



# BEAUTIFUL Boston

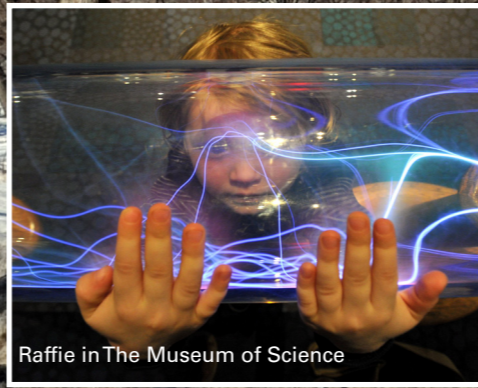
A city with a history of pilgrimages and top education, Boston is a city which has a lot to offer. MIKAL LUDLOW plays the generation game as he heads to Massachusetts with an octogenarian and a three-year-old



Main pic: Boston Common, inset: Mikal and son Raffie in Harvard Yard

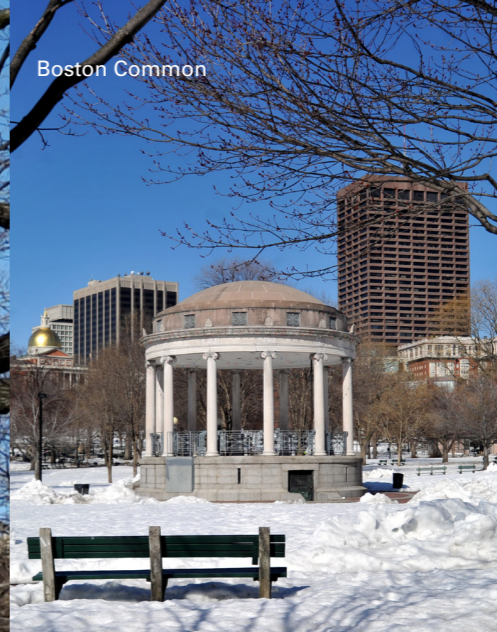


A tribute to children's picture book Make Way for Ducklings



Raffie in The Museum of Science

Boston Common



The Old State House



Charles River complete with ice



One of the Tea ships



Pictures: Mikal Ludlow

**H**AVING 'discovered' Boston in 2011 while visiting North America on our 'babymoon' we always knew it was somewhere we'd return. I say discovered, but perhaps that honour should remain with the pilgrim fathers rather than the returning parents.

Convinced that we were ready for long-haul flights again, we couldn't think of a better place to revisit than somewhere we felt so at home. This time with our son, soon to celebrate his fourth birthday, we knew we'd be seeing a different side to this great city.

On hearing our plans the family mater declared it was somewhere she had always desired to visit, perhaps it's her closeness in age to the Mayflower and Boston's colonial past or just a life-long love of adventure that was the attraction. Never one to rest on my laurels, the thought of travelling with an infant seemed perfectly counterbalanced by adding in an 88-year-old great grandmother.

I thought there may be issues: demanding to sit by the window, temper tantrums, refusing to eat dinner. And I knew that the infant would be hard work too.

Actually, this is artistic licence, as we were all sitting in the middle section, nowhere near a window. Furthermore, our son dealt remarkably well with the whole epic journey without fuss. This may have been helped largely by his love of films and the timely purchase of a portable DVD player to show all his favourites (top tip parents – it works).

Why Boston and not New York? With time so precious and the world so vast, surely New York is the place to go? The two places really couldn't be more different.

Don't get me wrong, they both share a love of culture, theatre, museums and great food – I guess I'm referring to a state of mind and a general feel. Boston 'feels' friendly. It may not be, I'm sure the crime levels match up to any other major US city but it 'feels' friendly, it 'feels' intimate, which is what you want when travelling as a family.



Its sometimes referred to as the 'walking city' which gives a sense of its scale. Home to both Harvard and MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), the colleges seep into the fabric of the city.

Harvard is a great place to start, based in the centre of Cambridge, a district to the north of Boston Central. The architecture is very British and the history is palpable. You can walk in the footsteps of eight

presidents and rub the toe of the John Harvard statue which is supposed to bring luck. On campus is the wonderful Harvard Natural History Museum, offering truly something for all, complete with dinosaur bones and whale skeletons hanging from the ceiling. And maybe more stunning – if only for their sublime accuracy – is the glass flower exhibition. These aren't like something from a posh interior design shop; we are talking picture-perfect to the finest root – all made from glass at the turn of the last century.

Moving back to the centre towards the Charles River brings up the city skyline and our hotel – the Royal Senosta – ideally situated on the edge, not too far from the seats of learning, and a 15 minute drive from the airport.

Recently renovated the hotel is in perfect order, offering large rooms in a modern contemporary style with an air of luxury. It has a lot to offer overlooking the river (sadly not our room) and on the doorstep of some

top tourist attractions, including the Museum of Science. Now our son loves a good science museum and this didn't disappoint. Too vast to contemplate covering all in a day, let alone an afternoon, the highlight was the electricity show creating indoor lightning which mesmerized us all.

The same can be said for the New England Aquarium and specifically the chance to stroke a stingray, something young and old grabbed with both hands, – not literally, as I'm sure they don't like that.

So with one very happy three-year-old the next stop was deemed one for the adults. The Boston Tea Party ships and museum was a look back at the fateful night of December 16, 1773, and subsequent break with British Rule. This is a living history-style museum where you are greeted and taken on your journey by actors dressed up in period-costume; it draws you in.

If ever the saying 'bringing history to life' applies – it's here, including talking oil paintings (yes, they really do and it is very well done).

As soon as you step off the street you are as much a part of the story shouting 'fie' to the King and standing on the recreated boats and being able to throw a tea sack into the harbor.

All very thought-provoking, even for a small person, who asked 'what's the American Revolution and who were the bad guys?'. Try answering that under close scrutiny from a room full of Americans.

This was a holiday of experiences and narrowing the age gap, from sedate strolls through Boston Common and the upmarket area of Beacon Hill, to watching sparks fly and stingrays swim. It doesn't matter if you are three, 23 or 103, some things are just amazing and in a grown-up city with fun at heart, you have enough outlets for what makes us different and even more for what makes us the same.