

Golden Massachusetts

A state with an academic and historic reputation that goes before it, Massachusetts is home to a range of lively student cities, wonderful landscapes and famous sites, as GILLIAN EVANS reports.

In language and education travel terms, Massachusetts is a diamond. Home to over 100 universities, colleges and language schools, it is also steeped in a rich historical legacy. "Students choose Massachusetts for its excellent schools, as well as the opportunity to experience living in New England with its rich cultural heritage," relates Caroline Gear at the International Language Institute of Massachusetts in Northampton.

Alexandra Simmons, Student Services Coordinator at Geos Language Institute in Boston, highlights the historical importance of the area. "The entire New England region is steeped in 'Americana' – patriotic and nostalgic things and places related to the

history, geography, folklore and cultural heritage of the United States," she says.

From Plymouth, where the Pilgrims landed, to Nantucket, famous for its whaling ships, and Boston, one of the oldest cities in the USA, Massachusetts has more than its share of the country's historical legacy. Boston itself is the state's largest city and its capital, and its popularity as an education destination among international students is growing, says Casey Sherman, Centre Director for EC Boston. At EC, increasing numbers of students are enrolling there with the intention of transferring to a local university. "Boston offers international students a wealth of academic opportunities at over 50 universities in the greater Boston area making the city itself appear like a large student campus," she relates.

Rhonda Seidman, Executive Director at the English Language Institute (ELI) at Pine Manor College in Boston, also mentions the "college town" appeal of Boston. "There are so many colleges and universities in the Boston/Cambridge area that there is always something happening that would appeal to students. There are many live music venues and dance clubs as well as cultural attractions, such as museums, classical music performances or cutting-edge theatre."

As well as its wide choice of museums and cultural activities, Boston on foot is an attraction in itself. "Boston is a city of neighbourhoods, each with its own unique character and is an extremely 'walkable' city," says Thomas Smith from the Boston School of Modern Languages. "The city is filled with small parks,

Fenway Park

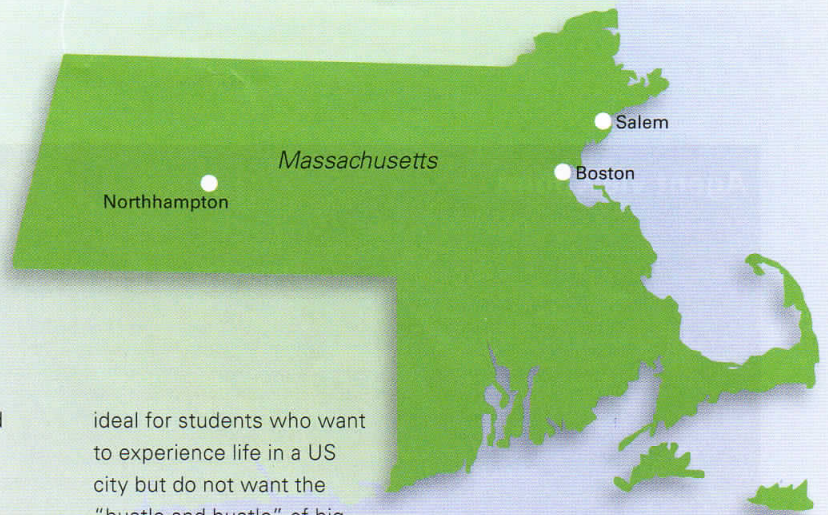
As the home ball park of the Boston Red Sox, this stadium is a must see whether you're a baseball fan or not. Opening in 1912, it is the oldest major league baseball stadium currently in use



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MITT



The glorious golden autumn in New England



ponds, cafés, speciality museums and neighbourhoods that offer ethnic and cultural diversity.”

Walking the Freedom Trail around the city is, according to Marlana Hesse-Karami, Director, President and CEO of the American Language Programmes in Boston, one of the highlights for many students at their school. “The host teacher goes with the student and walks the ‘red line’ [trail] all over Boston with its various districts. Often they wait for students to enter certain historical homes. Our State House has a lot of interesting history and the tours are free to the public.”

Despite being Massachusetts’ largest city, Boston is compact and manageable in comparison to many of the USA’s other world-famous cities. According to Alain Cabache, Principal of OISE Boston, “Boston is a small city with a big city feel,” and is

ideal for students who want to experience life in a US city but do not want the “hustle and bustle” of big metropolises like New York, Los Angeles or Chicago. Seidman agrees, adding, “Boston is a cosmopolitan city with a very cosy feel, featuring a compact downtown that is easy to navigate and an environment that is welcoming to international students.”

Cabache also mentions the friendliness of the Bostonians. “Students comment



Old Burying Point

As one of the oldest burial grounds in the USA, this graveyard in Salem has several noteworthy people buried there, including Jonathan Corwin, the judge who resided over the Salem Witch Trials

Agent viewpoint

"Many of our students are attracted to the state's [famous] and outstanding universities and colleges, including Harvard, MIT, Boston University, the University of Massachusetts, and so forth. They appreciate the serious and academic ambience of the campus, the name recognition of the schools, the opportunity to meet those who may be in a position to assist their future business careers... and the proximity to New York City and Washington, DC. Our students also enjoy the architecture, the history of the area, the natural beauty, the convenience of being able to walk or take inexpensive public transportation, easy access to parks, the plethora of museums, sports, art galleries and schools, and libraries. And I mustn't forget to mention the famous symphony orchestra."

Julia Hong, Uihak.com, Korea

"We especially [send students] to Boston [and it usually] exceeds their expectations, because

not only do they learn at a very high standard, but they also have the chance to experience a very fun student life having the opportunity to interact with students from many other cultures."

Brenda Crivosei, Aseores Educativos, Venezuela

"Massachusetts is a very well-known state among Spanish students, as it is very close to Europe in culture, and well promoted around the world. We send students to Boston and Chestnut Hill. They love the area where Pine Manor is, and its facilities. It's quite spectacular. Boston is a very famous city in Europe due to its appearance in certain TV series and movies. The fact that some of the Presidents of the USA spend their summer holidays in the area (notably Martha's Vineyard) makes it popular, [as well as] places such as Cape Cod, for its architecture of red brick buildings, etc."

Carla Sevilla, British Summer, Spain

"Students love the academic atmosphere with all the famous universities and colleges there; it is a safe

city and has good public transportation. However, students are usually surprised at how cold it is there, and the city is smaller than many expect it to be. They enjoy watching baseball – the Red Sox have a Japanese player, Matsuzaka – and they love to visit New York."

Aya Shimizu, Ryugaku Journal Inc, Japan

"Boston is a very convenient destination. Our students appreciate the young, lively and safe environment that the city can offer with its many universities, leisure [activities], and [the fact it is a] European city, while still being in America. We mostly send students to Boston but we also send students to eastern Massachusetts' universities; Amherst or UMASS. Downtown Boston is popular for students who want to stay busy, knowing they will meet many international students there. The Boston suburbs offer more space and larger facilities (sports) with a natural environment."

Christine de Chanaud, Séjours Home Abroad, France

continuously about the warmth and friendliness of the Boston native! When the Red Sox [baseball team] won the World Series in 2007, a group of students were at a bar watching the final game," he recounts. "When the game finished, the bar bought drinks for [everyone] and they were invited to a private party."

Sports certainly feature highly in Boston. "For the sports fans, Boston is home to some very exciting teams," says Sherman. "The Red Sox are one of the most loved teams throughout the country and Fenway Park, located in Kenmore Square, is a historical Baseball Park, [which] offers free tours daily."

Integrating students with locals is an important aspect of most language schools, and both the ELI at Pine Manor College and EC Boston offer their students a conversation partner programme with Americans. EC students also have the opportunity to attend a lecture series at the school or at a nearby university to improve their listening comprehension and expose them to current topics of discussion.

Just a one-and-half-hour drive away from Boston is the city of Northampton, offering students plenty of cultural activities, restaurants and bars but with a much lower cost of living than Boston. According to Gear at the International Language Institute of Massachusetts in Northampton, the city, which has a population of 30,000, is the cultural centre

of the Western Massachusetts area. She comments. "It has all the cultural, business, and educational amenities of an urban area surrounded by a beautiful, rural landscape with incredible recreational opportunities."

The people of Northampton are welcoming to students, and the school works hard to ensure all students feel at home in their new environment. "We encourage our students to get out into the community," says Gear. "And, at the beginning of each programme, we take the students on a tour of downtown so that they will



Martha's Vineyard

A cherished summer hotspot, this little island off the coast of Cape Cod is renowned for its mild climate and its many beautiful beaches. The panoramic view from Gay Head cliffs at Aquinnah is particularly dramatic

feel comfortable venturing out on their own. We often include a scavenger hunt activity about downtown Northampton and activities to interview community members."

Another small city located close enough to Boston to enjoy its cultural activities is Salem, a place steeped in history and folklore. "Salem is affectionately known by locals and visitors as 'the witch city,'" says Sarah Dietrich from Salem State University. "Among the local attractions are museums and theatre productions which tell the story of the witch trials of 1692, as well as a monument dedicated to those who were killed, and a cemetery where the judge who presided at the witch trials is buried." The history of the town also plays a part in the classroom and on excursions. "As part of their undergraduate, graduate and English language courses, students often participate in field trips to explore the greater Salem area. Moreover, students play an active role in activities such as the municipal parade which launches the month-long celebration of 'Haunted Happenings', in October, in which students from all over the world wear costumes and wave flags representing their home countries."

Wherever students choose to study in Massachusetts there's plenty to do whatever the season, for example, swimming and hiking in the summer, and skiing in the winter. And then there is, of course, the famous New England Fall. "New England is known for fall foliage and there is nothing like walking along the Charles River on a Saturday morning to see all the leaves that have turned," relates Sherman.

Boston Public Gardens

A statue of former President, George Washington – sitting astride his horse – greets visitors at the gate of the Public Garden, a park located in the heart of the city. It was created by Thomas Ball in 1869



PHOTOGRAPH: SARAH MUSUMECI