



FEATURE : Top New & Updated Boston Hotels

Boston's Best New, Renovated Hotels

Read about the latest and greatest places to bunker down on your Boston vacation.



The lobby at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Boston

Courtesy of the Mandarin Hotel Boston

Boston
by **KIM FOLEY MACKINNON**
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Bad economy or no, there are several new hotels in Boston that have opened in recent months. From Boston's emerging waterfront, the Fairmont Battery Wharf will surely be a draw with its prime location near the North End. Copley Square and the Back Bay, which offer easy access to many of the city's attractions, seem to be exploding with activity, with new hotels and renovated ones opening within weeks of each other. Here are a few of the best new, luxury hotels and boutique lodging in Boston.

New Boston Properties

Fairmont Battery Wharf

This is Fairmont Hotels and Resorts' second property in Boston, and it's a huge departure from the traditional and sumptuous Fairmont Copley Plaza, which opened in 1912. The Fairmont Battery Wharf is quite modern and sits right on the waterfront at Battery Wharf, steps from the North End, Boston's famous Italian neighborhood, and on Boston's Harborwalk, which is being improved and expanded all the time. You can easily walk to the Freedom Trail [read our Freedom Trail Attractions article], Charlestown, the Rose Kennedy Greenway and the Institute of Contemporary Art, making it a snap to get around without a car.

If you do want to be driven, complimentary car service is offered. Later this year, an 18,000-square-foot spa and approximately 33,000 square feet of retail space will open. Utilizing its waterfront location, there's a dock so boaters can pull up for lunch, and a water taxi shuttles travelers back and forth to the airport.

The lobby "living room" is welcoming and comfortable, and you can sip a cocktail and watch the harbor traffic. Rooms have large desks, marble baths, flat screen LCD televisions and in-room laptop safes. Not all the rooms have a water view, so make sure to request one. I found my room to be spacious, though I

wish I had thought to ask for a room with a bath, as I had just a shower. A gym on site has cardio machines and free weights.

* A room at the new Fairmont Battery Wharf.

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A room at the new Fairmont Battery Wharf.

© Courtesy of the Fairmont Battery Wharf

A huge draw for foodies is the hotel's restaurant, Sensing, opened by three-star Michelin chef, Guy Martin, who has a restaurant of the same name in Paris. This is the famous French chef's first restaurant in the United States and it has generated a lot of buzz.

The introductory Only One Way Winter Package rate starts at \$299 per night, with a second night free, through April 15. Overnight valet is \$40. Fairmont Battery Wharf, 3 Battery Wharf; tel. 617-994-9000. www.fairmont.com/batterywharf

Mandarin Oriental Boston

As they say, don't judge a book by its cover, and the Mandarin Oriental Boston is a good example of this. Somewhat staid on the outside, this massive block-long building in the heart of prime real estate on Boylston Street in the Back Bay is a pleasant surprise on the inside.

* The exterior of the new Mandarin Oriental Boston.

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A huge grand lobby welcomes you as you walk in, as do live greeters, stationed by the doors to direct you to the front desk or other parts of the hotel. No expense was spared as evidenced by lobby lithographs, grand staircase wood engravings and artwork by artists whose work has been seen at major venues such as Boston's Museum of Fine Arts.

It's easy to believe the hotel's claim that it has some of the largest rooms in the city—the smallest is 400 square feet. Every room has ample seating for two, a full-size sofa, a writing desk, a walk-in closet and a 42-inch high definition flat-screen TV. Wireless Internet is available. Bathrooms feature a soaking tub and rain shower head, a large vanity area plus my personal favorite, Aromatherapy Associates bath products. For more



The exterior of the new Mandarin Oriental Boston.

© Courtesy of the Mandarin Oriental

name-brand luxury products, look for Ploh duvets and pillows, 400-thread Frette linens and Frette bathrobes.

The hotel is attached to the Prudential Center, so shoppers can easily walk through without ever going outside, a plus in winter. There's a 24-hour business center, a TechnoGym fitness center and the gorgeous 16,000-square-foot spa. Dining options include M Bar & Lounge, a popular spot with locals, and Asana, which offers Asian and American food.

Two independently owned and beloved Boston restaurants [read our Best Boston Restaurants article], Sel de la Terre and L'Espalier, have made homes within the complex. Hotel rates start at \$595 per night. Mandarin Oriental Boston, 776 Boylston St., tel. 617-535-8888. www.mandarinoriental.com/boston

* Find luxury at a fraction of the price at The Inn @ St. Botolph.

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Find luxury at a fraction of the price at The Inn @ St. Botolph.

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Inn @ St. Botolph

This sweet little boutique hotel, with just 16 suites, is a stylish bargain located near Copley Square. The Inn @ St. Botolph is the sister property of the luxury downtown hotel XV Beacon. It's got many of the same luxe touches as XV, at a fraction of the cost, however the 19th-century brownstone hotel offers "abbreviated" services. There are no valets, doormen, a front desk or even room keys. Access to the building, as well as your room, is by secure key pay; once you book a room online, a code is sent to you.

The large suites feature a funky urban look, luxurious linens and kitchenettes stocked with dishes. Free wireless Internet; a small, but adequate workout room; and a continental breakfast are all included. Just blocks from shopping on Newbury Street, great restaurants in the Back Bay and the subway, it's convenient to everything. I actually enjoyed just coming in and out of the hotel without staff around. You can pretend for a little while that the historic building is your own. Rates start at \$129. The Inn @ St. Botolph, 99 St. Botolph St., tel. 617-236-8099. www.innatstbotolph.com

Newly Renovated Boston Hotels

The Colonnade Hotel

This independently owned Colonnade Hotel is one of my favorites in the city, and I was glad to see it get a \$20 million facelift in late 2008. I especially appreciate the environmental upgrades, which include energy-efficient and soundproof windows (that actually open), a heating system that is activated when

you check in and is deactivated at checkout, and lights activated by sensors. You need soundproof windows because the hotel sits on busy Huntington Avenue, in the thick of the action.

Guest rooms and suites offer floor-to-ceiling windows, pillow-top mattresses, down comforters and iPod docking stations, while bathrooms have large marble vanities, rain showers and a Colonnade Hotel tradition—a yellow rubber ducky that is yours to keep.

The hotel has the only rooftop pool in the city, and its views are spectacular. Sipping a cocktail at the poolside bar is great fun. A 1,000-square-foot fitness center has cardio equipment and weights. Brasserie Jo, a charming French bistro with delicious food, is located on the property. Rates start at \$219. The Colonnade, 120 Huntington Ave., tel. 617-424-7000. www.colonnadehotel.com

* Enjoy the view of Boston from the city's only rooftop pool at the Colonnade Hotel.

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© Courtesy of the Colonnade Hotel

Copley Square Hotel

A landmark hotel, the Copley Square Hotel opened in 1891, was in desperate need of a new look and renovations. More than \$17 million later, the 143-room property has a sexy, contemporary feel. Reopened in January 2009, the rooms now feature pillow-top beds, workstations with ergonomic chairs and complimentary Wi-Fi. Other perks include free coffee, tea and hot chocolate in the lobby 24 hours a day, a hosted "Wine Down" hour at 5 p.m., and twice-daily housekeeping.

The adorable lounge called Minibar offers mini-bottles of liquor (there are no mini bars in the hotel rooms), and the crowd is not just guests. XHALE, the hotel's restaurant, which opened Feb. 27, 2009, offers a casual setting and American fare. Rates start at \$159. Copley Square Hotel, 47 Huntington Ave., tel. 617-536-9000. www.copleysquarehotel.com