

ROADTRIP

real people, real fun

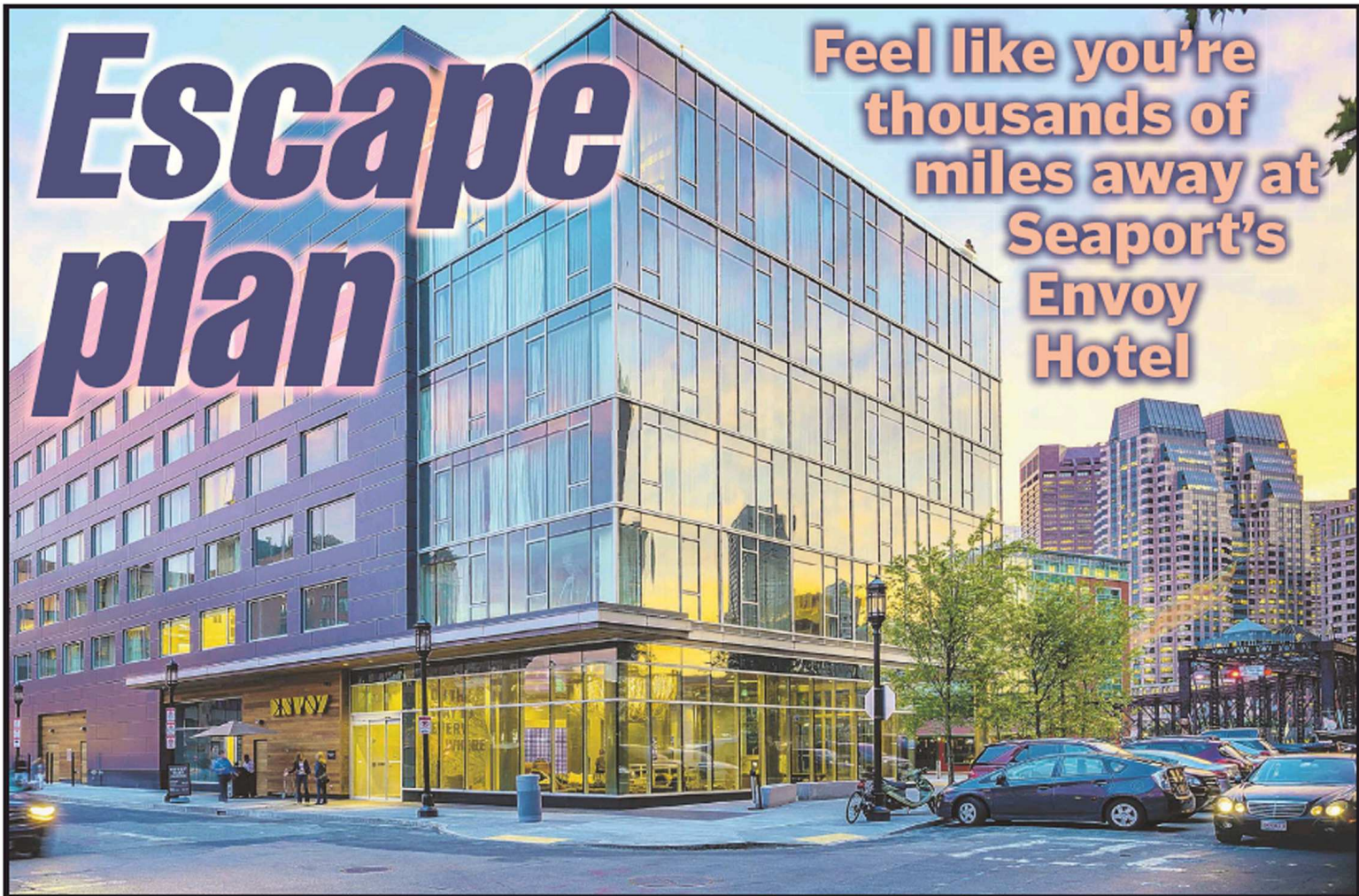


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Escape plan

Feel like you're thousands of miles away at Seaport's Envoy Hotel



By MOIRA MCCARTHY

Escape knows no time zone. Vacation needs no mile marker. This I discovered recently when I planned a near-home getaway that left me completely fulfilled. I saw new sights while walking streets I've known all my life. For a glorious three-day weekend, I was entertained, pampered and submerged completely in vacation mode.

All just a few quick miles from home.

I chose to anchor my weekend at the spiffy new Envoy Hotel in Boston's

Seaport District. Opened four months ago, the hotel is Boston's first Autograph Collection property. Tucked into the edge of Boston Harbor (it gazes down upon the iconic Barking Crab restaurant), the hotel offers a new and distinctive feel for a Boston stay, but with enough classic Boston and seaside to remind us what an amazing city we live in. There's even a rooftop bar.

It was clear from check-in that staff members are delighted to be there — their warmth and expertise was genuine. Warm and almost beachy, and touched with the hotel's signature yellow and lots of reclaimed



HERALD PHOTO BY MOIRA MCCARTHY

TASTY TREAT: A scallop tops Brussels sprout leaves, above, in a creation by executive chef David Verdo of Outlook Kitchen and Bar at the Envoy Hotel, top.

wood, the lobby featured classic games such as

Connect Four, deep and comfortable conversation-

pit-style couches, artistic touches like a chandelier made from reclaimed materials, and an open feel. We could see through the vibrant bar and dining room to the active kitchen. Yes, we'd spend some time there.

Our room — like all 136 in the hotel — was surprising and innovative, but in a gentle, welcoming way. The first thing that hit my husband and me was the view. The Boston skyline etched by harbor waters is breathtaking. Then there is the decor. It feels airy and on point. The television (which is also an interactive tool for things like check-out,

the Internet and Netflix), sits on an easel made from a bike. The bath area is enclosed in glass etched with a map of Boston Harbor. We could have stayed there all weekend if we wanted to.

But Boston called us. From our window, we could see the Moakley footbridge, and we planned to walk it. But first, we turned the other way and headed into the Innovation District for a craft beer or two, landing at Committee, where we noshed on Greek appetizers and sampled a few local beers recommended by our bartender. Outside the window, construction was everywhere, and fun to

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COURTESY PHOTOS LEFT AND FAR LEFT

ON THE WATERFRONT:
The rooftop bar at the
Envoy Hotel in the Sea-
port District offers great
views of Boston Harbor.
The hotel sits near the
Moakley footbridge.

spaces in one. Our favorite section was the library, and not just for the amazing portrait of Bill Murray over the fireplace. It's cozy and alive and the drinks are sublime. Dinner earlier in the outer area featured shared plates of oysters, pork and tuna, as well as some large pour cocktails that serve many. Fun and bonding, that's what dining there is.

Sunday we dined at the hotel again, and then headed off to explore some museums. It's a quick drive from the Envoy to home, but it feels as if we'd week-ended in another world.

We'll escape to the Envoy again, experiencing our own Boston. Innovation indeed.

[Go to theenvoyhotel.com.](http://Go.totheenvoyhotel.com)



arch of the Boston Harbor Hotel, then headed back to the Greenway. There are giant chess sets, frolicking kids, food trucks and more. It's lush and yet urban, an intoxicating mix.

We followed the Greenway to Faneuil Hall and ended up at the new Boston Public Market, where chef Verdo was teaching a cooking class. Offered by the hotel, the class takes you to the market to shop for fresh, local ingredients and then back to the kitchen to prepare them. The market itself is a destination. Cheeses, cider doughnuts, fresh fish and meats, a giant craft

beer selection, just about any food you can imagine is there. How have we missed this? We chose Brussels sprouts on a thick stem and briny scallops

and headed back to learn how to prepare them. It's a perfect afternoon.

That night we ventured out, a quick walk to Downtown Crossing to spend

an evening at Yvonne's, newly opened where Locke-Ober stood for more than a century. With some touches from those old days, the place is like three

watch. Clearly the Innovation District is innovating. It's not hard to remember when this slice of Boston was unsavory. Now it shines.

We headed back to our hotel for dinner at the Outlook Kitchen and Bar. Executive chef David Verdo's progressive culinary sense is obvious in each dish. We sampled a bright halibut in a lemongrass broth, and dug into a savory steak and an amazing dessert that features marshmallows that smoke in front of you. Verdo is all about local sourcing and farm to table, and it shows in the fresh taste in each bite. His kitchen — which you can see into — looks bright and calm. Two chefs-area side seats are available for dining each night at no extra cost. You just need to plan ahead and reserve. We closed out the night with one of the bar's signature cocktails.

The next morning after noshing on the lobster benedict for breakfast, we walked over the Moakley bridge and explored Boston, a city we've known all our lives. The Envoy is close to everything. We cut through the Financial District, a place I'm used to seeing busy, and noticed things we've probably passed in a rush a million times. A fall garden. Cool fixtures on buildings. The light through the narrow streets lined with tall buildings. In the hush of a Saturday morning, it was a new discovery.

Then we turned back and walked all the way along the Rose Kennedy Greenway. We cut over and walked through the