

BOSTON GREENSPACE

For centuries, green space has been a central element of Boston life and culture. The Boston Common, which was established shortly after the city in 1634, is the oldest public park in the United States and the first recorded public park in the world. That tradition continues today, and Boston has developed parks and recreational spaces that are woven seamlessly into the urban landscape. Boston's public parks blend history, innovation, and natural beauty – and most importantly create spaces for social connection. In fact, every Boston resident has a public park, at most, a 10-minute walk from their home. Whether an historic garden or a modern urban greenway, these beloved spaces continue to shape the destination's identity as one of America's most livable and environmentally conscious cities.

Curating Social Connection: The Rose Kennedy Greenway

Boston biggest venues attract world-class talent throughout all four seasons. In the warmer months, Fenway Park plays host to roughly a dozen concerts per year and baseball's oldest professional ballpark is quite the location to enjoy a show. Located a few blocks from Fenway on the Boston University campus is Agganis Arena, which also hosts musical acts in a somewhat more intimate setting compared to its big cousin across town – TD Garden. The Garden anchors the sprawling Hub on Causeway complex and is a stellar spot for spectators to take in not just sporting events but some of the most famous musical artists on the scene.

Clubs & Neighborhood Joints

The Rose Kennedy Greenway emerged from a transformative public project which placed Boston's elevated Central Artery underground, creating the opportunity to develop a linear park, traversing multiple neighborhoods, in the heart of the city. Named after Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, The Greenway is now a lively urban park featuring interactive installations, seasonal beer gardens, food trucks, and family activities. A merry go round and splash pads sit alongside pollinator habitats and public art to create a dynamic space that evolves throughout the year. The newest addition to the Dewey Square block is the thought-provoking mural "your spirit whispering in my ear" by Jeffrey Gibson. Each block of the park is distinct, and its design emphasizes sustainability, with native plantings, organic maintenance practices, and innovative stormwater management systems.

Love That [Not Dirty] Water

For almost 50 years, Boston Harbor has been the focus of major cleanup efforts to mitigate the urban runoff and industrial wastewater that had been polluting the area for decades. Today Boston's waterfront offers a unique blend of natural beauty, recreational opportunities, and cultural experiences. The Boston Harborwalk spans more than 40 miles of the city's waterfront, providing pedestrian-friendly pathways through neighborhoods, public art, and access to museums, attractions and even beaches. The Boston Harbor Islands, made up of 34 islands and peninsulas, is operated by the National Parks Service and offer an escape from the city with hiking trails, historic forts, and sandy shores accessible by ferry. From a sustainability perspective, North America's first-ever "Living Seawalls" panels were installed by the Stone Living Lab at two locations on Boston Harbor in December 2024. The panels are specially designed to create habitat for marine life to flourish on what would otherwise be inhospitable flood barriers. These waterfront spaces connect people to the city's rich maritime heritage and provide vibrant outdoor environments for relaxation, recreation, and active exploration.

Boston's Emerald Necklace and Frederick Law Olmsted

Frederick Law Olmsted, often regarded as the father of American landscape architecture, played a transformative role in shaping Boston's park system. His visionary designs include Franklin Park (the city's largest park), the Back Bay Fens, Arnold Arboretum, and Jamaica Pond, which together form the Emerald Necklace, a connected chain of green spaces designed to bring nature into the urban environment. Each park displays Olmsted's philosophy of creating harmonious, accessible landscapes for recreation and reflection. However, beyond the natural beauty, Olmsted's greatest legacy may be his social vision and the belief that parks could serve as meeting grounds for people of different backgrounds and economic means. The Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, operated by the National Parks Service, preserves his legacy and serves as a resource for understanding his enduring influence on urban park design.

Unlikely Green Spaces: Garden Cemeteries

While Boston offers a variety of public parks, the destination is also home to tranquil green spaces that are not always on the tourist map – garden cemeteries. In Cambridge Mount Auburn Cemetery doubles as an arboretum, featuring walking paths, monuments, and diverse plant species, as well as cultural programming like its Winter Solstice installation and its artists-in-residence. It is also the final resting place of many prominent Bostonians, including Isabella Stewart Gardner, Julia Ward Howe, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes and more. The Forest Hills Cemetery in Jamaica Plain, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2004, features a distinctive Victorian landscape design features meandering paths, scenic vistas, and lovely lake Hibiscus. Many prominent historic, cultural, and civic figures are buried here, including the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, suffragist Lucy Stone, poets Anne Sexton and e.e. cummings, and playwright Eugene O'Neill. Garden cemeteries like these, and others across the United States, are not only for those who have passed but very much for the living as well.

Worth A Visit

Boston has nearly 4800 acres of park land including 30 protected urban wilds. With so much green space, there is a park for everyone whether you are looking for an active pursuit or simply seeking that perfect sunset.

The Boston Common

The Boston Common is the first public park in the United States. Since 1634, it has been a gathering place for performances, civic discourse, demonstrations, and active recreation. From its colonial days as a grazing ground for cattle to today's performances of Shakespeare, ice skating on the Frog Pond and Freedom Trail walks, it continues to be one of the most visited destinations in Boston.

The Public Garden

Boston's Public Garden is the more formal younger cousin to the more casual and boisterous Boston Common. The first public botanical garden in America, its landscape, plantings, and statuary evoke its Victorian heritage.

Franklin Park

At 485 acres, Franklin Park is the city's largest open space. Connecting the neighborhoods of Roxbury, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, and Roslindale, Franklin Park features miles of hiking trails, recreation facilities, and attractions like Scarboro Pond, the 99 Steps and Ellicott Arch, old Franklin Park Zoo Bear Dens, The Wilderness, and the William J. Devine golf course.

The Charles River Esplanade

The Charles River Esplanade, a 64-acre park, stretches along the river's edge, drawing runners, cyclists, and families with its picturesque views, playgrounds, and events, like the Boston Pops Fireworks Spectacular on the Fourth of July. Like Boston Harbor, The Esplanade offers a variety of ways for visitors to get onto the water from kayaks to sail boats with Community Boating, Inc. and, of course, Boston Duck Tours.

Piers Park

Venture over to East Boston to Piers Park for sweeping views of Boston and the harbor. With its beautiful design, landscaping and pier, this large park is easily accessible from the T or ferry. Go around sunset for the best sunset views in Boston.

Cambridge Common

What was once the site of George Washington's first troop camp during the Revolutionary War is now a public park next to Cambridge's bustling Harvard Square. This park features notable monuments, including a plaque representing where the "Washington Elm" once stood, three abandoned cannons dedicated to Revolutionary War figures, and the Irish Famine Memorial.

Christopher Columbus Park

This North End gem is a great picnic spot with its abundance of shaded trees, lawns, beautiful wisteria trellis and views of the harbor. Grab a bite from one of the many great Italian restaurants nearby while you watch boats come in from the harbor.

Castle Island

Located at the southern edge of South Boston's beaches, anchoring Pleasure Bay, Castle Island offers unmatched panoramic views of Boston Harbor. The 22-acre park combines natural beauty with historic charm, with its primary attraction being Fort Independence, a star-shaped granite fort that has stood since before the Civil War.

