

# *New England Today* **TRAVEL**

Planning a Boston vacation, day trip, or getaway? From dining and lodging to attractions that are well worth the drive, here are nearly 20 of our editors' picks for the best of Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

## **BEST OF BOSTON & CAMBRIDGE 2018 | ATTRACTIONS**



2018 Best of Boston & Cambridge | Arnold Arboretum  
[Bill Ilott / Flickr / Creative Commons](#)

### **BOTANICAL GARDEN: [Arnold Arboretum](#) *Boston***

The stats on this crown jewel in the Emerald Necklace park system are enough to make any green thumb giddy: 281 acres that are home to 15,000 living plants, including 4,000 kinds of trees, shrubs, and vines. You can wander at will, of course, but to really explore this urban oasis, check the calendar for weekly free events, from guided nature walks to morning yoga beneath the branches. Arriving on two wheels? Thanks to the recent Casey Overpass grounding project, there are now off-street bike lanes for an easier connection from the busy Southwest Corridor path. *617-524-1718*

### **CINEMA OR DRIVE-IN: [Kendall Square Cinema](#) *Cambridge***

In 2016 (the year it actually turned 21), this beloved theater won permission to begin slinging beer and wine—and not just any beer and wine, as it turned out, but stellar local selections from Cambridge Brewing Co. and Lamplighter Brewing Co., among others. Installing the bar was among the renovations completed at this nine-screen venue last year; there's also fresh carpeting and lighting in the lobby and cushy reclining seats throughout. And while it's technically part of the Landmark Theatres chain, Kendall Square Cinema retains an art-house ethos: There's always something intriguing on its schedule, from new indie releases and foreign-language films to festivals and other special events (local premieres, Italian opera). *617-621-1202*

## **FAMILY ADVENTURE: Georges Island** *Boston*

Accessible via a 45-minute ferry ride and the home of spooky 19th-century Fort Warren (supposedly haunted by the “Lady in Black”), this Boston Harbor Island feels worlds—and centuries—away from downtown. Adding to the back-in-time appeal are Civil War-era baseball games with vintage rules and uniforms, while staff-guided tours, kid-friendly concerts, lawn games, and Lego fort-building sessions round out the activity roster—all in all, a day of entertainment well worth the \$43 for a family four-pack of round-trip tickets. 617-223-8666;

## **FARMERS’ MARKET: Union Square Market** *Somerville*

One of the state’s largest farmers’ markets, this ever-expanding bazaar bursts with vibrant veggies and fruits, tasty small-batch treats (from buzzy vendors such as Fox Point Pickling Company, Jaju Pierogi, and Q’s Nuts), and street snacks from mid-May to mid-November. Sure, Union Square lies a bit outside downtown, but you can easily make a day of it: Grab brunch at recently renovated neighborhood favorite the Independent (think sweet potato biscuits and high-octane bloody marys) or head to newly opened Bow Market and keep the artisanal foods and craft beers coming. 617-955-0080

## **NEW CULTURAL ATTRACTION: The Watershed** *Boston*

Turning a condemned factory in the East Boston shipyard into a space for art exhibits and cultural programs is a gutsy move—as is setting the admission price at zero dollars. In honor of the Institute of Contemporary Art’s bold vision for its seasonal satellite, we’ll go out on a limb ourselves and predict that the Watershed, which opens June 27 with a major installation by pioneering California artist Diana Thater, will be a lasting high-water mark for its parent museum. 617-478-3100

## **WALKING TOUR: Bites of Boston Food Tours** *Boston*

For lunch with a side of history, book a tour through this boutique company founded by Bay State native Alyssa Schoenfeld. Currently on offer are the trivia-filled “Sweet & Savory South End” jaunt—featuring snacks and stops at six neighborhood standouts, including cheese mecca Formaggio Kitchen and Joanne Chang’s original Flour bakery—and the “Allston Arts & Eats” ramble around an up-and-coming Boston dining destination, with bonus street art. You’ll leave with a full stomach (we couldn’t finish our mac and cheese at Stephi’s on Tremont, the last hurrah on the South End stroll) and new perspectives. 617-477-0567

## BEST OF BOSTON & CAMBRIDGE 2018 | LODGING



2018 Best of Boston & Cambridge | Yotel Boston  
Courtesy of Yotel Boston

### BOUTIQUE HOTEL: **The Verb Hotel** *Boston*

Think Boston is more Brahmin than rock 'n' roll? The retro-leaning Verb Hotel begs to differ. From the rehabbed 1947 Flxible tour bus parked out front to the in-room Crosley record players and fully stocked vinyl library and music memorabilia in the lobby, this colorful four-year-old crash pad is just steps from Fenway Park and a far cry from buttoned-up Beacon Hill. Adding to the one-of-a-kind atmosphere are the heated, see-and-be-seen outdoor pool and the tiki-inspired tipples at Hojoko, the Verb's on-site *izakaya* (aka Japanese pub). Try the frosé or, if you're traveling with a crowd, the Jasper's Rum Punch. *617-566-4500*

### AFFORDABLE CITY STAY: **Yotel** *Boston*

The first local outpost from this U.K.-based micro-hotel chain is now open in the Seaport, stylishly chipping away at the Hub's reputation for sky-high lodging rates. Snag a "cabin"—Yotel parlance for guest room—for less than \$200 a night and enjoy mood lighting, a heated towel rack, and other smart, tech-y touches, such as self-service check-in kiosks. Not surprisingly, the rooms are on the small side (most are just 150 square feet), which is all the more reason to explore the sleek common spaces, such as the indoor-outdoor 12th-floor lounge. *617-377-4747*

### UPSCALE CITY STAY: **Boston Harbor Hotel** *Boston*

It's the perfect introduction to Boston: feeling the salty breeze and watching the skyline unfurl from aboard a water taxi from Logan Airport directly to this harborside luxury hotel. After docking, the delights continue, as you settle into a spacious guest room replete with Frette linens and done up in elegant shades of blue (some with soaking tubs and all with views). With such a serene setting, you'd be forgiven for staying put—perhaps taking in an al fresco "Summer in the City" concert or movie from the outdoor terrace at the hotel's Rowes Wharf Sea Grille?—but nearby top attractions such as the New England Aquarium and the Boston Public Market also beckon. *617-439-7000*

## FAMILY LODGING: **Kimpton Marlowe Hotel** *Cambridge*

Located a hop, skip, and a jump from the Museum of Science, this property has thought of everything to dazzle pint-size guests. And while welcome toys plucked from a treasure chest and animal-print mini robes are sweet, it's the amenities that families can enjoy together that really put this hotel over the top: a fleet of bikes and tandem kayaks plus two new paddleboards for exploring the Charles River and the city; a kids' menu at the on-site eatery Bambara, helmed by Barbara Lynch empire expat David Bazirgan; fidget spinners and a balloon animal-making magician to entertain little ones during complimentary wine hours for adults. Cheers to that. *617-868-8000*

## NEW HOTEL: **The Godfrey Hotel** *Boston*

This 242-room Downtown Crossing hotel has an older sibling in Chicago and a Hollywood location on the way, but its character is uniquely Boston thanks to the setting (the renovated turn-of-the-century Amory and Blake buildings) and the city-chic rooms (gray plaid headboards, tall windows framing the skyline). Adding to the local appeal: The grandfather of Hub coffee roasters, George Howell, has a serious cafe in the lobby, and on-site restaurant Ruka, turning out seafood-centric Peruvian-Japanese fare, is the newest venture from the Boston-based team behind Yvonne's and Lolita Cocina. Burn off the calories with a free group running tour offered at 6:30 a.m. on weekdays March through November, weather permitting. *617-804-2000*

## ROMANTIC GETAWAY: **XV Beacon** *Boston*

After a long day playing tourist, you and your significant other can be forgiven for pretending that this art-filled boutique hotel around the corner from the Boston Common is your very own swish pied-à-terre. The fact that it's an inn for all seasons only adds to the fantasy: Peep panoramic city views from the rooftop deck in warmer months, and retreat downstairs to burrow under a cashmere throw in front of a gas fireplace (every room has one) when there's a chill in the air. You'll never want to go home. *617-670-1500*

## BEST OF BOSTON & CAMBRIDGE 2018 | DINING



2018 Best of Boston & Cambridge | Mooncusser Fish House  
Courtesy of Mooncusser Fish House

## **BURGER: Craigie on Main** *Cambridge*

Having already garnered ample praise and a cult following, this burger's not easy to get. Chef Tony Maws gets a limited supply of grass-fed beef from a farm in Massachusetts, enough to make 18 patties a night. If you want one, you have to show up early. So why tease you with this unwieldy pick? Because it's worth the effort. Maws spent months perfecting his recipe: the three cuts of beef blended with suet and bone marrow, the miso powder, the perfect grind. He developed a specific bun and his own ketchup. So putting this on your bucket list, if it isn't already, is a fair challenge. *617-497-5511*

## **CHOWDER: Daily Catch** *Boston*

No pasty, gluey stew here. Just a perfectly creamy chowder enriched with loads of clams, bacon, cream, and potato. The clincher: a savory biscuit topper that beats the usual oyster crackers (much as we love them) by a mile. The Daily Catch may be best known for seafood pasta served in skillets, but its chowder is, ahem, quite a catch. *Locations in Boston and Brookline.*

## **DINER: Mike's City Diner** *Boston*

New England is the birthplace of the diner and we have a lot of them, but what makes Mike's stand out is the from-scratch goodness of the cooking. The turkey in the club sandwich and the signature turkey dinner is roasted on-site; the gravy begins with homemade stock. Even the pastrami and corned beef are made right here. Weekends offer a breakfast menu only—but the French toast is so good, you won't miss that turkey. *617-267-9393*

## **DOUGHNUTS: Blackbird** *Boston*

Some doughnut shops excel at coming up with fun flavors (looking at you, maple bacon and pumpkin ale). Others master one form—the cake doughnut or the yeast-raised type—but fall flat on the other. Blackbird wins because it does it all, serving up inventive flavors such as chocolate pretzel and strawberry rhubarb and pulling off all styles with panache. The Boston cream is a dream, and the classic chocolate glazed is so richly chocolaty no one can top it. *617-482-9000*

## **NEW RESTAURANT: Tasting Counter** *Somerville*

This quirky prix fixe concept—which asks you to purchase a ticket in advance, then complete an online questionnaire about your food preferences—is a leap of faith. With chef Peter Ungár behind the stove, however, there's always a soft landing. The food is highly technical but not gimmicky, allowing the flavors of seasonal ingredients—half of which are grown in Massachusetts—to shine in gorgeous compositions such as lobster tortellini with pine mushrooms in beef broth, and miso-marinated duck. Composed plates dazzle, flavors sing.

And at the end of the night, there's no tip to calculate or server to wrangle. You've already paid. All you have to do is float home. *617-299-6362*

**SEAFOOD: Mooncusser Fish House**  
*Boston*

Carolyn Johnson rose to acclaim with 80 Thoreau, a farm-to-table gem whose reputation drew jaded Boston diners out to idyllic Concord. Now, she's brought her clear vision and sourcing genius back to the city to reinvent that regional mainstay, the fish house. Here, the all-local catch is dolled up with a balance of skill and restraint: tuna with chestnut and red wine, monkfish with kohlrabi and tarragon. Like a well-conducted quartet, these flavors play in harmony. *617-917-5193*