

A Geographer's Boston

Boston is an ideal city to explore on foot with key attractions, interesting neighborhoods and rich histories packed into a relatively small area. The conference area at Copley Square is in the center of it all. Whether you have a few hours or a few days, you can pack in a lot. Don't miss the opportunity to do some exploring on your own or with friends and family. Many of the activities listed below are especially kid-friendly.

Take the T (subway)

You're better off not renting a car as all the conference venues are easily accessible and parking spots in the Copley area are scarce. You can take the T from the airport for just \$2.00. Get off at Copley or, if you're staying at the Sheraton Boston, get off at Prudential on the Green "E" line. If you're arriving by Amtrak train, get off at Back Bay station, one block from Copley Square.

Walk the Neighborhoods

Copley Square Area: Copley Square is ideally located with interesting neighborhoods in all directions. Right at Copley Square, you can check out the Romanesque architecture of Trinity Church, the classically styled Boston Public Library, and the starkly modern John Hancock Tower designed by I.M. Pei and Henry Cobb, all within a single view. Indoor walkways lined with over 200 upscale shops and restaurants connect all three conference hotels and join the Copley and Prudential areas.

Back Bay: Walk just one block north of Copley Square to reach Newbury Street, the heart of Back Bay. This area has come a long way from its beginnings as a tidal backwater. It is now a vibrant (and expensive) neighborhood full of stores and restaurants housed in gracious old brownstones. The famous magnolia trees lining Newbury Street should be beginning to bloom at conference time.

Northeast: Head northeast to meander through the Public Garden, up Charles Street to see historic Beacon Hill, back down along Beacon Street to pass the State House and then through the Boston

Common. Head down Winter Street to find Boston's pedestrian mall and shopping center, situated along Washington Street. Turn east towards Faneuil Hall or west towards Beach Street leading to the heart of Chinatown.

To the South: Just south of the Copley area, Boston's South End contains the largest Victorian brick row house district in the United States. In the last ten years, this area has exploded to life with a profusion of new restaurants and shops centered roughly at Tremont and Clarendon Streets.

Orient Yourself

Walk the Freedom Trail: This 2½ mile walking trail of red brick passes through much of the heart of Boston on its way to 16 historic sites including the Old North Church, the Paul Revere House, Faneuil Hall (site of tumultuous revolutionary debates), and the Old State House. Begin your tour at the National Park Service Visitor Center at 15 State Street (T: State Street), where you can pick up materials, including a Junior Ranger Handbook for kids, that help make the American Revolution come alive.

Take a Duck Tour: Board an authentic World War II amphibious vehicle for an 80 minute drive past many of Boston's highlights extending to Charlestown and the USS Constitution, the world's oldest commissioned warship still afloat. The tour includes a splashdown in the Charles River for a water view of Boston and Cambridge. Knowledgeable ConDUCK-tors (get it?) provide commentary. Tours start at the Prudential Center (walk from conference) and the Museum of Science. (T: Science Park) (Adults: \$29; ages 3-11: \$19)

Get An Aerial View: The Skywalk Observatory on the 50th floor of the Prudential Center (walk from conference) provides sweeping views of the city. (Adults: \$11; under 12: \$7.50)

Especially for Geographers

The Mapparium presents a unique opportunity for visitors to walk on a glass

bridge inside a three-story colored glass globe and view the world as it was in 1935, when the globe was completed. Recently restored, debate centered on whether to update the globe, but the decision was made to keep it intact as a fascinating snapshot of a geographic window on the world. The Mapparium is part of the Christian Science Plaza complex, located at 200 Massachusetts Avenue, at Huntington Street (walk from conference or T: Prudential). (Adults: \$6; ages 6-17: \$4) Open 10-4; closed Mondays.

Climate Change Exhibit: The Museum of Science's temporary exhibit "Double Exposure: Photographing Climate Change" opens April 4th, just in time for the AAG. The exhibit pairs aerial photos from 50 years ago with recent images to show evidence of icecap and glacial recession. Museum admission: Adults: \$17; ages 3-11: \$14. Special exhibits may have additional charges. Open daily 9-5; Fridays 9-9. (T: Science Park)

For Kids

The beloved picture book *Make Way for Ducklings* by Robert McCloskey provides a great geographic introduction to Boston. Mallards visit the Charles River and Beacon Hill before deciding to raise their ducklings on the pond in the Public Garden, where a series of bronze duck statues memorializes their quest (and are great fun to sit on if you're young).

Much More

I haven't even mentioned the Aquarium, the shops at Quincy Market, the many sites in Cambridge and surrounding communities, and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, to name a few favorite locations. www.starthereboston.com has much more information. The AAG website also has many Boston tourism links: www.aag.org. ■

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