Boston, the capital and largest city in Massachusetts, is located at the innermost point of Massachusetts Bay, the mouth of the Charles River. The local Algonquin inhabitants called the area Shawmut. John Winthrop and his Puritan followers established a settlement in 1630 that was originally named Tremontaine for the three hills, but later renamed for their hometown, Boston, Lincolnshire, England.

Boston’s Freedom Trail covers 16 historical sites in the city: Boston Common, Massachusetts State House, Park Street Church, Granary Burying Ground, King’s Chapel and Burying Ground, Benjamin Franklin Statue & Boston Latin School, Old Corner Book Store, Old South Meeting House, Old State House, Site of Boston Massacre, Faneuil Hall, Paul Revere House, Old North Church, Copp’s Hill Burying Ground, Bunker Hill Monument, and the USS Constitution (also known as Old Ironsides). A red brick or painted line connects the sites on the Trail and serves as a guide throughout the city.


Representing different periods and neighborhoods, the Pierce House, Gibson House, Otis House, and Nichols House are among the city’s preserved historic homes that serve as museums.

Boston has many performing arts venues, including Symphony Hall, which is home to the Boston Symphony Orchestra; Boston Opera House, which is the home for the Opera Company of Boston; and Citi Emerson Colonial Theatre, which presents Broadway shows. Citi Performing Arts Center’s Wang and Shubert Theatres host Broadway plays, theater, music, dance, comedy, and opera performances. Emerson College’s Cutler Majestic Theatre and Paramount Center showcase performing arts groups. The Wilbur Theatre features comedy and music performances. Several theater companies perform at the Stanford Calderwood Pavilion at the Boston Center for the Arts, the BCA Plaza Theatres, and the Boston University Theatre, which also presents student and faculty productions. The Charles Playhouse is the current home of two long-running performances, Blue Man Group and Shear Madness. Lyric Stage Company productions vary in genre and style.

Neighborhoods

Boston’s downtown area is a commercial, financial, governmental, and tourist center, where housing options range from historic apartment buildings to modern high-rise towers.

Neighborhoods that border the downtown include the North End, which is surrounded on two sides by the Boston Harbor and features historic brick apartment buildings on narrow cobblestone streets. The West End features large apartment towers with views across the Charles River or towards the Boston Harbor. Massachusetts General Hospital and Massachusetts Eye and Ear are located here.

Chinatown is composed of a dense mix of shops, restaurants, and housing in historic buildings. It is also home to Tufts Medical Center and Floating Hospital for Children. Adjacent to Chinatown, the Leather District is a small neighborhood comprised of 19th-century brick warehouse structures that are now a mixed-use area characterized by loft-living options.

Located along the Charles River, Beacon Hill is one of Boston’s best-known neighborhoods and is home to classic red brick Federal-style houses from the early 19th century that line narrow cobblestone streets. The architecture in the small, historic Bay Village neighborhood often resembles the homes located in Beacon Hill, as the individuals who built the Beacon Hill residences lived in Bay Village and constructed their homes in a smaller, similar style. Bay Village also has narrow winding streets, historic facades, brick sidewalks, and gas street lamps. The historic neighborhood of Back Bay is also situated along the Charles River and is known for its Victorian row houses, brick sidewalks, and the finish line of the Boston Marathon.

The Longwood Medical Area features a mix of dense state-of-the-art hospital buildings, college facilities, and apartment housing and is located between Mission Hill and Fenway neighborhoods. Medical and academic institutions in the area include Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston Children’s Hospital, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Joslin Diabetes Center, Mass College of Pharmacy, Mass College of Art, Harvard Medical School, and Harvard Dental School. The largely residential Mission Hill neighborhood contains traditional brick row houses, triple-deckers (3-story apartment buildings), new condominiums, and the Mission Hill Triangle, which is an architectural landmark district consisting of single-family homes built by early landowners. Mission Hill’s streets wind up and down the steep hill for which the neighborhood is named. The Fenway housing stock includes brick row houses lining the Charles River and Emerald Necklace alongside new apartment and condominium towers near Fenway Park.

Charlestown is located across Boston Harbor from the downtown. Brick and wood row houses, waterfront condominiums, and apartments comprise the housing options. Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital is located in the area. East Boston is also across the harbor and was built on several islands connected by landfill; housing is a mixture of old and new, including many restored triple-deckers.

Across Fort Point Channel from downtown, the South Boston Waterfront is rapidly transforming from historic warehouses and industrial space into a creative, technical, and residential hub for the city. Numerous apartment buildings, condominiums, and micro-unit options have recently been built or are in development. Historic Fort Point hosts affordable artists’ units along with market rate loft-living opportunities in former warehouses. South Boston, or “Southie,” offers newly constructed condominiums and apartments that are joining renovated older row homes and triple-deckers. The South End neighborhood is known for its Victorian townhouses and many small parks. Historic brick town homes and publicly funded housing comprise the South End’s housing stock. Major tenants of the neighborhood include Boston Medical Center and Boston University School of Medicine.

Once home to stockyards and railroad yards, today’s Allston is a mix of commercial and residential properties that are located on tree-lined side streets filled with wooden triple-decker houses. The housing in nearby Brighton varies between Boston’s ubiquitous wooden triple-deckers, more suburban single-family homes, and brick apartment buildings. St. Elizabeth’s Medical Center and the Franciscan Children’s Hospital are located in the area.

City Stats

| City Population | 645,966 |
| Metropolitan Statistical Area Population | 4,681,299 |
| Per Capita Personal Income, Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA (MSA) | $61,754 |

Photographs courtesy of the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau.
Other neighborhoods include the large Dorchester neighborhood, where housing varies from the old Victorian homes of wealthy Bostonians to the multi-family dwellings of later groups of immigrants. Carney Hospital is located in this neighborhood. Jamaica Plain’s residential streets are filled with triple-decker houses in imaginative colors and many mixed-use buildings with retail on the ground floor and apartments or condominiums in upper floors. The neighborhood also features live-work spaces for artists and the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital. Mattapan is a residential area with growing commercial centers and a housing mix that includes small apartment buildings, single-family homes, public housing, and traditional triple-deckers. Roslindale features a mix of single family homes, traditional triple-deckers, and small apartment buildings. Many of the neighborhood’s large colonial homes are being converted into condominiums. Housing in Roxbury, considered the geographic heart of Boston, is a mix of historic brick row houses and traditional triple-deckers. Farthest from downtown are Hyde Park and West Roxbury, which offer a blend of accessible city amenities and quiet suburban lifestyle with mid-20th century single-family homes. The VA Boston Healthcare System is located in West Roxbury.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Boston has parks, playgrounds, athletic facilities, city squares, urban wilds, 3 active cemeteries, 16 historic burying grounds, and 2 golf courses (George Wright Golf Course in Hyde Park and William J. Devine Golf Course at Franklin Park). Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Boston’s Emerald Necklace Park System consists of an 1,100-acre chain of nine parks linked by parkways and waterways, with the Boston Common on one end and Franklin Park at the other. Considered the anchor of the Emerald Necklace, the almost 50-acre Boston Common is the oldest park in the country and the starting point of the Freedom Trail. Attractions in the Common include the Boston Common Frog Pond, which becomes a public skating rink in the winter; spray pool; carousel; bandstand; and several monuments. Another component of the Emerald Necklace is the Public Garden, which is the first public botanical garden in the United States. The 68-acre Jamaica Pond is popular for fishing, sailing, and running along its 1.5-mile shore path. The 265-acre Arnold Arboretum, designed by Olmstead, offers a botanical oasis in the heart of the city. Franklin Park, considered the ‘crown jewel’ of the Emerald Necklace, features 527 acres of green space and walking paths, Franklin Park Zoo, and a golf course. The Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway is a linear series of parks and gardens that connects some of the city’s oldest and most diverse neighborhoods. It is Boston’s only organically maintained public park. Greenway amenities include seven water features, free public Wi-Fi network, and a custom-designed and accessible Greenway Carousel with characters inspired by the drawings of local children.

Once an open landfill, the 100-acre Millennium Park is now home to 6 miles of accessible pedestrian paths, a canoe launch, athletic fields, playgrounds, and picnic areas. The 34 islands and peninsulas comprising the Boston Harbor Islands offer hiking trails, campgrounds, beaches, swimming, fishing, boating, and picnic areas. The Civil War–era Fort Warren is located on Georges Island, and Boston Light on Little Brewster Island is the oldest lighthouse in the United States. Boston Harbor Islands provide critical nesting and feeding grounds for coastal birds.

The New England Aquarium and Boston Nature Center and Wildlife Sanctuary are other Boston attractions.

Boston is home to several major league sports teams, including the Boston Red Sox (baseball), Boston Celtics (basketball), and Boston Bruins (hockey). The New England Patriots (football) and New England Revolution (soccer) play in nearby Foxborough.

E D U C A T I O N

Boston Public Schools educates 57,000 students in 5 early education schools (K–grade 1 or grade 3), 44 elementary schools (K–5), 29 elementary and middle schools (K–8), 8 middle schools (6–8), 3 middle and high schools (6–12), 26 high schools (9–12), 3 (7–12) magnet schools, 8 special education schools, and 2 alternative (at-risk) programs.

Boston has 30 colleges and universities that range from major research universities to special focus and community colleges and fall into either public, private for-profit, or private nonprofit sectors: Boston Bay State College, Brandeis University, Tufts University, Boston College, Northeastern University, University of Massachusetts Boston, Tufts University, Boston University, Harvard University, and Tufts University have colleges of medicine.

H E A L T H C A R E

The following acute care hospitals are located in Boston:

• Brigham and Women’s Hospital: 793 beds (including Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Dana-Farber Cancer Center)
• Brigham and Women’s Faulkner Hospital: 150 beds
• Massachusetts General Hospital: 999 beds (includes MassGeneral Hospital for Children)
• Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center: 649 beds
• Boston Medical Center: 496 beds
• Tufts Medical Center: 415 beds (includes Floating Hospital for Children)
• St. Elizabeth Hospital: 252 beds
• Carney Hospital: 159 beds
• VA Boston Healthcare System: 640 beds
• The Lemuel Shattuck Hospital: 255 beds

Specialty hospitals include Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary for diseases that affect the eye, ear, nose, throat, and adjacent regions of the head and neck (41 beds); New England Baptist Hospital for orthopedic surgery and the treatment of musculoskeletal diseases and disorders (118 beds); Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital for physical rehabilitation (132 beds); and Kindred Hospital Boston for long-term acute care (59 beds).

Additional dedicated pediatric hospitals include Boston Children’s Hospital, Shriners Hospitals for Children–Boston, and Franciscan Hospital for Children.

Other hospitals are located in the surrounding metropolitan area.

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