 Years of Stobo, costs £99pp and includes a Top to Toe Face & Body Glow treatment (40 mins), sit down three course lunch, full use of spa facilities and optional use of fitness and aqua classes. For more information see www.stobocastle.co.uk or tel: 01721 725 300

48 HOURS IN

Rovinj, Croatia

Friday, midday

Check into the Amarin Hotel (www.maistra.com, doubles from £175), which sits on the shores of the Adriatic with great views of the old town. Three outdoor swimming pools tempt at this family-friendly four star.

1pm

Enjoy an impressive array of local sashimi and cold meat cuts at Rovinj's Brasserie Adriatic, before salt baked sea bass caught by the local fishing fleet.

3pm

Ease up to the Church of St Euphemia, Rovinj's literally unmissable main attraction. The belltower apes St Mark's across the water, while the views are superb.

5pm

Walk back to the Amarin enjoying the views back to the old town. Stop off at one of the beach bars en route.

7pm

Dine at the Istrian Beach House right on the water, with local regional produce and wines on the menu to go along with a burning Adriatic sunset.

Saturday, 10am

Time to explore further afield. Drive north and check out the family-run olive oil stands on the way to Limski Kanal, before heading down to the nearest Croatia has to a fjord.

Midday

Enjoy lunch at Trattoria Basilica by the yachts now cruising into the up and coming resort of Vrsar. Istrian truffles with pasta are the top starter



with grilled tuna to follow.

3pm

Back in Rovinj wander along Grisia, a winding stone paved street alive with wee souvenir shops, art galleries and studios.

6pm

Take a cushion and place it on the rocks right down by the water's edge at Valentino's as you settle in for a sundowner.

8pm

Dine at the incomparable Monte (www.monte.hr). This creative gastronomic temple in Rovinj's old town spices up the country's superb produce and matches the sparkling dishes with the excellent wines that are getting Istria noticed these days.

Sunday, 9am

Take a last dip in one of the Amarin's pools or enjoy a spa treatment. ■

Robin McKelvie

EasyJet (www.easyjet.com) flies to Pula from Edinburgh (via London Gatwick). Holiday Autos (www.holidayautos.com) offer car hire at Pula Airport.

BARGAIN BREAKS

Channel Island treat

EasyJet Holidays is offering three nights at the four star Pomme d'Or Hotel in St Helier, Jersey, on a B&B basis from £215pp including flights from Edinburgh on 20 October. Call 020 3499 5232 or see www.easyjet.com/holidays

Double destination

Book with Travelbag and stay for three nights in Dubai followed by seven nights in Sri Lanka, with accommodation at the five star Avani Deira Dubai Hotel on a half board basis and the five star Amari Galle, Sri Lanka, on a B&B basis. Prices start

from £1,399 per person including flights from Edinburgh with Emirates and connecting flights. Based on selected travel in March 2019, book by 1 September 2018. Call 0207 001 4112 or see www.travelbag.co.uk

Tales of the Lakes

Take a last minute break to the Lake District and stay at Lindeth Howe Country House Hotel, once owned by Beatrix Potter. From £173pp for arrival on 29 August, you can get two nights' accommodation, including breakfast, dinner on the first night of your stay and afternoon tea. Call 0800 042 0288 or see www.superbreak.com