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April 2016

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START YOUR **SWISS ADVENTURE** p. 70

MUNICH A CITY BY DESIGN p. 52

DIVERSE **KUALA LUMPUR**
EMBRACES BUSINESS p. 60

GET SWEPT UP IN THE SPIRIT
OF **TAHITI** p. 74



UP ON THE ROOF: View of the harbor from The Envoy Hotel's roof-deck bar

PHOTO: © ENVOY HOTEL

On the Waterfront

Development rises in Boston's emerging Seaport District. BY STEPHEN JERMANOK

Peering at the sailboats slicing through the harbor from the sixth-floor roof-deck bar of the new Envoy Hotel, it finally dawns on you that, yes, Boston really does rest on the shores of the Atlantic. For some silly reason, Boston has never taken proper advantage of its ocean setting. When the Institute of Contemporary Art opened in a gem of a building on the edge of the harbor in December 2006, publicists dubbed the evolving neighborhood the Seaport District. Yet five years after the ICA opening, not much changed. A sea of parking lots continued to surround the ICA, and wharves still lined the harbor of this industrial port.

Then, in 2013, Vertex Pharmaceuticals made the bold initiative to move the company's global headquarters to twin 18-story buildings featuring 1.1 million square feet of research labs and office space. Other companies followed, including Manulife, Fidelity Investments and PricewaterhouseCoopers. At last, the late Mayor Menino's dream of a burgeoning Seaport District has taken root. Everywhere

you look along the waterfront today, new condominiums and office buildings are under construction.

The 136-room Envoy Hotel, a member of the Marriott Autograph Collection, opened its doors this past June and quickly became a hot spot for after-work drinks. You'll find one of the finest views of the Boston skyline from its roof deck. If you book the corner room just below the bar, you have the same glorious vista all to yourself.

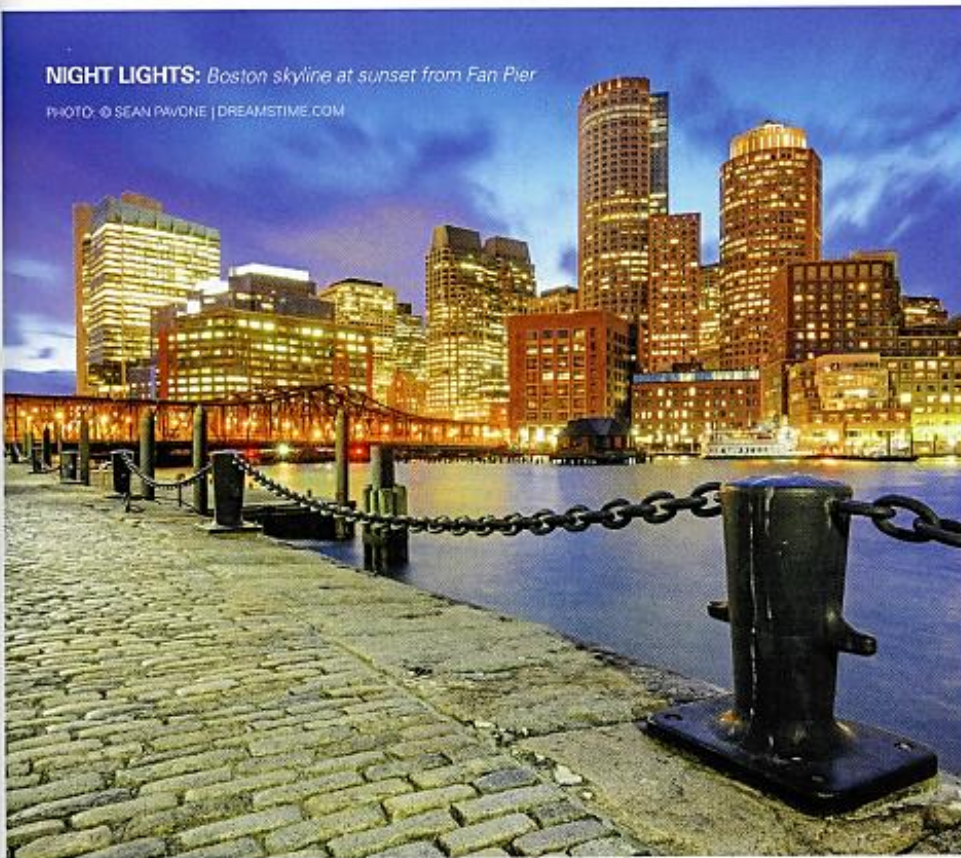
Directly across from The Envoy, a massive, block-long construction site marks the start of One Seaport Square. When finished in 2017, the \$600 million project will create 832 apartments above 260,000 square feet of retail space. The complex will consist of two glass and metal towers rising to 20 and 22 stories between Seaport Boulevard and Northern Avenue and will feature an Equinox Fitness Club, Kings Bowling and a 10-screen cinema.

Not all the development of the Seaport District lies directly on the water. The Boston Convention & Exhibition Center on Summer Street is planning a 1.3 million-square-foot expansion. The redesign is currently in the inchoate stages as the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority interviews architects and project managers.

A 330-room Aloft Hotel and 180-room Element Hotel just opened on a 5.6-acre parcel on D Street opposite the BCEC. Nearby lies The Lawn on D, an urban park that enters its third season this May. The park features food trucks, a rare patch of grass for picnicking, an

NIGHT LIGHTS: Boston skyline at sunset from Fan Pier

PHOTO: © SEAN PAVONE | DREAMSTIME.COM



artsy swing set and live performances from jazz and rock musicians.

Some of Boston's best-known chefs, including Barbara Lynch (Menton, Sportello and Drink), were the first to brave the waters and move into relatively affordable warehouses that once housed art studios in this part of the city. They were soon joined by flashier developments along the water like Liberty Wharf, home to the three-story Legal Harborside, an offshoot of Legal Sea Foods. Last April, Mario Batali opened a Babbo Pizzeria e

Enoteca just off the Harborwalk, already receiving rave reviews for its affordable brick-oven pizza and pasta dishes. Ocean Prime just made its debut near the coveted former locale of Anthony's Pier 4. It specializes in steaks and seafood, like a cut of ribeye or tender sea bass.

The Seaport District could still use a good grocery store, but as more and more residents call the neighborhood home, rest assured the Boston waterfront is finally becoming a thriving part of the city.

Aloft Boston Seaport

starwoodhotels.com

Babbo Pizzeria e Enoteca

babbopizzeria.com

Boston Convention & Exhibition Center

massconvention.com

Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce

capeannchamber.com

Destination Salem

salem.org

Element Boston Seaport

starwoodhotels.com

The Envoy Hotel

theenvoyhotel.com

Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau

bostonusa.com

The Lawn on D

lawnond.com

Legal Harborside

legalseafoods.com

Ocean Prime

ocean-prime.com

Peabody Essex Museum

pem.org

Woodman's of Essex

woodmans.com

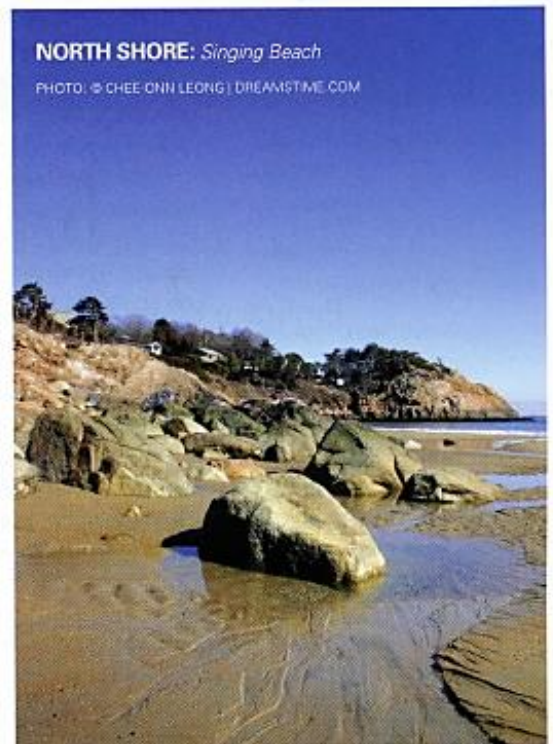
SCENIC DRIVES

If Boston Harbor has you yearning for a beach, head north on Route 128 and within an hour arrive at Massachusetts' lesser-known cape, the one locals don't want you to know about, Cape Ann. Forty miles north of Boston, Cape Ann beckons sun worshippers with its long stretch of sand. In Manchester-by-the-Sea, couples stake their claim to exquisite Singing Beach, tucked away in a cove and backed by cliffs and precariously perched mansions. Wingsheek Beach remains a favorite for Boston families who make the drive to the North Shore to swim in the shallow waters. At low tide, you can walk a mile to almost reach a gleaming white lighthouse jutting out from the tip of land at Annisquam. When you tire of the sun, head to the village of Rockport, known for its shops, galleries and restaurants. Or try the legendary lobster-in-the-rough joint, Woodman's, in Essex; the seafood shack claims to have created the fried clam July 3, 1916.

Prefer not to drive but still want to take a daytrip? Less than 20 miles northeast of Boston and four years older lies the historic hamlet of Salem. Best known as the place where, in 1692, 20 innocent victims were hanged and stoned to death as witches, Salem flourished during the 17th and 18th centuries as its merchant vessels circled the globe. Salem is now home to one of the finest museums in New England, the Peabody Essex Museum. The art museum houses a vast assortment of wares from China, Japan, Korea, India, the Pacific Islands and Africa, not to mention immense holdings of Native American crafts. New England maritime art and 18th- and 19th-century dwellings from Salem's historic streets. The best way to arrive in Salem is via the ferry from Long Wharf. Grab a seat, smell the salty air, see the seaside estates of Marblehead, and 45 minutes later you arrive in Salem, stress-free.

NORTH SHORE: Singing Beach

PHOTO: © CHEE ONN LEONG | DREAMSTIME.COM



One of Boston's favorite holidays, Patriots' Day, takes place this year April 18. All schools are closed as folks watch the annual running of the Boston Marathon.