

Planning Your Trip to Boston

Boston enjoys a reputation for being the “most European” American city. That means it’s small, cultured, traditional, and (by American, not European, standards) old. It abounds with historic sites and college students, traditional hash houses and chic watering holes, beloved cultural institutions and lively outdoor diversions. In fact, if it weren’t for Boston’s less enjoyable European-style traits—the cost of living, the traffic, and the fact that we sometimes can’t understand a word anyone is saying—we’d probably never go anywhere else.

This chapter addresses the practical issues that arise after you select a destination. One topic you probably won’t need to tackle is renting a car. If you need to venture beyond Boston and Cambridge, you’ll find the national chains represented at and near the airport and in town. They include **Alamo** (☎ 800/327-9633), **Avis** (☎ 800/831-2847), **Budget** (☎ 800/527-0700), **Dollar** (☎ 800/800-4000), **Enterprise** (☎ 800/325-8007), **Hertz** (☎ 800/654-3131), **National** (☎ 800/227-7368), and **Thrifty** (☎ 800/367-2277).

1 Visitor Information

The **Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau**, 2 Copley Place, Suite 105, Boston, MA 02116-6501 (☎ **888/SEE-BOSTON** or 617/536-4100, 0171/431-3434 in the U.K.; www.bostonusa.com), offers a comprehensive visitor information kit (\$10) and a *Kids Love Boston* guide (\$5). The kit includes a travel planner, a guidebook, a map, pamphlets, and coupons for shopping, dining, attraction, and nightlife discounts. Smaller guides to specific seasons or events are often available free.

For information about Cambridge, contact the **Cambridge Office for Tourism**, 4 Brattle St., Suite 208, Cambridge, MA 02138 (☎ **800/862-5678** or 617/441-2884; fax 617/441-7736; www.cambridge-usa.org).

The **Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism**, 10 Park Plaza, Suite 4510, Boston, MA 02116 (☎ **800/227-MASS** or

617/973-8500; fax 617/973-8525; www.massvacation.com), distributes information about the whole state. Its free *Getaway Guide* includes attractions and lodgings listings, a map, and a calendar.

2 When to Go

Boston attracts throngs of visitors year-round. Between April and November, there are hardly any slow times. Make reservations as early as possible if you plan to visit during traditionally busy periods.

The periods around college graduation (May and early June) and major citywide events (see “Boston Calendar of Events” below) are especially busy. Spring and fall are popular times for conventions. Families pour into the area in July and August, creating long lines at many attractions. Summer isn’t the most expensive time to visit, though: Foliage season, from mid-September to early November, when many leaf-peepers stay in the Boston area or pass through on the way to northern New England, is a huge draw. December is less busy but still a convention time—look out for weekend bargains.

The “slow” season is January through March, when many hotels offer great deals, especially on weekends. However, this is when unpredictable weather plagues the Northeast (often affecting travel schedules) and when some suburban attractions close for the winter.

WEATHER

Given New England’s famously capricious climate, dressing in layers is always a good idea. Spring and fall are the best bets for moderate temperatures, but spring (also known as mud season) is brief. It doesn’t usually settle in until early May, and snow sometimes falls in April. Summers are hot, especially in July and August, and can be uncomfortably humid. Fall is when you’re most likely to catch a comfortable run of dry, sunny days and cool nights. Winters are cold and usually snowy—bring a warm coat and sturdy boots.

BOSTON CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The **Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau** (☎ 888/SEE-BOSTON or 617/536-4100; www.bostonusa.com) operates a regularly updated hot line that describes ongoing and upcoming events. The **Mayor’s Office of Special Events, Tourism & Film** (☎ 617/635-3911; www.cityofboston.gov/calendar) can provide information about specific happenings. If you’re planning at the last minute, the “Sidekick” section of the daily *Boston Globe* and the “Edge” section of the Friday *Boston Herald* are always packed with ideas.

January

Martin Luther King, Jr., Birthday Celebration, various locations. Events include musical tributes, gospel concerts, museum

displays and programs, readings, speeches, and panel discussions. Check special listings in the *Boston Globe* "Sidekick" section for specifics. Third Monday in January.

Boston DineAround, various locations. Restaurants throughout the area entertain celebrity chefs and cookbook authors, who design special dinners and take turns behind the stove. Other events include classes, demonstrations, and book signings. Call the Convention & Visitors Bureau (☎ **888/SEE-BOSTON**) or visit www.bostondinearound.com. End of January.

Boston Wine Festival, Boston Harbor Hotel and other locations. Tastings, classes, lectures, receptions, and meals provide a lively liquid diversion throughout winter. Call the festival reservation line (☎ **888/660-WINE** or 617/330-9355; www.bostonwinefestival.net) for details. January to early April.

Chinese New Year, Chinatown. The dragon parade (which draws a big crowd no matter how cold it is), fireworks, and raucous festivals are part of the celebration. Special programs take place at the **Children's Museum** (☎ **617/426-8855**; www.bostonkids.org). Depending on the Chinese lunar calendar, the holiday falls between January 21 and February 19. In 2007, it's February 18; in 2008, it's February 7.

February

Black History Month, various locations. Programs include special museum exhibits, children's activities, concerts, films, lectures, discussions, readings, and tours of the Black Heritage Trail led by National Park Service rangers (☎ **617/742-5415**; www.nps.gov/boaf). All month.

School Vacation Week, various locations. The slate of activities includes special exhibitions and programs, plays, concerts, and tours. Contact individual attractions for information on programs and extended hours. Third week of February.

March

New England Spring Flower Show, Bayside Expo Center, Dorchester. This annual harbinger of spring, presented by the **Massachusetts Horticultural Society** (☎ **617/933-4900**; www.masshort.org), draws huge crowds starved for a glimpse of green. Plan to take public transit. Second or third week of March.

April

Big Apple Circus (www.bigapplecircus.org), City Hall Plaza, Government Center. The New York-based "one-ring wonder" performs in a heated tent with all seating less than 50 feet from the ring. Proceeds support the Children's Museum. Visit the museum

box office or contact Ticketmaster (☎ 617/931-ARTS; www.ticketmaster.com). Early April to early May.

Red Sox Opening Day, Fenway Park. Even if your concierge is a magician, this is an extremely tough ticket. Check ahead (☎ 877/REDSOX-9; www.redsox.com) when tickets for the season go on sale in December. If you can't get tickets to Opening Day, try to see the game on **Patriots Day**, the third Monday in April. It begins at 11am so spectators can watch the Boston Marathon afterward. Early and mid-April.

Swan Boats Return to the Public Garden. Since their introduction in 1877, the Swan Boats (☎ 617/522-1966; www.swanboats.com) have been a symbol of Boston. Like real swans, they go away for the winter. Saturday before Patriots Day.

Patriots Day, North End, Lexington, and Concord. Festivities commemorate and reenact the events of April 18 and 19, 1775. Lanterns glow in the steeple of the **Old North Church** (☎ 617/523-6676; www.oldnorth.com). Participants dressed as Paul Revere and William Dawes ride from the **Paul Revere House** (☎ 617/523-2338; www.paulreverehouse.org) in the North End to Lexington and Concord to warn the Minutemen that “the regulars are out” (not that “the British are coming”—most colonists considered themselves British). Musket fire rings out on the Battle Green in Lexington and then at the North Bridge in Concord. Contact the **Lexington Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center** (☎ 781/862-1450; www.lexingtonchamber.org), or the **Concord Chamber of Commerce** (☎ 978/369-3120; <http://concordchamberofcommerce.org>), for information on battle reenactments. Third Monday of April.

Boston Marathon, Hopkinton, Massachusetts, to Boston. International stars and local amateurs join in the world's oldest and most famous marathon (www.bostonmarathon.org). The noon start means that elite runners hit Boston around 2pm; weekend warriors stagger across the Boylston Street finish line as much as 6 hours later. Third Monday of the month.

Freedom Trail Week, various locations in Boston, Cambridge, Lexington, and Concord. This is another school vacation week, with plenty of crowds and diversions. Family-friendly events include tours, concerts, talks, and other programs related to Patriots Day, the Freedom Trail, and the American Revolution. Third week of April.

May

Museum-Goers' Month, various locations. Contact individual museums for details and schedules of special exhibits, lectures, and events. See chapter 5. All month.

Street Performers Festival, Faneuil Hall Marketplace. Everyone but the pigeons gets into the act as musicians, magicians, jugglers, sword swallows, and artists strut their stuff. Late May.

June

Boston Pride March, Back Bay to Beacon Hill (☎ 617/262-9405; www.bostonpride.org). The largest gay pride parade in New England is the highlight of a weeklong celebration of diversity. The parade, on the second Sunday of the month, starts at Copley Square and ends on Boston Common. Early June.

Dragon Boat Festival, Charles River near Harvard Square, Cambridge (☎ 617/349-4380; www.bostondragonboat.org). Teams of paddlers synchronized by a drummer propel boats with dragon heads and tails as they race 500m (1,640 ft.). The winners go to the national championships; the spectators go to a celebration of Chinese culture and food on the shore. Second or third Sunday of June.

Central Square World's Fair, Cambridge (☎ 617/868-3247; www.cambridgema.gov). This celebration of unity and diversity features the usual food, crafts, and kids' activities—and a twist that elevates the event far above the usual street festival: local and national musicians (rock, jazz, and blues). Early or mid-June.

Cambridge River Festival (☎ 617/349-4380; www.cambridgeartscouncil.org), Memorial Drive from John F. Kennedy Street to Western Avenue. A salute to the arts, the festival incorporates live music, dancing, children's activities, crafts and art exhibits, and international food on the banks of the Charles. Mid-June.

July

Boston Harborfest, downtown, the waterfront, and the Harbor Islands. The city puts on its Sunday best for the Fourth of July, a gigantic weeklong celebration of Boston's maritime history. Events surrounding Boston Harborfest (☎ 617/227-1528; www.bostonharborfest.com) include concerts, children's activities, cruises, fireworks, the Boston Chowderfest, guided tours, talks, and USS *Constitution's* turnaround cruise. Beginning of the month (June 29–July 4, 2007).

Boston Pops Concert and Fireworks Display, Hatch Shell, on the Esplanade. Spectators start showing up at dawn (overnight camping is not permitted) for a good spot on the lawn and spend

all day waiting for the sky to get dark enough for fireworks. Others show up at the last minute—the Cambridge side of the river, near Kendall Square, and the Longfellow Bridge are good spots to watch the spectacular aerial show. The program includes the *1812 Overture*, with real cannon fire and church bells. For details, check the website (www.july4th.org). July 4.

August

Italian-American Feasts, North End. These weekend street fairs begin in July and end in late August with the two biggest: the Fisherman's Feast and the Feast of St. Anthony. The sublime (fresh seafood, live music, dancing in the street) mingles with the ridiculous (carnival games, tacky T-shirts, fried-dough stands) to leave a lasting impression of fun and indigestion. Visit www.fishermansfeast.com or www.saintanthonysfeast.com for a preview. Weekends throughout August.

September

Boston Film Festival (☎ 617/331-9460; www.bostonfilmfestival.org), various locations. Independent films continue on the festival circuit or make their premieres, sometimes following a lecture by an actor or filmmaker. Most screenings are open to the public without advance tickets. Mid-September.

October

Salem Haunted Happenings, various locations. Parades, parties, a special commuter-rail ride from Boston, fortune-telling, cruises, and tours lead up to a ceremony on Halloween. Contact **Destination Salem** (☎ 877/SALEM-MA) or check the website (www.hauntedhappenings.org) for specifics. All month.

Head of the Charles Regatta, Boston and Cambridge. High school, college, and postcollegiate rowing teams and individuals—some 4,000 in all—contest the 4-mile race (☎ 617/868-6200; www.hocr.org) in front of hordes of fans along the banks of the Charles River and on the bridges spanning it. Late October.

An Evening with Champions, Bright Athletic Center, Allston. World-class ice skaters and promising local students stage three performances to benefit the Jimmy Fund, the children's fundraising arm of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Sponsored by Harvard's **Eliot House** (☎ 617/493-8172; www.hcs.harvard.edu/~ewc). Late October.

December

The Nutcracker, Opera House, Boston. Boston Ballet's annual holiday extravaganza is one of the country's biggest and best. This is *the* traditional way to expose young Bostonians (and visitors) to

culture, and the spectacular sets make it practically painless. Visit the website (www.bostonballet.org) for more info. For tickets, call **Tele-charge** (☎ 800/447-7400 or TTY 888/889-8587; www.telecharge.com) as soon as you plan your trip, ask whether your hotel offers a *Nutcracker* package, or cross your fingers and visit the box office when you arrive. All month.

Boston Tea Party Reenactment, Old South Meeting House (☎ 617/482-6439; www.oldsouthmeetinghouse.org) and Tea Party Ship and Museum, Congress Street Bridge (☎ 617/338-1773; www.bostonteatartyship.com). Chafing under British rule, American colonists rose up on December 16, 1773, to strike a blow where it would cause real pain—in the pocketbook. A recreation of the pre-party rally takes place at the meeting house; call ahead to see whether the ship has reopened. Mid-December.

Black Nativity, Converse Hall, Tremont Temple Baptist Church, 88 Tremont St. (☎ 617/723-3486; www.blacknativity.org). Poet Langston Hughes wrote the “gospel opera,” and a cast of more than 100 brings it to life. Most weekends in December.

Christmas Revels, Sanders Theatre, Cambridge. This multicultural celebration of the winter solstice features the holiday customs of a different culture each year. Recent themes have included Victorian England and Romany Gypsies. Be ready to sing along. For information, contact the **Revels** (☎ 617/972-8300; www.revels.org); for tickets, call the **box office** (☎ 617/496-2222). Last 2 weeks of the month.

First Night, Back Bay and the waterfront. This is the original arts-oriented, no-alcohol, citywide New Year’s Eve celebration. It begins in the early afternoon and includes a parade, ice sculptures, art exhibitions, theatrical performances, and indoor and outdoor entertainment. Some attractions require tickets, but for most you just need a First Night button, available for \$15 or so at visitor centers and stores around the city. The carousing wraps up at midnight with fireworks over the harbor. For details, contact **First Night** (☎ 617/542-1399; www.firstnight.org) or check the newspapers when you arrive. December 31.

3 Specialized Travel Resources

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Boston, like all other U.S. cities, has taken the required steps to provide access for people with disabilities. Hotels must provide accessible rooms, and museums and street curbs have ramps for wheelchairs. Some smaller accommodations, including most B&Bs, have not

been retrofitted. In older neighborhoods (notably Beacon Hill and the North End), you'll find many narrow streets, cobbled thoroughfares, and brick sidewalks. In the construction areas that dot the entire metropolitan area, especially in downtown Boston, you may have to negotiate uneven road surfaces and pedestrian detours.

Newer stations on the Red, Blue, and Orange lines of the **subway** are wheelchair accessible; the transit authority is currently converting the Green Line (which uses trolleys). Contact the **Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)** (☎ 800/392-6100 or 617/222-3200; www.mbta.com) to see if the stations you need are accessible. All MBTA **buses** have lifts or kneelers; call ☎ 800/LIFT-BUS for more information. Some bus routes are wheelchair accessible at all times, but you might have to make a reservation as much as a day in advance for others. To learn more, contact the **Office for Transportation Access**, 145 Dartmouth St., Boston, MA 02116 (☎ 617/222-5438 or TTY 617/222-5854).

One taxi company with wheelchair-accessible vehicles is **Boston Cab** (☎ 617/536-5010); advance notice is recommended. In addition, an **Airport Accessible Van** (☎ 617/561-1769) operates within Logan Airport.

An excellent resource is **VSA Arts Massachusetts**, 2 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116 (☎ 617/350-7713, TTY 617/350-6836; www.vsamass.org). Its comprehensive website (www.accessexpressed.net) includes general access information and specifics about more than 200 cultural facilities.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

Overall, Boston is a gay- and lesbian-friendly destination, with a live-and-let-live attitude that long ago replaced the city's legendary Puritanism. And if you don't already know that Massachusetts is the only state in which same-sex marriage is legal—hey, where've you been?

The **Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Helpline** (☎ 888/340-4528 or 617/267-9001) offers information Monday through Friday from 6 to 11pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 5 to 10pm. **Bay Windows** (☎ 617/266-6670; www.baywindows.com) is a weekly newspaper that covers New England and publishes cultural listings. The weekly **Boston Phoenix** publishes cultural and nightlife listings and has a gay-interest area on its website (www.bostonphoenix.com).

An excellent guide to local gay- and lesbian-owned and -friendly businesses is the **Pink Pages**, 66 Charles St., #283, Boston, MA

02114 (☎ **800/338-6550**; www.pinkweb.com). You can also contact the **Boston Alliance of Gay and Lesbian Youth** (☎ **617/227-4313**; www.bagly.org) and the **Bisexual Resource Center** (☎ **617/424-9595**; www.biresource.org).

SENIOR TRAVEL

Mention that you're a senior citizen when you make your travel reservations. Boston-area businesses offer many discounts to seniors with identification (a driver's license, passport, or other document that shows your date of birth). The cut-off age is usually 65, sometimes 62. Restaurants, museums, and movie theaters may offer special deals. Restaurants and theaters usually offer discounts only at off-peak times, but museums and other attractions offer reduced rates at all times.

With the **Senior Pass**, seniors can ride the MBTA **subways (the T)** for 35¢ (a 90¢ savings) and **local buses** for 25¢ (a 65¢ savings). On zoned and express buses and on the commuter rail, the senior fare is half the regular fare. Fares and discounts were current at press time but may change with T fares. The Senior Pass is available for 50¢ on weekdays from 8:30am to 5pm at the Back Bay MBTA station, or by mail from the Office for Transportation Access, 145 Dartmouth St., Boston, MA 02116 (☎ **617/222-5438** or TTY 617/222-5854). Enclose a 1-by-1-inch photo and 50¢.

Members of **AARP**, 601 E. St. NW, Washington, DC 20049 (☎ **888/687-2277**; www.aarp.org), get discounts on hotels, airfares, and car rentals. AARP offers members a wide range of benefits, including *AARP: The Magazine* and a monthly newsletter. Anyone over 50 can join.

FAMILY TRAVEL

Boston is a top-notch family destination, with tons of activities that appeal to children and relatively few that don't. Every hotel and most restaurants in the area have extensive experience meeting kids' needs. Throughout this book, the "Kids" icon flags destinations that are especially welcoming and interesting to youngsters. Also consult the boxes on "Family-Friendly Hotels" (p. 48) and "Family-Friendly Restaurants" (p. 89), and the section "Especially for Kids" (p. 123). Children (usually under 18, sometimes under 12) can stay free in their parent's hotel room when using existing bedding. Most hotels charge for cots, and some charge for cribs. Always ask whether the hotel you're considering has special offers for families. Many hotels offer family packages that include a room or a suite, breakfast, and parking, plus discount coupons for museums and restaurants.

Online Traveler's Toolbox

Before I share a few of my favorite websites, here's a crucial piece of advice: Double-check information that you find on the web. If you find a description of an intriguing establishment or event, a quick phone call to ensure that the information is up-to-date can save you a lot of trouble. Following is a selection of other online tools to bookmark and use:

- **Airplane Food** (www.airlinemeals.net)
- **Airplane Seating** (www.seatguru.com and www.airlinequality.com)
- **Boston.com** (www.boston.com)
- **Bostonist** (www.bostonist.com)
- **Boston-to-English Dictionary** (www.boston-online.com/glossary.html)
- **Citysearch** (<http://boston.citysearch.com>)
- **Maps** (www.mapquest.com and <http://maps.google.com>)
- **MBTA** subway, trolley, bus, ferry, and commuter-rail schedules and route maps (www.mbta.com)
- **National Park Service** (www.nps.gov)
- **Time and Date** (www.timeanddate.com)
- **Travel Warnings** (<http://travel.state.gov>, www.fco.gov.uk/travel, www.voyage.gc.ca, and www.dfat.gov.au/consular/advice)
- **Visa ATM Locator** (www.visa.com), **MasterCard ATM Locator** (www.mastercard.com)
- **Weather** (www.intellicast.com and www.weather.com)

The **Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau** (☎ 888/SEE-BOSTON; www.bostonusa.com) sells a *Kids Love Boston* guide (\$5) filled with travel information for families.

4 Getting There

The major U.S. carriers that serve Boston are **AirTran** (☎ 800/247-8726; www.airtran.com), **American** (☎ 800/433-7300; www.aa.com), **America West** (☎ 800/235-9292; www.americawest.com), **ATA** (☎ 800/225-2995; www.ata.com), **Continental** (☎ 800/525-0280; www.continental.com), **Delta** (☎ 800/221-1212; www.delta.com), **JetBlue** (☎ 800/538-2583; www.jetblue.com), **Midwest** (☎ 800/452-2022; www.midwestexpress.com), **Northwest** (☎ 800/225-2525; www.nwa.com), **United** (☎ 800/241-6522; www.united.com), and **US Airways** (☎ 800/428-4322; www.usairways.com).

The domestic discount airline **Southwest** (☎ 800/435-9792; www.southwest.com) and several other carriers serve Manchester, NH, and Providence, RI, often at fares that undercut prices to Boston.

If you're not renting a car, try to fly into Manchester. **Manchester Boston Regional Airport** (☎ 603/624-6556; www.flymanchester.com; airport code MHT) is about 56 miles north of Boston. **Vermont Transit** (☎ 800/552-8737; www.vermonttransit.com) runs buses to Boston's South Station and Logan. **T. F. Green Airport** (☎ 888/268-7222; www.pvdairport.com; airport code PVD) is in the Providence suburb of Warwick, about 60 miles south of Boston. There is no direct public transit between Boston and T. F. Green.

GETTING INTO TOWN FROM THE AIRPORT

Logan International Airport, or "Logan" (☎ 800/23-LOGAN; www.massport.com/logan; airport code BOS) is in East Boston at the end of the Sumner, Callahan, and Ted Williams tunnels, 3 miles across the harbor from downtown. Logan has four terminals—A, B, C, and E (there's no D)—that each have ATMs, Internet kiosks, pay phones with dataports, fax machines, and an information booth (near baggage claim). Terminals C and E have bank branches that handle currency exchange. Terminal C has a children's play space, and its information booth is a visitor service center where staff members can help make hotel and restaurant reservations, plan tours, provide convention information, and buy theater and sports tickets.

The Massachusetts Port Authority, or **MassPort** (☎ 800/23-LOGAN; www.massport.com), coordinates airport transportation. The toll-free line provides information about getting to the city and to many nearby suburbs. It's available 24 hours a day and is staffed weekdays from 8am to 7pm.

The ride into town takes 10 to 45 minutes. Except at off hours, such as early on weekend mornings, driving is the slowest way to get into central Boston. If you must travel during rush hours or on Sunday afternoon, allow plenty of extra time or plan to take the subway or water taxi (and pack accordingly).

You can get into town by bus, subway, cab, van, or boat. The Silver Line **bus** stops at each airport terminal and runs directly to South Station, where you can connect to the Red Line subway and the commuter rail to the southern suburbs. It takes about 20 minutes, not including waiting time. The **subway (the T)** takes just

10 minutes to reach downtown, but first you have to reach the subway. Free **shuttle buses** run from each terminal to the Airport station on the Blue Line of the T from 5:30am to 1am every day, year-round. The Blue Line stops at Aquarium, State Street, and Government Center, downtown points where you can exit or transfer to the other lines. The fare for the bus or subway was \$1.25 at press time.

Just getting into a **cab** at the airport costs \$8.25 (\$6.50 in fees plus the initial \$1.75 fare). The total fare to downtown or the Back Bay runs \$20 to \$30. Depending on traffic, the driver might use the Ted Williams Tunnel for destinations outside downtown, such as the Back Bay. On a map, this doesn't look like the fastest route, but often it is. You can also try the **Share-A-Cab booths** at each terminal and save up to half the fare.

The Logan Airport website (www.massport.com/logan) lists numerous companies that operate **shuttle-van service** to local hotels. One-way prices start at \$12 per person and are subject to fuel surcharges as gas prices fluctuate.

The trip to the downtown waterfront in a weather-protected **boat** takes about 7 minutes and costs \$10 one-way. The free no. 66 shuttle bus connects the airport terminals to the Logan ferry dock. A commuter ferry and two on-call water-taxi services serve downtown (though the dedicated water shuttle is defunct). The ferry company, **Harbor Express** (☎ 617/222-6999; www.harborexpress.com), runs to Long Wharf, behind the Marriott Long Wharf hotel. It operates every 20 minutes on weekdays from 7am to 8pm (Fri until 11pm), and every 30 minutes from 10am to 6pm on weekends. Hours are shorter in the winter.

The **City Water Taxi** (☎ 617/422-0392; www.citywatertaxi.com) connects about a dozen stops on the harbor, including the airport ferry dock. The **Rowes Wharf Water Taxi** (☎ 617/406-8584; www.roweswharfwatertaxi.com) serves Rowes Wharf, off Atlantic Avenue behind the Boston Harbor Hotel. Months and days of operation for water taxis are subject to change; at press time, only the Rowes Wharf taxi operates year-round. Call ahead from the dock for water taxi pickup.

Some hotels have their own **shuttles** or **limousines**; ask about them when you make your reservation. To arrange private limo service, call ahead for a reservation, especially at busy times. Your hotel can recommend a company, or try **Carey Limousine Boston** (☎ 800/336-4646 or 617/623-8700), **Commonwealth Limousine Service**

(☎ **800/558-LIMO** or 617/787-1110), or **Dav-El of Boston** (☎ **800/343-2071** or 617/884-2600).

Unless you need it right away, seriously consider waiting to pick up your **rental car** until you're starting a day trip or other excursion. You'll avoid airport fees, tunnel tolls, hotel parking charges, and, most important, Boston traffic.

BY CAR

Driving to Boston is not difficult, but parking is expensive and scarce, and downtown traffic is terrible. The Big Dig highway project is virtually complete, but widespread construction persists downtown. If you're thinking of driving to Boston only because you want to use the car to get around town, think again.

I-90, also known as the Massachusetts Turnpike ("Mass. Pike," to the locals), is an east-west toll road that originates at Logan Airport and links up with the New York State Thruway. **I-93/U.S. 1** extends north to Canada. **I-93/Route 3**, the Southeast Expressway, connects Boston with the south, including Cape Cod. To avoid driving downtown, exit the Mass. Pike at Cambridge/Allston or at the Prudential Center in the Back Bay. **I-95** (Massachusetts Rte. 128) is a beltway about 11 miles from downtown that connects Boston to highways in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York to the south, and New Hampshire and Maine to the north.

The approach to Cambridge is **Storrow Drive** or **Memorial Drive**, which run along either side of the Charles River. Storrow Drive has a Harvard Square exit that leads across the Anderson Bridge to John F. Kennedy Street and into the square. Memorial Drive intersects with Kennedy Street; turn away from the bridge to reach the square.

In an emergency, you can call the **State Police** on a cell phone by dialing ☎ *77. The **American Automobile Association (AAA)** (☎ **800/AAA-HELP**; www.aaa.com) provides members with maps, itineraries, and other travel information, and arranges free towing if you break down. At press time, the Mass. Pike was a privately operated road that arranged its own towing, but the state highway department may be taking over. If you break down there, ask the AAA operator for advice.

Tip: When you reach your hotel, leave your car in the garage and walk or use public transportation. Use the car for day trips, and before you set out, ask at the front desk for a route that avoids the construction area.

BY TRAIN

Amtrak (☎ 800/USA-RAIL or 617/482-3660; www.amtrak.com) serves **South Station**, on Atlantic Avenue at Summer Street, near the Waterfront and the Financial District; **Back Bay Station**, on Dartmouth Street between Huntington and Columbus avenues, across from the Copley Place mall; and **North Station**, on Causeway Street near the TD Banknorth Garden. All train stations link to the MBTA **subway** and **commuter rail**.

BY BUS

South Station is also the main bus terminal. Consider long-distance bus travel a last resort except on the **New York** route, which is so desirable that **Greyhound** (☎ 800/231-2222 or 617/526-1800; www.greyhound.com) and **Peter Pan** (☎ 800/343-9999; www.peterpanbus.com) have upgraded service. It's frequent and relatively fast (4–4½ hr.), and the price is about half the regular train fare. If you can catch an express bus, which makes only one stop, it's worth the extra \$5 or so.

5 For International Visitors

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

For an up-to-date, country-by-country listing of requirements, go to the “Foreign Entry Requirement” Web page of the U.S. State Department at <http://travel.state.gov>. International visitors can obtain a visa application at the same website.

For information about U.S. Customs and Border Protection, including restrictions on what you can bring into and take home from the United States, consult your nearest U.S. embassy or consulate, or **U.S. Customs** (☎ 202/927-1770; www.customs.ustras.gov).

DOCUMENTS

The U.S. State Department has a **Visa Waiver Program** allowing citizens of the following countries (at press time) to enter the United States without a visa for stays of up to 90 days: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Citizens of these nations need only a valid passport and a round-trip air or cruise ticket upon arrival. If they first enter the United States, they may also visit Mexico, Canada, Bermuda,

and/or the Caribbean islands and return to the United States without a visa. Further information is available from any U.S. embassy or consulate. Canadian citizens may enter the United States without visas; they need only proof of residence.

Citizens of all other countries must have (1) a valid passport that expires at least 6 months later than the scheduled end of their visit to the United States, and (2) a tourist visa, which may be obtained without charge from any U.S. consulate.

MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

Unless you're arriving from an area known to be suffering from an epidemic (particularly cholera or yellow fever), inoculations or vaccinations are not required for entry into the United States. If you have a medical condition that requires **syringe-administered medications**, carry a valid signed prescription from your physician—the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) no longer allows airline passengers to pack syringes in their carry-on baggage without documented proof of medical need. If you have a disease that requires treatment with **narcotics**, you should also carry documented proof with you—smuggling narcotics aboard a plane is a serious offense that carries severe penalties in the U.S.

For **HIV-positive visitors**, requirements for entering the United States are somewhat vague and change frequently. For up-to-the-minute information, contact **AIDSinfo** (☎ 800/448-0440 or 301/519-6616 outside the U.S.; www.aidsinfo.nih.gov) or **Gay Men's Health Crisis** (☎ 212/367-1000; www.gmhc.org).