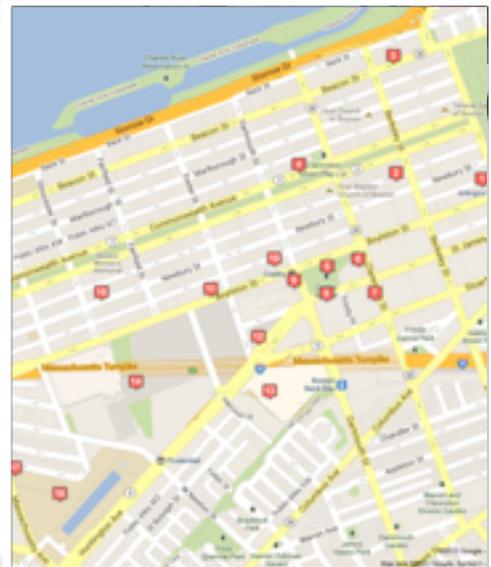


Back Bay



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WELCOME TO THE BACK BAY

Prior to a massive 19th century reclamation project, the Back Bay neighborhood did not exist. Native Americans used the water on the west side of the Shawmut Peninsula as a fishery. When a toll road project failed, the city decided to create buildable land by filling the salt marsh. At the height of the 30-year endeavor, 875 gravel-filled railcars arrived every 24 hours. A portion of the marshland became a freshwater reservoir. The Esplanade was created along the Charles River to provide a recreation area. Home to the renowned Independence Day celebration, the 3-mile-long waterfront park has playgrounds, boat landings, picnic facilities and paths for biking, skating and walking.

Featuring a Parisian layout with wide boulevards and tree-lined streets, the neighborhood became one of the most expensive residential areas in the city. The well-preserved Victorian brownstones on Commonwealth Avenue are the finest examples of period architecture and urban design in the country. Copley Square is home to architectural masterpieces, including the Beaux-Arts style Boston Public Library and the Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel. Other significant buildings are the John Hancock Tower, the tallest building in New England, and the Romanesque style Trinity Church, which has intricate murals and stained glass windows. Popular attractions include the Public Garden, Arlington Street Church, the Gibson House, the Hynes Convention Center and the Mary Baker Eddy Museum. The observation deck in the 52-story Prudential Tower provides wonderful views of Back Bay and the surrounding area. Visitors can explore trendy boutiques that line Boylston and Newbury Streets as well as the upscale shops in the Copley Place and Prudential Center malls. The Back Bay is easily accessible on the MBTA's Green and Orange subway lines.

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1. Arlington Street Church

Founded in 1729, the Church of Presbyterian Strangers has a long and storied history in Boston. Their first meetinghouse served as the backdrop for the Massachusetts Convention and ratification of the new United States Constitution. In the early 1800s, the congregation hired Charles Bulfinch to design their new building on Federal Street. It was here that the American Unitarian Association was founded in 1825.



Thirty-four years later, the congregation voted to erect another house of worship because the area around their historic church on Federal Street was becoming a commercial district. Situated at the intersection of Boylston and Arlington Streets, the church was the first public edifice constructed in the newly created Back Bay neighborhood and welcomed worshipers in 1861. The Arlington Street congregation merged with the Second Universalist Church of Boston in 1967. The new congregation combined the tenants of American Universalism espoused by Hosea Ballou and the teachings of William Ellery Channing, America's preeminent Unitarian leader. A statue of Mr. Channing is located in a public garden across the street from the church.

Arlington Street Church designers Gridley James Fox Bryant and Arthur Gillman also created the Parisian-style layout of the Back Bay and designed the old city hall. The architects received their inspiration for the church from London's St. Martin-in-

the-Fields. The foundation is secured by 999 timber pilings, which anchored the building in the marshy Back Bay. The New Jersey brownstone façade is adorned with 18th century English and Italian Renaissance flourishes. The church's Italian basilica-inspired interior has two aisles with a central nave and 156 chestnut pews and black walnut railings. There are 25-foot-tall Corinthian columns supporting the 62-foot high, curved vaulted ceilings whose arches are designed after those in the 17th century basilica Annunziata in Genoa. Decorative panels and plaster moldings that feature classic European-style foliage arrangements.

The building is believed to be the largest repository of Tiffany stained-glass windows within a single church in the country. Installed from 1898 to 1933, the panels chronicle the development of glass as an art form, including the use of opalescent glass and paint to achieve the preferred shades and effects. Renowned designers Louis Comfort Tiffany and Edward S. George directed the creation of the church's windowpanes. Located in the 190-foot tower are a set of 16 bells, which are inscribed with quotes from the Bible. These clarions are among the last remaining bells in the city that are rung entirely by hand. Located at 351 Boylston Street, the house of worship was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. The church is open for public tours.

2. Church of the Covenant

Built from 1865 to 1867, the Gothic Revival style Church of the Covenant was one of the first houses of worship to move into the newly created Back

Bay neighborhood. New England Industrialist Benjamin Bates, who founded a liberal arts college in



Maine, was a major benefactor for the construction project. Richard M. Upjohn designed the edifice, which features a distinctive rock known as puddingstone. The church has a 240-

foot-tall spire because the architect did not want any dwelling or structure in the area to be taller, including the Bunker Hill Monument. The soaring steeple, which Oliver Wendell Holmes believed to be almost perfect, is visible from the Boston Public Garden.

In the 1890s, the church was redecorated under the direction of the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company. New features included 42 stained glass windows, detailed mosaics and an electric chandelier that the renowned interior designer Jacob Adolphus Holzer created for the 1893 Chicago's World's Fair. Located at 67 Newbury Street, the building with its unique interior decorations was declared a National Historic Landmark in 2012 as the Central Congregational Church. This was the organization's name prior to the merger in 1932 of the Central Congregation and the First Presbyterian Church. Public tours are available.

3. Gibson House Museum

Located in the Back Bay at 137 Beacon Street, the Gibson House Museum preserves the home in which three generations of the namesake

family resided. Visitors can discover how this affluent family and their domestic workers lived in the late 19th and early 20th century. Catherine Hammond Gibson purchased land created in 1859 when the city filled in the mud flats. Her Italian Renaissance style home, designed by the architect and artist Edward Clarke Cabot, was completed a year



later. She gave the home to her son Charles Hammond Gibson who subsequently bequeathed it to his son. Three years after her grandson's death in 1954, the brownstone and red brick edifice became a museum.

Declared a National Historic Landmark in 2001, the Gibson House has the distinction of being the only Back Bay, Victorian era row house with its original floor plan and exterior façade. Preserved spaces include the kitchen, the butler's pantry and the scullery as well as the family's private accommodations. The rooms are decorated with a variety of Gibson family furnishings and accent pieces, such as paintings, figurines, curios, ceramics and other family keepsakes. Architectural highlights include textiles, black walnut woodwork, imported carpets and elegant wallpaper.

4. Back Bay's Victorian Brownstones

Back Bay is renowned as one of the best-preserved models of 19th century municipal planning in the country. Once a tidal basin, the residential area was created by a land reclamation project that began in 1857 and lasted almost three decades. One of the most

distinctive characteristics in this exclusive enclave is its three- and four-story brownstone row houses, which are set against a Parisian-inspired backdrop of broad, parallel tree-lined streets. The builders used Portland brownstone from quarries in Connecticut that also supplied the chocolate-colored sandstone for several national landmarks in the country during the 19th century.

Although designed by several different architects, the harmonious nature of the neighborhood was maintained by setback requirements



and other deed restrictions. The covenants are now maintained under the direction of the Back Bay

Architectural Commission. While the exterior of these homes is meticulously preserved, many houses have modern interior designs and the latest amenities. The Back Bay's Victorian brownstones were listed on the National Historic Register in 1973. They are some of the most sought after residential properties in the city. Most of these homes, which are located on Commonwealth Avenue and Newbury Street, are privately owned and not available for public tours.

5. Copley Square

Copley Square is a public urban space located in the Back Bay community. Bounded by St. James Avenue as well as Boylston, Clarendon and Dartmouth Streets, the plaza is named in honor of native son John Singleton Copley, one of the most influential painters during America's colonial era. The plaza features a life-size bronze sculpture of Mr. Copley that was created by Lewis Cohen, which

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