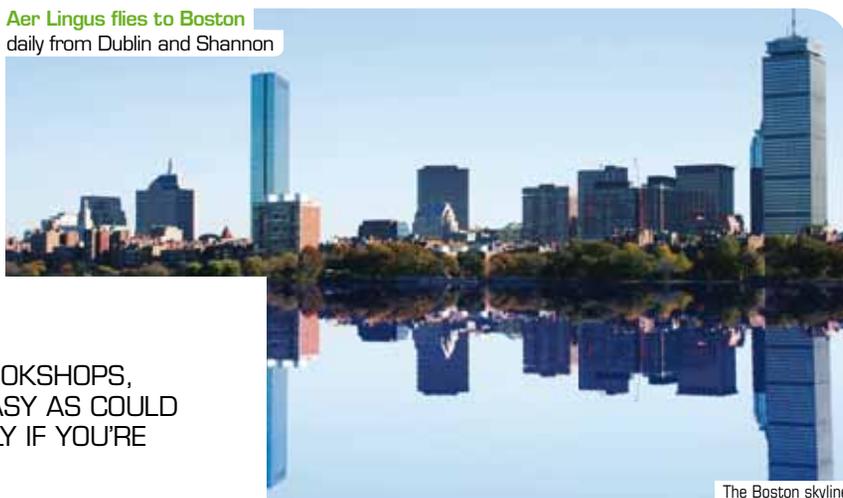


Aer Lingus flies to Boston
daily from Dublin and Shannon



The Boston skyline

BOSTON

WITH ITS BROWNSTONES, BOULEVARDS, BOOKSHOPS, BARS AND BIG-CITY ENTERTAINMENT, IT'S EASY AS COULD BE DOING BUSINESS IN BOSTON – ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE IRISH, DISCOVERS **ROGER NORUM**



AFTER THE 1950S, BOSTON FULLY EMERGED AS A LEADER IN THE THEN FLEDGLING COMPUTER AND HI-TECH INDUSTRIES, WITH BUSINESSES CREATED AND STAFFED BY GRADUATES OF HARVARD

Old State House, past and present downtown Boston

NAMED AFTER A rural hamlet in Lincolnshire, England, Boston was established in 1630 by John Winthrop, an ideologue who fled religious persecution in England to establish a pious Puritan state. While – ironically – many soon left his colony due to the harsh and intolerant society the Puritans had created, Winthrop stayed and Boston became known as a place where social, political and cultural leaders would come to challenge themselves and their acolytes.

So its citizens, even when they lacked the financial means, had a keen business sense from the beginning (Bostonians, for example, were the first to raise eye-

brows at willy-nilly colonial tax increases to fund the British Crown). The city's active port encouraged a rapid, progressive development of commerce – Tea Parties notwithstanding – until 1872, when a raging fire decimated the city's business district, taking with it 65 acres of commercial property and 1,000 local businesses. But within two years, a new city rose from those ashes, and business here has never turned back.

After the 1950s, Boston fully emerged as a leader in the then fledgling computer and hi-tech industries, with businesses created and staffed by graduates of Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other area universities. Banking and service industries soon flourished, turning the capital of Massachusetts into the finance and business capital of all of New England. Now the city publishes its own weekly business publication, the *Boston Business Journal* (boston.bizjournals.com), which hones in on local trends, deals, and movers and shakers.

City earnings run 15-25% higher than the US average, and local government strongly advocates both private development and public works projects, the greatest of which is the Big Dig, a colossal project that recently sculpted 12.07kms of major freeways into tunnels under the city and landscaped hundreds of acres of seafront land into urban parks. The \$15bn project has quite literally changed the face of the city. Little surprise, then, that *Travel + Leisure* magazine voted Boston "America's Favourite City" for 2008, memorably calling it "madly evolving".

Bostonians have always had a fondness for the Irish. Approximately one in five residents of New England is of Irish descent, and Boston is easily America's most Irish city, with tons of Irish-American organisations, including the Irish Cultural Center, the Irish-American Chamber of Commerce and even the Irish Networking Society, a professional networking group of hundreds of Irish nationals residing locally.

According to Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau head Pat Moscaritolo, the city's popularity stems from "its scale, livability, cultural attractions, historical treasures, and its championship sports teams that drive civic pride." But sport aside, it's the diverse business sector, prestigious universities, welcoming residents, proximity to gorgeous nature and rich connections to Ireland that have resulted in some of the world's most brilliant minds arriving – and often staying – to do business in Boston. ◉

How to do business in Boston

Olivia Frawley Crossey, sales manager at the Back Bay Hotel, arrived from County Clare five years ago. "Boston actually reminded me a lot of Ireland," she remembers. "It's something about the people – there's a really good community vibe." That vibe was so strong that she ended up meeting her husband, also an Irishman, here. But Olivia found that she did have to make a few adjustments to working in America. "You definitely need to be on time. And you need to dress more conservatively and speak more slowly," she explains.



The Back Bay Hotel

XV Beacon

The 60 rooms in this award-winning Financial District boutique hotel are outstanding testaments to luxury design. Expect upscale amenities such as marble bathrooms with powerful rainforest showers, and a complimentary in-town chauffeured Lexus Sedan service. 15 Beacon St; tel: + 1 857 233 9897; xvbeacon.com



XV Beacon roof terrace

"HAVING AN IRISH ACCENT WORKS WONDERS IF YOU'RE SELLING THINGS IN BOSTON. OPEN YOUR MOUTH AND PEOPLE JUST SMILE"



Financial district with Custom House in distance

"That said, having an Irish accent works wonders if you're selling things. Open your mouth and people just smile."

Olivia confesses that while she has integrated into American society, she can still be found on Saturday mornings ensconced at the Irish Cultural Centre watching the football or listening to traditional Irish music. But she is grateful for the balance Boston allows between leading an American and an Irish life. "The city's an hour from both skiing and beaches, and I'm much more culturally active now than when I lived in Dublin," Olivia explains. "There's so much to do here that we don't really have time to be homesick." O

Local etiquette

While Americans tend to be less formal than Europeans in manners and dress – New England business culture, for example, allows short-sleeves in the summer months – standard business courtesies are on the whole still adhered to so behave appropriately. Regular business hours are from 8:30am to 5pm, but working late into the night – or at the weekend – tends to be much more common than in Europe. Americans also favour a working lunch over a working breakfast, and, at the table, business visitors often offer to share part of the bill – though this empty invitation is usually refused by the inviting party.

The business district

Most business in the city is focused around the Financial District, a downtown centre of skyscrapers bounded by Chinatown, Boston Common and Government Center.



Seaport Hotel

Where to stay

The Back Bay Hotel

This one-time Back Bay police headquarters is now the city's favourite luxury place to stay for Irish visitors – not least of all for its Irish pub, Aveda bath products and Renaissance Revival architecture. Go for the corner rooms on the ninth floor – stellar views. 350 Stuart St; Back Bay; tel: + 1 617 266 7200; doylecollection.com/backbay

Seaport Hotel

An eco-friendly gem, this waterfront hotel offers large, elegant rooms, a hip lobby bar and a swimming pool with underwater music. It's a brisk walk to the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center. 1 Seaport Ln; tel: + 1 617 385 4000; seaportboston.com

Dining out

Grill 23

One of the best steak houses in the city, Grill 23 is one of those age-old institutions that everyone has visited at some point. The deep wood panelling, Corinthian columns and spot-on steaks make it a great bet for business lunches or dinners. 161 Berkeley St; tel: + 1 617 542 2255; grill23.com

L'Espalier

Currently Boston's top restaurant, the cuisine at Chef Frank McClelland's starred spot is New England-French fusion, with local ingredients taking pride of place in the recipes. In central Back Bay, they offer an excellent power lunch for \$24. 774 Boylston St; tel: + 1 617 262 3023; lespalier.com

Sorellina

Head chef and owner Jamie Mammano infuses his take on traditional Italian meals with enthusiasm and innovation. Two favourites include Nova Scotia scallops and Columba River wild king salmon. Located in Back Bay. 1 Huntington Av; tel: + 1 617 412 4600; sorellinaboston.com

Conferencing

Boston is home to several world-class conference centres. The 280,000 square foot Bayside (baysideexpo.com) is one mile from downtown and easily accessible via commuter rail. Meanwhile, the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center (bostonconventioncenter.com) is the largest conference centre in New England, with more than twice that floor space. It is located at the waterfront in a beautifully architected building that provides stunning views of the skyline and Boston Harbour.

Wi-Fi

Boston is about to roll out city-wide Wi-Fi, and by late 2009 all 258 city commuter rail coaches will have free access, too.