



Instant Guide to Boston

Beacon Hill & the Common

4 hours on the go

Fodor's



There's history around every bend in Boston—skyscrapers rise near Revolutionary-era buildings, and modern marketplaces line the antique cobblestone streets. Past and present home of the old-money elite, Beacon Hill is Boston at its most

Bostonian. The redbrick elegance of homes sends you back to the 19th century just as surely as if you had stumbled into a time machine. But residents here would never make the social faux pas of being out of date; the neighborhood is full of hip boutiques and young, affluent professionals. Our top picks will give you the best Beacon Hill experience.

GET HERE FAST

Take the T to either the Bowdoin (Blue Line) or Charles/MGH (Red Line) subway stops. One of the most compact areas in Boston, Beacon Hill is bounded by Cambridge Street on the north, Beacon Street on the south, the Charles River Esplanade on the west, and Bowdoin Street on the east.

DON'T MISS

■ **Boston Common:** Nothing is more central to Boston than the Common, the oldest public park in the United States and the largest and most famous of the town commons around which New England settlements were traditionally arranged. Dating from 1634, it's as old as the city around it. Look for the Central Burying Ground, Boston Massacre Memorial, and the Frog Pond. The Robert Gould Shaw 54th Regiment Memorial honors the first Civil War unit made up of free blacks.

■ **Freedom Trail:** More than a route of historic sites, the Freedom Trail is a 2½-mile walk into history that brings to life the events that exploded on the world during the Revolution. Starting in Beacon Hill, a red stripe on the sidewalk connects 16 sites. For a small taste begin at Boston Common and head for the State House, Boston's finest piece of Federalist architecture. Also check out beautiful Park Street Church nearby.

■ **Museum of Afro American History:** A community of free blacks lived in Beacon



Hill during the 1800s. The African Meeting House came to be known as the "Black Faneuil Hall" for the fervent antislavery activism that started within its walls. This historic site and the Abiel Smith School are now part of the museum. Pick up a brochure here for the Black Heritage Trail, which stitches together 14 sites in a 1½-mile walk in the neighborhood.

QUICK HITS

■ **Acorn Street:** Surely the most photographed street in the city, Acorn is Ye Olde Colonial Boston at its best. For drivers, the cobblestone street may be Boston's roughest ride—and it's so narrow that only one car can squeeze through at a time.

■ **Louisburg Square:** This is one of the most charming corners in a neighborhood that epitomizes charm. Louisa May Alcott once wrote here, and Senator John Kerry now lives here. The grassy square—enclosed by a wrought-iron fence—belongs collectively to the owners of the houses facing it.

■ **Granary Burying Ground:** The Old Granary, as it's called, is just one of the city's picturesque and historic cemeteries. Headstones for such patriots as Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and Paul Revere are impressively ornamented with skeletons and winged skulls.

SHOPPING BLITZ

■ **Charles Street:** A five-block stretch has more than 30 stores crammed with top-notch antiques. Bargain hunters should check out Reruns Antiques and the dealers inside the two-floor Boston Antique Co-op. There's also Eugene Galleries, with prints, etchings, old maps, and books; and Marika's, a tangle of American and European objets d'art and furniture as well as Japanese prints.

■ **Wish:** Everything a hip young woman could wish for, from designers such as Milly, Rebecca Taylor, and Nanette Lepore, can be found in this small but comfy addition to antiques row.

IN-THE-KNOW

Both the **Freedom Trail** and **Black Heritage Trail** can be explored independently, or you can join one of the free National Park Service tours. An MBTA LinkPass (\$9 per day, \$15 per week) allows for unlimited travel on subways, local buses, and inner-harbor ferries.

