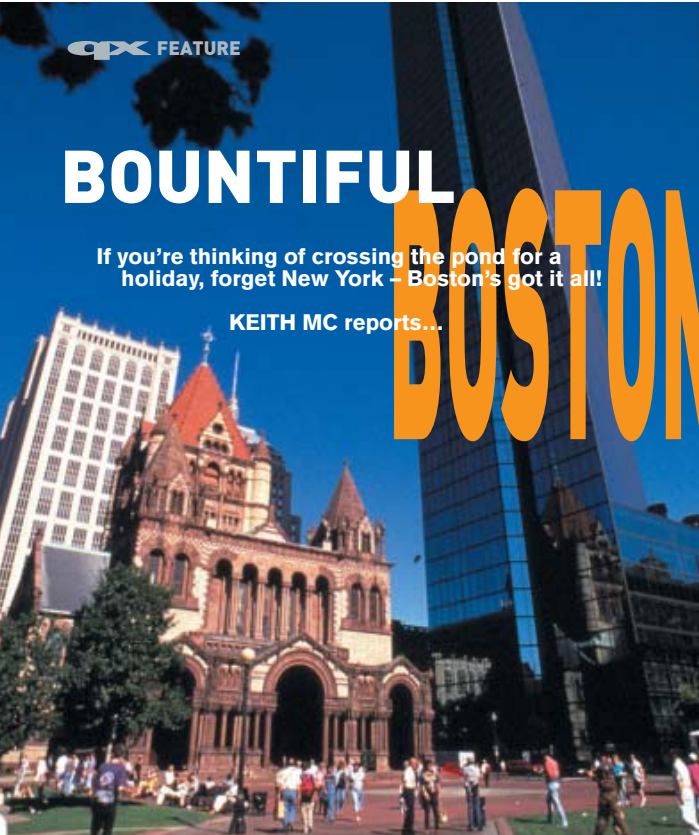


BOUNTIFUL BOSTON

If you're thinking of crossing the pond for a holiday, forget New York – Boston's got it all!

KEITH MC reports...



IT seems that we queers are programmed into thinking that the only possible long weekend break in the States is NYC. It's like London only worse – so why do it to yourself? My brunette friend and I were planning yet another trip to NYC this February then suddenly developed the crazy idea of going to Boston instead. This decision caused equal bemusement amongst friends in the UK and, it transpired, the gay guys we met on Boston's varied and thriving gay scene – but we never once regretted giving NYC the cold shoulder. The flying time is exactly the same, about six and half hours, but Boston is everything that NYC isn't – it's European in its outlook and appearance, its inhabitants are very cosmopolitan, welcoming and friendly, and everything's in easy walking distance.

Before arriving in Boston there are three websites you need to check out. Gay.com

America (www.gay.com), which contains a comprehensive city guide, **Bay Windows** (www.baywindows.com) – New England's largest gay and lesbian newspaper and **In News Weekly** (www.innewsweekly.com) – New England's largest gay, lesbian and bisexual newspaper. See there's rivalry on every gay scene!

They contain much useful info but as we found out you can't tell what a place will be like just from a listing so on arriving in Boston head to **Tremont Street**, which is the heart of queer Boston, and check

> **GETTING THERE:** British Airways, American Airlines and Virgin Atlantic all fly direct from LHR.

> **PLACES TO STAY:** **Nine Zero** (www.ninezerohotel.com) on Tremont Street is well worth checking out or alternatively have a browse through www.hotels.com.

> Alternative tour operator **MANAROUND**, tel: 020 8902 7177.

out **We Think The World Of You** – Boston's equivalent to Prowler/Clone Zone. There you can pick up copies of the free papers listed and ask the super-friendly staff where's hot and where's not.

Arriving on the Thursday and leaving on the Monday allowed us to have as full-on a gay weekend as possible. The first club we visited, on Friday, was **Machine**, which is situated next door to **Ramrod** – a leather bar (www.ramrodboston.com). Entry to Ramrod was free although there was a door charge for Machine; alas I can't tell you how much it was as the English accent went down a storm with a barman called Leo, so we got in for free! It was full of gorgeous guys and most closely resembles Heaven, although the downstairs bar in Ramrod was full of pool tables.

Indeed one of the busiest gay bars we went to was called **Fritz**, which was a sports bar, yet had the friendliest security and bar staff we came across. In fact the security guard let my brunette friend borrow his cell-phone to make a call! Once inside two double vodkas and lemonade set us back \$6. That's less than £4. Imagine that in Soho!

Fritz is where most guys start their Saturday night, as we did, later moving on to the most popular gay Saturday night called **Buzz** (www.buzzboston.com) which was rammed with more Abercrombie & Fitch than you could shake a big stick at. There are two dancefloors but plenty of bars to chill in as well and drinks are only a couple of dollars more expensive than in Fritz.

Take note that all clubs close at 2am and there are no bath houses (gay saunas to you and I), yet we still had a ball – just remember that clubs open at 10pm and there's a queue by 9.30.

Some clubs are also very strict when it comes to ID. On our last night we decided to give the Boston 'DTPM' a go. Called **Avalon**, (www.avalonboston.com) it remains one of the biggest and busiest gay nights in the city, but as we were obviously English and didn't have our passports with us, they wouldn't let us in – so be warned. Likewise they're very strict when it comes to serving alcohol, especially in restaurants and bars so even if you're 30+, take some ID with you.

There's never been a better time to visit the States as the dollar's not been this weak for years and Boston is also a shopping heaven. Whether it's the upmarket boutiques on Newbury Street or Tommy Hilf jeans for \$25 from the department stores on Washington Street, Boston's got it all. And the food is to die for as well – one place where you must eat is **Sonsie** (www.sonsieboston.com) but reservations are essential. The waiters are as much to die for as the cocktails and the out-of-this-world food.

Boston Pride takes place on 12th June and **Provincetown**, New England's gay Mecca, isn't far either, so maybe I'll see you there. Next time you're thinking of jetting off to America make sure you give Boston a whirl – you won't regret it.

> With special thanks to **Richard, Christopher (and the brunette) and Kindra Clineff** for pics.



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