



BURT WOLF TRAVELS & TRADITIONS BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS



Boston is the second largest port of entry in the United States, right behind Ellis Island. Over 56 million immigrants came to the U.S. through Boston and today, almost one out of every six Americans can trace an ancestor who came here through this town.

The first residents of Boston arrived in 1630, which gives the city an early start in our nation's history. Accordingly, Boston has been responsible for many firsts. Boston is the site of Harvard University—the first university in America. Boston designed the country's first public garden—24 acres of green in the middle of downtown. It opened in 1859.



Boston is the home of the first church in America built by free blacks. It opened in 1806 and was originally called the African Meeting House. When Massachusetts declared slavery illegal in 1783, the town became a haven for hundreds of slaves that had escaped from the south.

Boston built the first public library which opened in 1895. The library houses a diverse collection of paintings as well as books.

Boston is also home to the world's oldest annual foot race—the Boston Marathon. It's been held every year since 1897. Next to winning an Olympic event, winning the Boston Marathon is one of the most important honors in marathon racing.

Boston is also the town where a new form of American music was created. In 1885 the Boston Symphony Orchestra tried to re-create the summer concerts that were being held in the gardens of Vienna. They presented a strait-laced Boston public with a light and humorous program, and the public loved it. Within a century it became a unique American musical institution known as the Boston Pops. It is the most recorded orchestra in the world.

And perhaps in a somewhat less significant category but still important to many people, including me, it has the first Dunkin' Donuts shop. It opened in 1950 in the town of Quincy, just outside of Boston. The donut is not only my favorite pastry but



the most popular pastry in the United States. And as opposed to bagels, which are eaten primarily in restaurants, donuts are eaten primarily in automobiles.

Boston's Beginnings

During the early 1600s a group of strict Calvinists known as Puritans were living in England and being persecuted by the Anglican Church. In 1630 a fleet of 11 ships set sail from England. They were carrying 750 Puritans bound for Salem, Massachusetts.



Eventually, 150 Puritans ended up on the Charles River and named their new town Boston, which was also the name of their old town in England. They weren't the most creative group but they were respectful of their English heritage. On the other hand, nothing lasts forever and 150 years later they had lost all respect for England and wanted to be independent.

At the heart of the trouble was a group of agitators known as the Sons of Liberty, which included Paul Revere, John Hancock, and Samuel Adams. They were totally committed to the idea that they should not be taxed without being honestly represented in government. Their cry was "No taxation without representation"—a totally valid idea and worthy of being reconsidered today.

King George III started announcing new taxes and the colonists started telling him what he could do with them. Bostonians and British soldiers clashed and the American Revolution got started. It's a very important point to the people of Boston and still very much part of the city's life. On the Freedom Trail, guides dressed in 18th century clothing lead tourists along a 2.5 mile ribbon lined with 16 historic sites where America's independent spirit was forged.

The USS Constitution

Another example of American resistance to the British is the USS Constitution. It's the world's oldest commissioned warship still afloat and one of the first ships built for the U.S. Navy. It was launched in Boston in 1797 and its overall length is 204 feet. Most of its 44 guns had a range of 1,200 yards and it carried a crew of 450 men. The bolts fastening its timbers and the copper

sheathing on the bottom were made by Paul Revere. Since 1934 it has been based at the Charlestown Navy Yard.

The nickname of the ship is Old Ironsides, but there's no iron in the construction. The ship is made of Yankee live oak and white oak. The wood is so dense that if you put it in water, it sinks like a stone, but when it was layered on the inside and outside of the ship's hull, it made an "oak sandwich" that repelled canon balls. They bounced off the sides and sent her to victory every time.



Crewcuts

You don't think of men in the military having ponytails but the sailors aboard the Constitution did. And it was practical, fashionable, and a status symbol. The longer your ponytail was, the longer you'd been out to sea, but it also secured your hat when you were working aloft and the wind was blowing. You'd braid the tail of your hat into your ponytail. However, once a month the crew would have their bangs cut, to keep them from blowing in their face. They would line up and the chef would cut the crew's hair, hence the phrase crew cut.

The Four Seasons

While I was in Boston I stayed at The Four Seasons Hotel. It's right in the heart of the city but it overlooks the Public Gardens, which gives it a nice balance—a quiet oasis in the middle of a busy town and the interior reflects the Victorian residential character of the neighborhood. There's a grand staircase that leads up to the hotel's main restaurant, which is where Executive Chef Ed Gannon presents some of Boston's finest



food. The restaurant has received a number of awards for both its cooking and its wine list. On weekend nights the hotel caters to the after-theater crowd with a buffet of Viennese sweets.

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What's Cooking

When the first settlers showed up on the coast of Massachusetts, the shores were covered with lobster—so many lobsters that they were despised as too common a food. Prisoners in the public jail would riot at the prospect of yet another meal with lobster. Indentured servants would stipulate in their contracts of employment that they were only to be served lobster twice a week.

Today, however, Boston is famous for its lobsters. In Cambridge you will find Jasper White's Summer Shack, which, in defiance of its name, is open all year round. Jasper is considered to be the dean of American fish cookery. In the year 2000, he took over a huge space and filled it with wooden picnic tables, banquettes from the 60s, and dangling strings of lights. In the center of the restaurant is a 1,500-gallon lobster tank and cooking apparatus that is so unique, it was given a patent by the federal government. In addition



THINGS TO DO IN BOSTON

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WWW.USSCONSTITUTION.NAVY.MIL

to lobster, Jasper is well-known for his fried clams, old-fashioned cod cakes with beans and his homemade pies.

When you're in town, you might also enjoy checking out the East Coast Grill in Cambridge. It belongs to Chris Schlesinger who has a national reputation based on his three books: *The Thrill of the Grill*, *License To Grill* and *Let The Flames Begin*.

Big Hitters

Fenway Park is the home of the Boston Red Sox. It opened in 1912 and still has the feel of an old-fashioned ballpark. It has a real grass-playing surface and the scoreboard is manually operated.

The Red Sox are very hospitable but that was not always the case. In 1919 they traded a young man named George Herman Ruth to the New York Yankees because he wasn't exactly what they had in mind. It turns out that it was a bad



move—the man was Babe Ruth, the greatest ballplayer in the history of the game. Since then the Red Sox have not won a single World Series. The Yanks have turned out to win more World Series than any team in the game. The situation is known as the curse of the Bambino.

The Big Dig

Boston is also home to the largest and most complex highway construction project ever undertaken in the United States. Officially, its objective is the reconstruction of a confusing elevated highway system that cuts the city off from its historic waterfront. In reality, it is taking the highways and putting them underground, creating high technology tunnels and bridges, reclaiming wasteland, building 200 acres of parks to cover the roads and completing the last piece of the U.S. Interstate Highway System. And at a cost of only 15 billion dollars, it's a real deal.



Dan McNichol, author of the definitive book *The Big Dig* was my guide:

"The Big Dig proves to cities around the world that you can replace your entire infrastructure and still keep the city moving. Businesses still can operate, conventions can still take place, people can live in their neighborhoods and the city goes on even though the largest project ever in this country's history is taking place.

The people of Boston have a love-hate relationship with the Big Dig. They love it when things are going well and--kind of like the Red Sox--when things aren't going well, it's tough to endure. One of the crane operators working on the Big Dig has been in the business for thirty-five years and said, 'I'll probably never see anything like this again in my life.' No one probably will. Not in this country. This is probably the last of the great big projects."

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