

**MOON**

# 52 THINGS TO DO IN **BOSTON**



**CITY** STREETS • **OUTDOOR** RECREATION • **WEEKEND** GETAWAYS



**CAMERON SPERANCE**

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# Best of 52 Things to Do in Boston

## Best of Boston Food and Drink

- Eat Italian Food on Hanover Street
- Explore Fenway Beyond the Red Sox
- Feast in Chinatown
- Brunch in the South End
- Explore Artsy Jamaica Plain
- Taste-Test Chowdah
- Nosh on Local Treats
- Go Beyond Beer at a Local Distillery

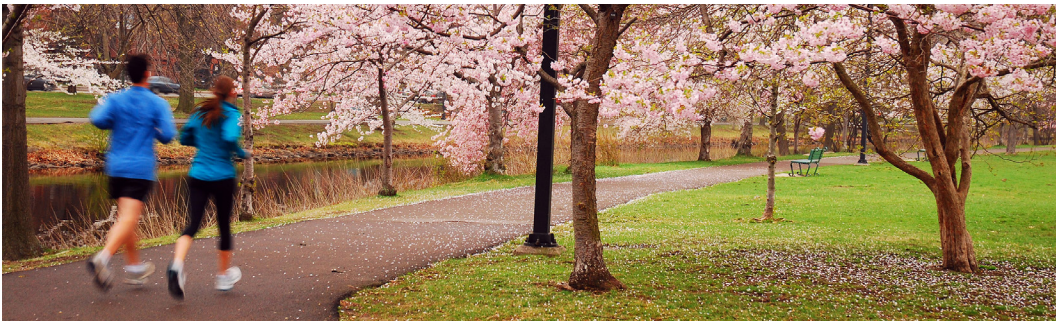




## Best Outdoor Adventures

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- Meander the Rose Kennedy Greenway
- Run on the Esplanade
- Kayak the Charles River
- Go Transcendental at Walden Pond
- Soak up the Sun on Boston's Irish Riviera
- Take to the Seas in Boston Harbor
- Go Whale-Watching
- Get Your Feet Wet at New England's Best Beaches



# 3 Play in Provincetown

*Weekend Getaways • Art and Culture • Outdoor Adventure*

**Why Go:** Colonists, Portuguese fishermen, artists, and members of the LGBTQ+ community — just to name a few — have all flocked to Provincetown on the outer tip of Cape Cod for trips of self-discovery, bacchanalia, and simple relaxation (all are somehow possible to achieve even over a long weekend).

**Where:** The outer tip of Cape Cod at the end of Route 6 • Many find it easier (though more expensive) to fly via Cape Air from Boston’s Logan International Airport or take a fast ferry from Boston’s Seaport or Long Wharf • [www.provincetown-ma.gov](http://www.provincetown-ma.gov)

**When:** Given the number of beaches, restaurants, shops, and drag shows to see in Ptown, I recommend a weekend trip. The drive from Boston is typically 2.5 hours, but it can get significantly longer in summer months due to Cape Cod traffic. The easier (but costlier) way to get to Provincetown is via the 90-minute fast ferries that leave from the World Trade Center terminal in Boston’s Seaport neighborhood or from Long Wharf. The fastest (and costliest) option is a 20-minute Cape Air flight from Boston Logan International Airport.

Whether arriving by land, sea, or air, there is nothing quite as euphoric as that first glimpse of Provincetown’s Pilgrim Monument hitting the horizon. The unofficial welcome mat to Ptown

— a granite tower noting the Pilgrims arrived here before scooting across Cape Cod Bay to Plymouth — lords over the tip of the cape as one of many signs this isn’t like any of its neighboring beachy towns.

A small cluster of fishing boats perennially in Provincetown Harbor and occasionally belching out a foghorn indicates the town hasn’t lost total sight of its fishing and whaling roots. But the blast of rainbow flags, parades down **Commercial Street**—the town’s main thoroughfare—and bass beats from an array of nightclubs in the summer show

the Ptown of today is much more of a haven for a good time than seafood collection.

Provincetown is also a place for personal evolution. First-time visitors often find themselves winding up with best (or new) friends on the sweaty, crowded dance floor of the Atlantic House downing expensive but potent thimbles of vodka soda, with a Kylie Minogue-Madonna



▲ Town Hall



▲ Commercial Street



▲ Provincetown bike rental



▲ Provincetown marina



mashup blaring all around. Seasoned regulars typically migrate to relaxed dinners at venues like the **Red Inn**.

Summer is by far the busiest time to visit Ptown and also the season with the most activities; however, the shoulder seasons—spring and fall—are great times to enjoy Ptown with thousands less people jamming the streets and a greater likelihood of a deal on Airbnb.

There are a few necessities to make a weekend in Provincetown go by easily. **Rent a bike** from one of the local shops (Arnold's Bike Shop and Provincetown Bike Rentals are the most centrally located) to get around town without the headache of a car on narrow streets. Sunscreen is a must for lounging at **Race Point** and **Herring Cove** beaches, but a light sweater is good for windy days — it's not unheard of for Ptown to be 20 degrees cooler than Boston on a spring or summer day.

Restaurants like **Pepe's Wharf Restaurant**, the Red Inn, and **Jimmy's Hideaway** are great seaside, cozy dining rooms. Delightful shops like **Perry's Fine Wines and Liquors**, **Pop and Dutch**, and **Relish Café** offer all the necessary ingredients you never knew you needed for a decadent picnic basket en route to the beach.

The **Province Lands Bike Trail** is a great way to explore the two main beaches while

## Local Lore

The local joke is the Pilgrims stopped in Provincetown Harbor, dropped off the drag queens, and then continued to Plymouth Rock. While I'm not aware of a colonial-era Bianca del Rio, there have been plenty of major names to pass through and get inspired by these sandy shores. Given its remote location at the tip of Cape Cod, Ptown has always held a reputation as a refuge for a variety of people, especially the LGBT community when the rest of the country wasn't as accepting as it is today. Tennessee Williams, Anthony Bourdain, John Waters, Norman Mailer, and Ryan Murphy are just a few of the famous faces who have or continue to summer in Ptown each year.

Author and summer resident Michael Cunningham described it succinctly in his travelogue and highly observational *Land's End: A Walk in Provincetown*: "It is the Morocco of America, the New Orleans of the north." Tennessee Williams was so inspired during his four summers in Ptown that he reportedly worked on several of his iconic plays like *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Glass Menagerie* while in residence.



▲ race point

also getting a roughly 8-mile loop of sandy dunes, ponds, and picturesque views of the Atlantic Ocean. [Art's Dune Tours](#) is a less cardio-heavy way to see the dunes and ocean, and some tour packages even come with a lobster bake at the end.

For the night owls, places like the [Atlantic House](#) (or A House), and [Paramount Bar](#) at the Crown & Anchor are popular dance floors that stay busy right up until last call at 1am.

## Nearby

- Take in culture and oysters in Wellfleet, MA (page xx)
- Get your feet wet at New England's best beaches (page xx)
- Cruise down Cape Cod's Route 6A (page xx)

# 19 Sleuth the Unsolved Art Heist at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

*Art and Culture, Families and Kids*

**Why Go:** The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is both a beloved local cultural institution, a great way to get a peek into Boston's Brahmin society, and way to satisfy your hunger for a slice of unsolved true crime—all under one roof.

**Where:** The Gardner Museum is on the eastern edge of the Fenway neighborhood, where the Longwood Medical Area meets the Emerald Necklace park network. The Museum of Fine Arts light rail station on the MBTA Green Line "E" branch is the most convenient public transportation. [www.gardnermuseum.org](http://www.gardnermuseum.org) 617-566-1401

**Timing:** Even the gardens at the Gardner museum are indoors, so there is no bad time of year to pop in for a visit.

There are plenty of museums in town where you can gawk at beautiful paintings on the wall, but there is only one with a story as infamous as its masterpieces. In the early hours of March 18, 1990, thieves disguised as Boston Police officers gained entry into the museum, tied up the guards, and stole 13 works of art by master artists like Vermeer, Rembrandt, and Degas. In total, the art was worth \$500 million, and the crime still ranks as the largest private property theft in the history of the world. The art is believed to have been offered for sale on the black market periodically since the theft; however, most leads in the case have come up short. The case remains unsolved. Today, you'll see evidence of the incident from the left behind gold frames in the galleries (and enhanced security). If you're able to provide information to get all 13 pieces back to the museum in good condition, the museum is offering a \$10 million reward.

Docents throughout the museum are able to answer questions about the robbery as well as the entire remaining collection. Visitors can also rent a \$5 audio guide, narrated by the museum's director of security, to retrace the steps of the intruders during their heist.

Of course, if you can't solve the mystery of the stolen paintings, there's still plenty of fun to be had at this house-turned-museum. Isabella Stewart Gardner, a Boston socialite who reigned over the city's culture scene from late 1800s into the 1900s, bought the land in order to build a Venetian-inspired home for the art she collected from around the world. The museum opened



▲ a glass ceiling makes the courtyard a year-round option



▲ rare books



▲ statue in the courtyard

in 1903 and has served as one of the city's cultural hubs ever since. Three floors of art galleries fan off from a soaring courtyard with lush gardens. The soothing courtyard hosts a variety of events, including monthly cocktail parties that are intended to attract a younger crowd to visit and enjoy the museum's collections.

The collection itself is quite varied with more than 7,500 paintings from artists like Rembrandt and John Singer Sargent, roughly 7,000 artifacts from places like Ancient Rome, Renaissance Italy, Medieval Europe, Asia, and Islamic states, and about 1,500 rare books, as well as sculptures, silver, ceramics, and furniture. As you admire the collection, you'll notice there are limited description plaques around each work; Gardner preferred to let the art speak for itself.

You wouldn't be blamed for thinking the museum, with its mosaics and stonework in the courtyard coupled with a mix of centuries-old artwork in the galleries, was actually shipped over from Italy, but think again: this is a Boston original. You can thank Mrs. Gardner's attention to detail for taking you on an Italian vacation in Massachusetts.

In addition to the lighthearted attitude about the unsolved heist, you can enjoy other aspects of Mrs. Gardner's fun-loving side. Mrs. Gardner was a devoted Boston Red Sox fan, so visitors in Red Sox apparel get discounted admission (an easy enough task for a local!); and guests named Isabella or those visiting on their birthday get free admission.

## **Nearby/Connect With**

- Tour Fenway beyond the Red Sox
- Hear local music at Boston's live music venues
- Nosh on local treats at Boston's many food halls



▲ the verdant courtyard

## Local Lore

They don't make socialites like Isabella Stewart Gardner anymore. A native New Yorker, Isabella Stewart made her way to Boston after marrying John Lowell Gardner. The couple's world tours inspired Isabella's fashion, bold personality, and enormous art collection. The art collecting led to her eponymous museum, but her personality is almost as bold as the art on the walls. Isabella once wore a Red Sox headband to a very formal performance of the Boston Symphony Orchestra — a major no-no in 1912! Along with the various ways to get a discount on museum admission, Isabella also left rules regarding the collection in her will. Should any of the art collection be rearranged from the way first established, the entire collection, as well as the entire museum property, is to be turned over to Harvard University. That puts greater weight on the museum's "Look, don't touch" rule!