



# Watch out Boston, the British are

**Joanna Walters** explores a revived waterfront with design hotels, great restaurants and a new Tea Party museum

**C**ool new restaurants with exotic menus, cutting-edge art, hip hotels with see-and-be-seen scenes — they've even transformed the smelly old harbour into a trendy waterfront. Can this really

be Boston?

I first came here several years ago and thought it was boring. Now it's abuzz with edgy culture, even if the newest museum showing off the city's most famous moment in history is a little cheesy.

"Huzzah!" the women in the mop cap shouted. That was our cue. "Huzzah," we all shouted back, as instructed.

At the new museum commemorating the Boston Tea Party, visitors don't just learn about the 1773 act of resistance to British rule that stoked the American Revolution, they re-enact it. The previous museum closed in 2001 after a lightning strike — it later burnt down — and the new one opened with fanfare last month. The latest is in a building resembling an old political meeting house, constructed on stilts over a harbour channel where the actual event occurred.

So, in comes an actor in a waistcoat and tricorne playing Samuel Adams, the leading

18th-century American patriot (ie, rebel against the British Empire). With his mop-capped follower coaxing visitors into revolutionary mock-frenzy, he protests against soaring taxes imposed by the Crown on its colonial subjects — not least a new tea tax.

To more cries of "huzzah" and "make Boston Harbour a teapot tonight", they lead us down a gangplank towards replicas of the ships that had carried the tea in question from London, which the rebels wanted to prevent from being unloaded and taxed.

Replica tea chests authentically wrapped in canvas are piled on the decks of the wooden ships, beautifully crafted for the new museum by the same master shipwright who built the vessels used in the film *Master and Commander*, starring Russell Crowe.

As a true Brit I hesitate to rebel against my Monarch — but how can I argue with Adams's rallying cry: "No taxation without representation!"? Grabbing a tea chest I heave it into the sea (they're later retrieved). I'm not really one for audience participation, but I'm starting to have fun.

We go down into a recreated ship's cabin then back to the building, where



Disney-esque but ingenious holographic displays and films explain how this direct action, for which King George III wanted Adams tried in Britain for treason, escalated from a tax protest into their great struggle for liberty — the American War of Independence.

Beyond the youngster-friendly theatrics and high-tech, there's only one exhibit. In a glass case the museum displays an original tea chest that washed up after the Tea Party, one of only two in existence today and rarely seen in public before. It's a stirring relic.

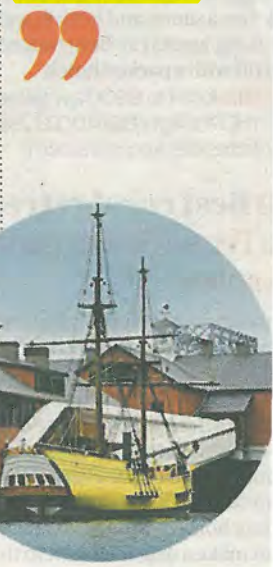
My act of treason has given me an appetite and now I'm keen to explore the fashionable bars and restaurants springing up across the redeveloping Boston waterfront near by.

Long a polluted, post-industrial eyesore that was largely ignored, the harbour has been cleaned up and is embarking on an exciting new chapter.

Soon I'm eating fresh New England seafood cooked in a spicy broth influenced by the local chef's travels in Cambodia. The new restaurant, Trade, is all distressed-chic and boisterous Bostonians, drawn to the businesses and lofts now taking over disused warehouses around the wharfs.

In addition, miles of harbourside walkways have been opened and the council has dug a tunnel for the ugly elevated motorway that used to split city centre and seafont, replacing it with a lush park. There are still chunks of

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VITO PALMISANO / GETTY IMAGES



# coming back

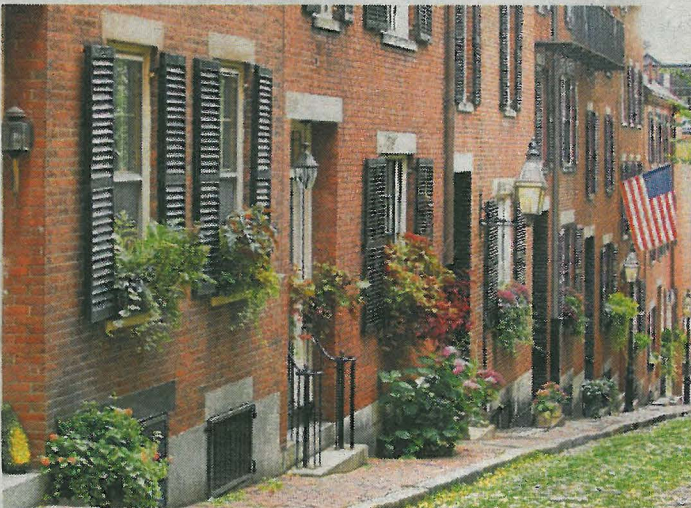
wasteland as the development grows, but to me, crumbly bits help frame edgy debutantes such as the Institute of Contemporary Art or the new branch of Boston's quintessential high-end fashion store, Louis, right on the water.

And there's goings on elsewhere. The new Revere Hotel in the theatre district opened this year on the anniversary of patriot Paul Revere's horseback Midnight Ride in April 1775 to warn gathering rebels that Crown troops were marching upon them. Despite legend, he never actually yelled "The British are coming", but nonetheless these events spawned the USA.

The Revere Hotel's contemporary style isn't as revolutionary but it is swish. And it makes a perfect base for walking the Freedom Trail around the handsome red-brick buildings representing Boston's fascinating rebel history.

The trail begins at Boston Common (where in fine tradition they used to hang witches), one of a series of verdant parks exquisitely known as the city's Emerald Necklace. Another of these green swaths backs onto the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, which haven't been idle during Boston's cultural renaissance either.

The superb MFA, with its 53-gallery Art of the Americas wing open since 2010, is vast, while the Gardner's is an eccentric private collection in an old mansion cramming Chinese antiquities, Titians, Rembrandts, Sargents and tapestries around a Roman courtyard, adjacent to an incongruous but exuberant new wing built entirely in glass.



Be warned — a long weekend isn't enough time to spend here. I wanted to eat at the Union Oyster House, serving shellfish since 1826, including to one of Massachusetts's favourite sons — John F. Kennedy — but I had to go straight to jail.

Unlike its name, the Liberty Hotel in the historic Beacon Hill district used to be a prison. I followed in the reluctant footsteps of the Boston Strangler, the civil rights rebel Malcolm X, and several suffragettes in spending the night within its Victorian granite walls. Unlike them, I was able to walk the original guards' catwalks around the spectacular atrium bar.

In one swoop this innovative throwback embodied Boston's blend of old, new and quirky to cap my thrilling rediscovery of a grand city I'd thought dull — no more.

The Boston waterfront, top; Joanna Walters throws a replica tea chest overboard in a Boston Tea Party re-enactment, far left, and, left, a replica tea ship; above, the houses on Beacon Hill

## Where to stay and eat

### Where to eat

Celebrity female chef-entrepreneurs are creating a buzz in Boston — especially on the waterfront. Barbara Lynch, from tough South Boston, has opened three establishments near the harbour. There's acclaimed haute cuisine at French-Italian **Menton** (354 Congress Street; 001 617 737 0099, [mentonboston.com](http://mentonboston.com)) where a four-course prix-fixe meal costs £63 or a seven-course chef's tasting menu is £100.

Convivial Italianesque lunch-counter **Sportello** (001 617 737 1234, [sportelloboston.com](http://sportelloboston.com)) has a grilled octopus starter with grapefruit, radish and turnip for £9, mains from £16. It and a trendy basement cocktail bar **Drink** (001 617 695 1806, [drinkfortpoint.com](http://drinkfortpoint.com)) are at 348 Congress Street.

Local restaurateur Jody Adams launched **Trade** (540 Atlantic Avenue; 001 617 451 1234, [trade-boston.com](http://trade-boston.com)) this year, drawing crowds for pizza-style flatbreads (£10). Mains with a twist include seafood stew in Cambodian broth (£16).

Prominent local chef Lydia Shire's in residence at the restaurant **Scampo** (Italian for escape; seared Atlantic salmon with campari, £19) at the Liberty Hotel that mixes luxury with original features, including barred doors (001 617 224 4000, 215 Charles Street, [libertyhotel.com](http://libertyhotel.com)), rooms from £215.

For super-fresh local seafood, feast on lobster (from £18.50) and clam chowder at the new **Legal Harbourside** restaurant (270 Northern Avenue; 001 617 477 2900, [legalseafoods.com](http://legalseafoods.com)), near Louis Boston fashion emporium (60 Northern Avenue;

001 617 262 6100, [louisboston.com](http://louisboston.com)).

### Where to stay

The newest hotel is the chic **Revere**, below, (200 Stuart Street; 001 617 482 1800, [reverehotel.com](http://reverehotel.com)), with rooms from £186. The imposing, mirrored-glass **InterContinental** (510 Atlantic Avenue; 001 617 747 1000, [intercontinentalboston.com](http://intercontinentalboston.com)) was the pioneer hotel when the waterfront began redeveloping. It overlooks the harbour and the Rose Kennedy Greenway named after JFK's mother. Rooms cost from £170 a night.

### What to see

The Boston Tea Party Ships and Museum (306 Congress Street; 001 617 338 1773, [bostonteapartyship.com](http://bostonteapartyship.com)) costs £18 for an adult ticket. Clear a day for the Institute of Contemporary Art (100 Northern Avenue; 001 617 478 3100, [icaboston.org](http://icaboston.org)) and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (280 The Fenway; 001 617 278 5156, [gardnermuseum.org](http://gardnermuseum.org)) and Museum of Fine Arts (Avenue of the Arts; 001 617 267 9300, [mfa.org](http://mfa.org)).

### How to get there

Virgin Atlantic (0844 209 2770, [virginatlantic.com](http://virginatlantic.com)) flies daily to Boston from Heathrow. Fares start at £583.39 including taxes.

### More information

[discoveramerica.com](http://discoveramerica.com)

