

# Newcomers' Survival Guide

## Bicycling in Boston

by **Clint Hamblin**

If walking, jogging or bicycling is part of your exercise regime, you'll love exploring the numerous paths and bicycle lanes scattered throughout the city. Oh sure, there are plenty of great tours where you can climb aboard a trolley and view Boston's historic landmarks and parks. But nothing quite compares to a brisk walk on the Esplanade to get the old cardio pumping while enjoying the picturesque views of the Charles River.

These days, people are not just on foot — they're on wheels, and I don't mean skates. The bicycle is everywhere. You do remember the bicycle? It's that thing with two wheels you probably learned to ride when you were just a kid. People are not only using these

calorie burners to cut down on their travel expenses, but they're enjoying the leisure aspects of riding and satisfying their need to exercise all at the same time.

Michael Wissell is the sales manager of Back Bay Bicycles at 362 Commonwealth Avenue.

"Business is good," Wissell said. "A lot more people are taking to the street on bikes to get around, and everyone is getting in on it. I recently sold a bike to a 68-year-old man who came in to buy his very first bike."

You can rent a decent bike for around \$20 to \$25 per day. Or make the investment and buy a \$300 commuter bike. For those with more discriminating taste, high performance bikes start at \$800, and the sky's the limit.

Community Bicycle Supply is

located at 496 Tremont Street in the South End where Rich Coombs' family has been in the bicycle business for the past 30 years.

"We're selling a lot of folding bikes," Coombs said, which you can pack up and take to where you want to ride. "But people use anything for exercising or sightseeing," Coombs continued. "I recommend purchasing a hybrid bike, a blend between a mountain bike and a road bike. It's more efficient and more durable."

There are two types of roads dedicated to bicycles in Boston. The bike path is a path usually in a park, and the bike lane is on a road traveled over by cars. Mayor Thomas Menino's efforts to provide better and safer bicycling opportunities for residents and



PHOTO: CLINT HAMBLIN

tourists have been quite successful.

"This year the program should install 5 to 10 miles of bike lanes," Nicole Freedman, director of bicycle programs for the City of Boston, recently said.

"We just established the first bike lane on Commonwealth Avenue and recently on Columbus

Avenue," Freedman said. "And our annual citywide bike event is on September 27. We expect 6,000 people on a closed Storrow Drive."

Boston hosts many events geared toward the bicyclist. For more information, check out [cityofboston.gov/bikes](http://cityofboston.gov/bikes) or on Facebook at [facebook.com/bostonbikes](http://facebook.com/bostonbikes).

### Courant Dictionary

**Alphabet Streets:** The cross streets of Commonwealth Avenue are named alphabetically: Arlington, Berkeley, Clarendon, Dartmouth, Exeter, Fairfield, Gloucester and Hereford. They are sometimes referred to by their first letters.

**Audubon Circle:** Approximately eight-block neighborhood near Kenmore Square, bounded by St. Mary's Street, Munson Street, the Massachusetts Turnpike and the MBTA "D" Line tracks.

**Ave.:** Unlike fast-paced New Yorkers who spell out "Avenue" (Park Avenue, Fifth Avenue, etc.), Bostonians abbreviate it because we believe in being succinct. Say "Comm Ave." and sound instantly like you were raised here.

**Back Bay:** Originally underwater as part of the Charles River. Filled in during the middle of the 19th century. The Charles River, the Public Garden, Massachusetts Avenue and Columbus Avenue bound the area.

**Back Bay Fens:** Park in the Fenway. Includes the Victory Gardens, the Kelleher Rose Garden, Mothers Rest playground and two ballparks.

**Back Bay Station:** "T" stop and Amtrak depot located on Dartmouth Street.

**Bay Village:** Self-contained residential enclave located off Arlington Street.

**BBAC:** Back Bay Architectural Commission legally oversees all exterior changes to buildings in the Back Bay. Other neighborhoods have similar commissions.

**BCA:** Boston Center for the Arts contains theater, art and exhibition space. Originally called the Cyclorama Building, the space housed exhibitions of cyclorama paintings, including Paul Philippoteaux's *The Battle of Gettysburg*. Located at 537 Tremont Street. The closest "T" stop is Back Bay Station. 426-2787.

**Blackstone Square:** Designed by Charles Bulfinch in 1801, this park was origi-

nally part of Columbia Square. In 1832, Columbia Square was changed to Blackstone and Shawmut Squares. Blackstone was named after Boston's first resident, Reverend William Blaxton. Located at West Brookline and Washington Streets.

**Boston Courant, The:** The community newspaper serving the Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Downtown, Fenway and South End.

**BPL:** Boston Public Library, located in Copley Square, includes a general collection lending library and a research library. The closest "T" stop is Copley. 536-5400.

**BRA:** Not the undergarment, but the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the city's planning and development agency.

**CAC:** Citizens Advisory Committee, a panel of citizens appointed by the mayor primarily to review large air rights development proposals and advise the BRA.

**Cathedral of the Holy Cross:** The city outgrew its cathedral in downtown Boston, and this new one was dedicated in 1875. Located at 1400 Washington Street. 542-5682.

**Charles Street:** Antique shops, boutiques and more. Runs between Beacon and Cambridge Streets.

**Clarendon Street Playground:** Playground located at the corner of Clarendon Street and Commonwealth Avenue.

**Comm Ave.:** Bostonian abbreviation of Commonwealth Avenue.

**Common, The:** The Boston Common is the oldest public park in the country. Facilities include the Frog Pond (which offers ice skating in the winter), baseball field, tennis courts and a playground. Quickest way to show that you're new to the area: calling it the "Commons." The closest "T" stop is Park Street.

**Copley Square:** Old South Church, Trinity Church, Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel and the Boston Public Library are all located here. The closest "T" stop is Copley.

**Downtown Crossing:** While home to many residents, the area is one of the

city's main retail districts and is in the midst of a revitalization effort. Located near Boston Common along Washington Street. A section is closed to vehicles.

**Esplanade:** Grassy area running parallel to the Charles River. Hatch Memorial Shell is a concert stage located at the Esplanade. Reached by a footbridge at the corner of Arlington and Beacon Streets. The closest "T" stop is Charles/MGH.

**Fenway:** Abbreviation for the ballpark. Also neighborhood bounded by Massachusetts Avenue, Huntington Avenue up to the medical area and Boylston Street to Landmark Center. Received its name since the area was a fens, a saltwater marsh. The Muddy River divides the area into the East Fens (east of the river) and the West Fens (west of the river).

**Fenway Park:** Home of the Red Sox baseball team.

**Fenway Studios:** Artist cooperative named on the National Register of Historic Landmarks, since it was one of the country's first buildings designed and built to artist specifications that is still in use today. Located in the Fenway on Ipswich Street, opposite the Massachusetts Turnpike.

**Flat, The:** Area between Charles Street and the Charles River. Historically part of the Back Bay but now considered Beacon Hill.

**Franklin Square:** Designed by Charles Bulfinch in 1801, this park was originally part of Columbia Square. In 1832, Columbia Square was changed to Blackstone and Shawmut Squares. Shawmut Square was renamed Franklin Square. Located at East Brookline and Washington Streets.

**Hancock, The:** Boston's tallest building. Located one block from Copley Square. 572-6429.

**Hatch Shell:** Hatch Memorial Shell is a concert stage located at the Esplanade.

**Hill, The:** General reference to Beacon Hill.

**Hill House:** Community center for the

area that offers youth and adult programs. Located at 74 Joy Street and 127 Mt. Vernon Street. 227-5838.

**Irish Famine Memorial:** Sculpture depicts an impoverished family leaving Ireland and another arriving in Boston filled with hope. Located at Washington and School Streets.

**Kenmore Square:** Area between the Back Bay, Fenway and Audubon Circle neighborhoods. Known for the famous Citgo sign.

**Mall, The:** Commonwealth Avenue Mall is a strip of grass along Commonwealth Avenue that stretches from Arlington Street to the Fenway. The area was developed in the late 19th century as a version of a Parisian boulevard. Statues honor individuals with significant ties to Boston.

**Mass Ave.:** Bostonian abbreviation of Massachusetts Avenue.

**Muddy River:** River in the Fenway, but also parts of Brookline, Jamaica Plain and Mission Hill. Connects to the Charles River. Work is being done to improve the river to prevent future flooding. Originally a saltwater marsh.

**Newbury Street:** Eight blocks of shops, boutiques, restaurants and art galleries. Runs between Arlington Street and Mass Ave.

**Old South Church:** One of the oldest churches in the city and known for its Romanesque architecture. Located in Copley Square.

**Old South Meeting House:** Colonists met there in 1773 and started the Boston Tea Party. Now operates as a museum. Located at 310 Washington Street. 482-6439.

**Pi Alley:** Located in Downtown Crossing near Washington Street, which used to be home to Newspaper Row, this passageway is named for the jumbles of type that typesetters used to drop there.

**Pike, The:** Abbreviation for the Massachusetts Turnpike. Also called the Mass Pike.

**Pru, The:** The Prudential Center is a shopping mall located at 800

Boylston Street. It offers the only 360-degree view of the city from the Skywalk. The Pru connects to Copley Place, another shopping mall. The closest "T" stops are Copley and Prudential.

**Public Garden:** Features seasonal flowering plants and neatly clipped shrubs that line winding paths. Visitors may ride "swan boats" on the lagoon. Swans also reside there. Located across from the Common and between Charles and Arlington Streets.

**South End:** Filled in during the mid-19th century. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 as the largest urban Victorian neighborhood in the country.

**Southwest Corridor:** Park that stretches from Dartmouth Street near Back Bay Station to Jamaica Plain.

**SoWa:** South of Washington Street. Hot spot of art galleries in the South End.

**St. Botolph:** Self-contained residential enclave off Huntington Avenue.

**St. Elsewhere:** Franklin Square House is now housing for the elderly but formerly the St. James Hotel. Known to TV fans as St. Eligius Hospital, since the building's façade was used in the opening credits of *St. Elsewhere*. Located at 11 East Newton Street.

**"T," The:** Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) provides public bus and train service throughout Greater Boston. The Green Line, comprised of four trains, runs through the Back Bay and the Fenway. The B, C, D and E trains go through the Back Bay, and the D and E trains run through the Fenway. The Orange and Silver Lines access the South End. Downtown Crossing is accessible by all subway lines and the Silver Line. For information about fares and schedules call 222-3200.

**The:** Put this word in front of most nouns and sound like a native, e.g. The Back Bay, The Mall, The Pru.

**Trinity Church:** Known for its Romanesque architecture. Located in Copley Square.