

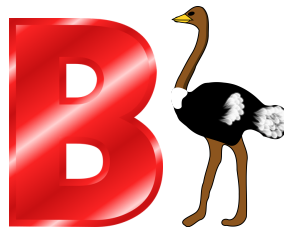
Guide to Boston

The Right Honorable Travis Dillon's *SOON-TO-BE RENOWNED* Guide to Boston

Note: Anything in **pink** is something I haven't tried yet.

INTRO TO BOSTRIDGE GEOGRAPHY

The Boston metropolitan area is composed of a bunch of abutting cities. The main ones are Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville. Sometimes Cambridge and Somerville together are referred to as Camberville. I like to refer to Cambridge and Boston together as Bostridge, like this:



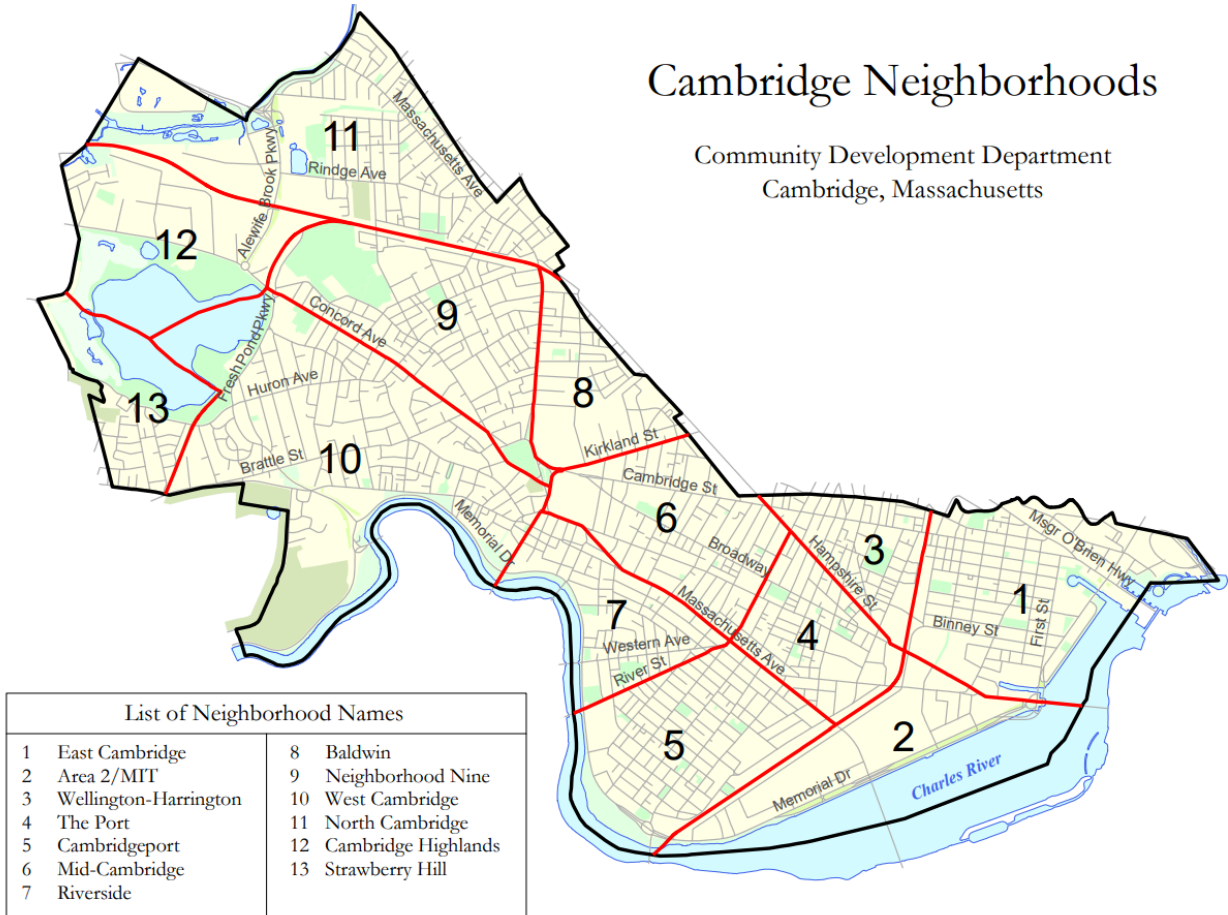
MAPS

A main navigational tool in the Boston area are the "Squares", which are not, in fact, squares, but instead notable street intersections with lively things happening around them. The main squares of Cambridge are (in order of east to west) Porter Square, Harvard Square, Central Square, Inman Square, Kendall Square; the main squares of Somerville are Davis Square and Union Square.

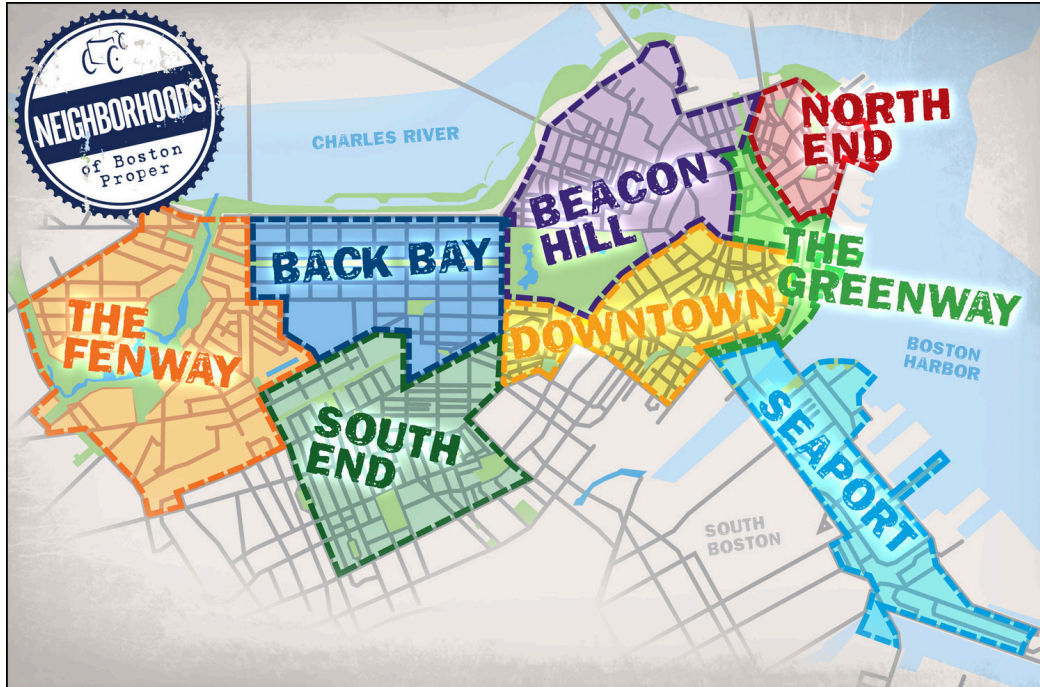
Here is a map of the Cambridge neighborhoods:

Cambridge Neighborhoods

Community Development Department
Cambridge, Massachusetts



And here is a map of the Boston neighborhoods closest to downtown:



Many people will say “Southie” instead of “South Boston”. (Strangely, in this map, Southie doesn’t get a color.)

ACTIVITIES

HOW TO SEE WHAT'S ON: MAILING LISTS + EVENT CALENDARS

[Cambridge Day](#) has a weekly calendar of interesting happenings; I recommend it.

[ArtsBoston](#) mailing list – great place to see what performance events are coming up.

Subscribe to the companion **BosTix** mailing list for discounted tickets.

A [redditor](#) has been posting things to do each weekend. You can subscribe as a [newsletter](#).

Here are some that are useful for (East) Cambridge

[Kendall Square](#); the most relevant events may be those in the [MIT Open Space](#)

[Cambridge Public Library](#) and [Boston Public Library](#) and [Somerville Public Library](#) events calendars

SHOWS

tickets

[BosTix](#) — discounted tickets for all theatre, musicals, etc. events throughout the Boston area, plus an arts calendar and mailing list (great place to see what’s upcoming)

Broadway in Boston has student rush tickets for \$30, and they're *very* worth it.

theatre + musicals

Citizens Opera House and **Emerson Colonial Theatre** — day-of rush tickets for students (most performances; call ahead to ensure availability; ballet is cash only)

The Rockwell black box theatre; events often on the sillier side (Shitfaced Shakespeare; stand-up; a musical about Boston public transit) but they have a variety of events

The Huntington Theatre black box theatre; [student tickets](#) available online

Greater Boston Stage Company — in Stoneham, accessible via car, but with great, fun plays; [student tickets](#) available by phone or in person

North Shore Music Theatre (Beverly)

American Repertory Theatre (Harvard Square)

Central Square Theater (Central Square) has [student discounts](#) for ticket packages: \$15 per ticket!

film

See screenboston.com for a central listing of the movies playing at the repertory theatres (Brattle, Coolidge, Somerville)

The Landmark (near Kendall Square) features foreign and independent films along with more popular releases

Somerville Theatre (Somerville) popular films and older, not-so-well-known films in an ornate theater. They also have ice cream.

The Brattle (near Harvard) shows independent, foreign, and classic films.

Coolidge Corner Theater (Coolidge Corner) lots of special features and events.

Plus a few AMC theatres scattered around

[Independent Film Festival](#) one week *full* of independent films at theaters throughout Boston (end April / beginning May)

[Belmont World Film](#) international movies throughout the year; plus an *international film festival* in March and a *children's film festival* in January (the children's movies are not just for children; they look really good, too)

comedy

Union Comedy (Union Square) improv comedy. Subscribe to the email list for two free tickets

Improv Asylum (North End) improv comedy

Laugh Boston (Seaport) stand-up

SoBar (North End) sober improv + stand-up

Duck Duck Goofs (Prospect Hill) stand-up, cheap drinks

Nova Comedy (several locations) itinerant improv group. [website](#)

Lil Chuck (Downtown) hosts comedy shows. [website](#)

The Comedy Studio (Harvard Square) Stand-up & open mics. Student discount: 50% off with code STUDENT & an .edu email

music

Boston Symphony Orchestra

The Lilypad (Inman Square) “clubhouse for the area’s best players”, according to Cambridge Day newspaper.

The Cantab Lounge (Central Square)

Club Passim (Harvard Square) Folk music.

The Bebop (Fenway)

Berklee College of Music performances

Berklee **Summer in the City** [link](#) mini concerts (summer only)

BPL **Concerts in the Courtyard** [link](#) series, June–August

Concert in the Park [link](#) downtown Boston, one day in June

[Musical Intelligencer](#) for upcoming classical music

[Jazz Boston](#) for upcoming jazz

[Celebrity Series of Boston](#) lists performances by more well-known musicians. If you’re 35 or younger, you can get tickets for \$35.

lectures / distinguished talks / etc

The **Boston Speakers Series** looks super cool: Very interesting people come deliver (presumably) very interesting talks. Tickets only for the whole season, and the cheapest are \$450, so I haven’t gone yet :/

other

Blue Man Group has [student tickets](#)

MUSEUMS

You can get free tickets to most museums through any of the local libraries: [BPL](#) or [CPL](#)

Museum of Fine Arts (Fenway)

Institute of Contemporary Art (Seaport)

Museum of Science (East Cambridge) Large enough to spend more than a whole afternoon there, plus an IMAX Theatre

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (Fenway) Personal collection of a rich 19th-century collector in a building constructed expressly for housing the collection. No labels or explanatory information; densely packed rooms. Nice central garden, cool architecture of the building. I recommend getting a tour if you're looking to learn; wandering is enough if you're happy to admire.

Mapparium (Back Bay) short + cool: a 30-foot-diameter globe you can walk inside

Harvard Museum of Natural History (Harvard Square)

Aquarium (Downtown Boston) fun if you're in the area (small penguins, otters, jellyfish, a sea turtle, lots of fish)

Astronomical Observatory [open nights](#) ! (Wednesdays 8:30pm (April–September); tickets released Thursdays at 11am, sell out within a few minutes; can show up without a ticket but no guarantee of admittance) ([Harvard](#) also has open nights, but less frequently)

Museum of Bad Art (Roxbury)

Metropolitan Waterworks Museum (Brookline)

Ether Dome (West End of Boston) at Massachusetts General Hospital (4th floor), free to see. A surgical theater that was the site of the first public display of surgical anesthesia; there's also a skeleton, sarcophagus, and mummy. (Not really a museum, but historical.)

THINGS TO SEE & DO

The **Freedom Trail** a 2.5-mile path through downtown Boston & Charlestown that will take you through many of the historical houses and sites. [Paid guided tours](#) leave periodically from the Boston Common, but it's easy enough to follow the trail yourself—grab a map from the visitors center at Boston Commons for a few dollars, or a free one from Faneuil Hall. A few historic The Black Heritage Trail highlights this history and influence of the Black community in Boston; there are [free tours](#) from May to October. The National Parks Service also has a free audio tour ([online](#) or on the NPS app).

Winthrop Lane A short cobblestone lane in Downtown, inlaid with tiles representing Boston landmarks and history. Fun and quirky.

Holocaust Memorial by Haymarket. Small but moving; worth seeing if you're near the area.

Independence Wharf Observation Deck [info](#) free, open to public

Taza Chocolate Factory is a local chocolate manufacturer in Somerville! They make really good chocolate and offer **tours**. (If you go on a weekday, there's a good chance you'll be the only one there, and you'll have a great time talking about chocolate with the tour guide.)

Candlepin Bowling @ Sacco's Bowl Haven or American Flatbread. Really fun as a group!

Roxy's Grilled Cheese Arcade near MIT on Massachusetts Avenue. Grilled cheese shop in front; 21+ arcade & bar in the back.

Line dancing at [Loretta's Last Call](#) near Fenway; Tuesday 8–11pm, Sundays 7–10pm

Paddle Boston [kayak rentals](#) throughout Boston (including Cambridge, by Longfellow Bridge)

The Clayroom Paint your own pottery (and lessons in using a pottery wheel, if you want to create your own) [website](#)

Author events at the Harvard Bookstore (Harvard Square). Live interviews or book readings with authors. Often these are free events, followed by signings. [link](#)

MBTA Ferries The public transit agency also runs some ferries. On a sunny day, it's a really nice way to see the skyline of Boston. [info](#)

Duck Tour A tour of Boston on an amphibious vehicle. [info](#)

Thursdays on the Lawn [info](#) in Jamaica Plain, 4pm to dusk in the summer (starting June 1). Musicians, food trucks, beer garden, a big green lawn, and assorted events. Looks like a good time

Makerspace at Cambridge Public Library (Harvard Square) Learn to use (and then use!) laser cutters, 3D printers, sewing machines, or use the recording studio. [link](#)

Revere Beach proudly advertises itself as America's First Public Beach. You can get there by the Blue Line. It's not a tropical beach, but it is sandy and not crowded (even on Labor Day weekend). It's long, too—great for a long beach walk.

Porchfest Once a year in the spring, musicians fill the porches of hosts in Somerville, and you can walk around for hours and enjoy the many different kinds of music. (Other towns in the area host Porchfests throughout the spring and summer; Somerville's is largest.)

ice skating

Ice skating in the Boston Common [website](#)

Simoni Skating Rink [website](#)

Skate @ Canal District [website](#)

sports

Go to a Red Sox (baseball) or Bruins (hockey) game. The Red Sox offer [student tickets](#) for very cheap.

CLASSES

Improv classes at [Union Comedy](#) in Somerville or [Improv Asylum](#) in Boston. [Nova Comedy's](#) Improv Gym is a great way to get more improv practice.

Dance Classes at [Dance Complex](#) in Cambridge

Cooking Classes at the [Cambridge School for Culinary Arts](#)

WALKS + HIKES

walks

Beacon Hill & North End

Esplanade

Charlestown

Harvard Yard, MIT

Boston Common + Public Garden

Newbury Street & Commonwealth Street

Mt. Auburn Cemetery in West Cambridge is peaceful and green with flat, winding walking trails. The Washington Tower has a nice view (climb 122 steps) of Cambridge and Boston.

Hike Boston Hikes in green spaces around the Boston area led by Park Rangers

Harvard Arboretum (Jamaica Plain)

hikes

Middlesex Fells Slightly north of Somerville. Lots of trails, including some rockier ones and some flat; beautiful on a sunny day, and much of the trails can't see the city.

while you're walking . . .

if you're here in June/July, check [this map](#) of publicly accessible fruit bushes and trees; maybe you can get some tasty berries along the way 😊

CALM PLACES

Christian Science Reflecting Pool a long pool (not for swimming) by the Christian Science Church lit by large pretty lights. Often quiet.

Pier by Longfellow Bridge — my go-to place in East Cambridge for a relaxed space at night. The underside of Longfellow Bridge is lit up at night, and it looks really nice.

Boston Public Library courtyard

Urban Park Rooftop Garden in Kendall Square

Tenshin-en calm garden in MFA ([info](#))

RECURRING ACTIVITIES & GROUP EVENTS

Library book groups, including cookbook groups: [Cambridge Public Library](#), [Somerville Public Library](#), [Boston Public Library](#), and a [few others](#)

Cambridge Zen Center. Everyone is welcome to join for the meditation practices. [website](#)
Drop Clock Club Eat at a local restaurant in a group. Casual way to meet new people (and the restaurant choices are very good). [website](#)

Cambridge Public Library Makerspace [website](#)

Volunteer [in Cambridge](#)

Puzzled Pint is a [monthly event](#) where you can solve puzzlehunt- or escape-room-style puzzles with a team at a local bar.

casual sports leagues

[VOLO sports](#) (cornhole, kickball, bocce ball, pickleball, etc.)

[Better off Bowling](#)

FESTIVALS + SIMILAR

summer

[Scooper Bowl](#) — all-you-can-eat ice cream, with profits going to charity (June)

[Pizza Festival](#)

[Black Arts & Music](#)

[Beantown Beanfest](#)

[The Big E](#) – HUGE New England interstate fair

winter

[Mt. Auburn Solstice](#) (December) — a light display in Mount Auburn Cemetery at night, but this description completely undersells it. It's one of the best events I've been to in Boston: calm, peaceful, wonderful.

ESOTERIA

[Longfellow Bridge Trophy Room](#)

FOOD

v or *vv* means there are several good vegetarian or vegan options, respectively. This does not mean that all options are vegetarian or vegan; if that's the case, I'll mention it.

BREAKFAST

The Neighborhood ✓ (Union Square) Family eatery with big portions, low prices, tasty food. The cream of wheat is amazing. (You think I'm being ridiculous. Try it.)

Brookline Lunch ✓ (Central Square) The baklava pancakes were too sweet for me (but some people love them!); their savory options are really good

The Friendly Toast ✎ styles itself as an old-timey diner joint, has breakfast all day. Locations in Back Bay and Harvard Square.

Veggie Galaxy ✎ (Central Square) All-vegetarian diner, and everything can be made vegan; serves breakfast all day.

S&S Restaurant ✓ (Inman Square) Classic family restaurant

Sofra ✓ (West Cambridge) Middle-Eastern-style + cafe foods: mezze, shakshuka, 'stuffed flatbreads' and shawarma, pastries. Busy on weekends; arrive before 11:00 or be prepared to wait in line. People queue for a reason—this food is *good*.

Mamaleh's ✓ (East Cambridge) Jewish deli serving breakfast and lunch.

SANDWICHES

"Sandwiches?" you ask. You can get mediocre sandwiches in lots of places, of course. But there are a surprising number of places in Boston that make astoundingly good ones—much better than the slapdash Subway-level meal you're imagining. Quality bread, fillings, and careful combinations of ingredients for flavor and texture can make a sandwich a truly satisfying meal. A number of these places are open only for lunch.

Porter & Davis Square

Dave's Fresh Pasta ✓ (Davis) A number of options, and customizable (most toppings no extra charge)

P&K Delicatessen (between Inman & Porter) Classic deli sandwiches

Shirley Eat More Sunshine ✎ (Davis) Focaccia sandwiches. Always at least one vegan option.

Sandüich Republic (near Davis)

Near-ish Inman Square

All-Star Sandwich Bar ✓

Wine & Cheese Cask (between Inman & Porter) renowned. Someone even made unauthorized stickers due to the quality of these sandwiches.

Harvard Square

Cardullo's Gourmet Shoppe Italian sandwich counter (also foods & sweets from Europe)

West Cambridge

Hi-Rise Bread Company ✓ tasty but expensive

Union Square & East-ish Cambridge

Vinal General Store ✓ (Union Square) Also soft serve

Vinal Bakery ✓ (Union Square) fresh-made English muffins (and English muffin sandwiches)

Elmendorf ✓ (East Cambridge) Also pastries

Mamaleh's ✓ (Kendall Square) Their smoked mushroom is astounding (and I often don't like mushrooms)

Si Cara ✓ (Central Square) also pan pizza

PRB Boulangerie (Kendall Square) French sandwiches (and pastries)

Downtown Boston & North End

Table Mercato ✓ (North End) serves focaccia sandwiches (and a selection of Italian pantry items). Also open during dinner hours.

Bricco Salumeria (North End). *Huge* Italian sandwiches—bring a friend or buy for 2 meals. (Only veg option is eggplant parmesan.)

Monica's Mercato ✓ (North End). Classic Italian sandwiches. A few veg options (caprese, mixed veg, eggplant parmesan).

Sam La Grassa's ✓ (Downtown)

Chacarero ✓ (Downtown) Chilean sandwiches, plus beef empanadas

Crane River Cheese Club (Downtown) no vegetarian options

Brookline

Michael's Deli ✓ (Coolidge Corner). NY-stye deli, amazing quality. Excellent sandwiches, outstanding potato knish. Not many vegetarian sandwiches (egg salad, cheese, breakfast sandwiches / bagels), but plenty of other options to make a meal: soup, salad, knish, blintz, latkes, stuffed cabbage, noodle kugel

Bagel sandwiches

Black Sheep Bagel Cafe ✓✓ (Harvard)

Bagelsaurus ✓ (Porter)

Mamaleh's ✓ (Kendall / East Cambridge)

Other notable shops

Al's Cafe (various locations around Boston) Enormous sandwiches (more workaday, not as specialty) for cheap(er). (But I do know someone who got food poisoning from Al's, so YMMV.)

Flour Bakery ✓ (various locations) has sandwiches & grain bowls that are somewhat popular, but I find underwhelming.

LUNCH

many of these places are often open for dinner, as well.

(also see the [Pizza](#) section below)

S&S Restaurant ✓ (Inman Square) Classic family restaurant

Pita Cambridge ✓ (Inman Square) tasty falafel! herbaceous and crispy (fried fresh, I think), and less expensive than average.

Shanghai Fresh (Central Square) has homemade soy milk and fried dough on weekends.

Amba ✓ (East Cambridge) tasty pitas, bowls. Plus extras, like shawarma fries and halva shake.

Punjab Express ✓ (Harvard Square) Lunch buffet.

Orinoco ✓ (Harvard Square) Venezuelan. Surprisingly tasty simple salad.

Falafel Place ✓ (Winter Hill, near Magoun Square) Falafel & halal meats. The falafel wrap is flavorful and tasty, much better than I expected.

Pikalo (East Boston, Jamaica Plain). Truly amazing empanadas at a good price.

Tatte ✓ (chain) has a variety of savory foods for sit-in or takeout. Everything I've had has been great.

Jamaica Mi Hungry ✓ (Downtown Boston) Jamaican food (surprise, surprise). Delicious and chock-full of flavor. For a cheap (\$5), delicious smaller meal, get a patty (essentially a Jamaican empanada).

Fresh food fast

The biggest Boston lunch chains are all essentially "fast food but healthy" places. In my opinion, if you're in search of a salad, Sweetgreen is a nice choice. Otherwise, they're nothing special.

Your tour:

Sweetgreen ✗ good salads

Clover ✗ is "fast Israeli" but with a weird tech/MIT vibe. Entirely vegetarian.

CAVA ✗ churns out industrialized Americanized Mediterranean food in much the same way that Chipotle does Mexican.

Dig like Chipotle for “healthy American” (think: grain bowls with chicken + broccoli + sweet potatoes + rice)

Life Alive 🌱 grain bowls, salads, wraps, soups, açai bowls

PIZZA

All-Star Pizza Bar 🌱 (Inman Square) typical crust, but with many topping choices, including some unusual ones. Also sells slices

Veggie Crust 🌱 (Union Square) typical crust, but all-vegetarian, with many vegan options, and many unusual toppings: eggplant, paneer tikka masala, falafel, . . .

Si Cara 🌱 (Central Square) fancy, puffy burnt dough style, with creative toppings. Sells pan-pizza slices at lunch

Area Four 🌱 (Central Square) regular-style, mix of creative & typical toppings

Double Zero 🌱 (Back Bay) vegan pizzeria.

Real Italian Gusto (Medford) is what my Italian housemate always ordered.

Gran Gusto (Cambridge) is the other place my Italian housemate ordered from.

Pinocchio's 🌱 (Harvard Square) Sicilian-style. Also sells slices. (Plus subs)

Union Square Pizza 🌱 (Union Square) The internet claims their Indian food is the only thing worth getting. So I'm curious if the Internet is right.

Joe's Pizza 🌱 (Harvard) NY-style slices; more expensive, but if it's what you're looking for . . .

Mortadella Head 🌱 (Davis) went viral for their mozzarella sticks and “chopped Caesar salad sub”. Sells slices.

Dragon Pizza 🌱 (Davis) by the slice

Galleria Umberto 🌱 (North End) is a no-frills pizza place and Boston institution. They have 1 type of pan pizza (cheese), plus calzones and arancini. Cheap for Boston, especially the North End.

Dolce (North End) chewy-crust pan margherita pizza

DINNER

Asmara 🌱 (Central Square) *wonderful* Eritrean food. Get one of the “combination” plates to try many different things.

Basta Pasta 🌱 (Central Square-ish) Big plates of pasta, tastes like solid homestyle cooking. The baked stuffed eggplant is a great veg option.

Coast Cafe (Central Square-ish) “Soul food”

Silk Road Uyghur Cuisine (East Cambridge) has basically no veg options, but many other people say they're very good.

Orale 🌱 (East Cambridge) Great burritos.

Punjabi Dhaba ✓ (Inman square) "Roadside Indian food". One of my favorite Indian restaurants.

Turkish Lazuri Cafe ✓ (Allston) Tasty food, friendly people, and a cute environment.

Yoma ✍ (Allston) Such good food. Try the pickled tea salad, a traditional Burmese food.

Vejigantes ✓ (South End) Puerto Rican.

Dosa-n-Curry ✍ (Union Square) Tasty South Indian food (all vegan). And Tuesday is dosa night: all-you-can-eat dosa for a flat rate 😊

Union Square Pizza ✍ (Union Square) is secretly very good at making Indian food. The inside is kinda dingy, so only order takeout.

Highland Kitchen ✓ (Somerville) on Highland Avenue. Interesting and tasty American cuisine

India Quality ✓ (Kenmore Square) Good food, fancier space.

Red White ✍ (Back Bay) vegan ramen, very umami

9zaab ✓ (East Cambridge) Really good Thai food

Suya Joint ✍ (Roxbury) So f*cking good. If you're ever near, go. Nigerian food, with both meaty and vegetarian options.

La Posada ✍ (Somerville) Latin American food

Kung Fu Kitchen (Coolidge Corner). Soup dumplings and hand-pulled noodles.

BAKERIES

✓ *All bakeries listed here have plentiful vegetarian options.* ✓

Tatte (chain throughout the Boston area) Mediterranean-inspired meals, pastries, and desserts. Brunch on weekends.

Flour Bakery (chain throughout the Boston area) Offers sandwiches and is popular for their pastries. Known for their sticky buns.

Their kouign-amann is also very good (crunchy, soft, and chewy, sweet and salty; consider splitting it if you're not looking to indulge in sugar).

Top Bread and **Great Taste** and nearby bakeries (Chinatown). Egg tarts, plus many other tasty baked goods, both savory and sweet. Some shops are cash only.

Mariposa Bakery (Central Square)

Elmendorf (East Cambridge) has muffins and pastries.

Praliné (Central Square) French. Good croissants, plus quiche + French sandwiches.

Bakey (Boston Commons) European-Israeli bakery with babka as their featured product, baked fresh throughout the day. (Their bagels disappoint, though; they're like dinner rolls in the shape of a bagel.)

Clear Flour (Brookline, near Packard's Corner); excellent breads. Routinely called the "best bakery in Boston"

La Saison (West Cambridge) some of the best sourdough bread I've ever had

Hi-Rise (West Cambridge)

Yafa Bakery (Porter Square) Palestinian bakery & cafe. The stuffed dates are transcendent and all the savory food is great. Wonderful chai, too.

PRB Boulangerie (East Cambridge) French. Good croissants.

La Sultana (East Boston) Colombian bakery: cheese balls, pastries, empanadas. Very tasty.

Mahalab (Porter) Mediterranean; mainly savory

Nine Winters Bakery (West Cambridge) Korean–American bakery fusion

Imagine / Kismet (West Cambridge) comfy cafe run by Iggy's Bakery

SWEETS

All places listed here have plentiful vegetarian options.

Mike's Pastry (Harvard Square & North End) Good cannoli, ricotta pie, pastry cream croissants, Boston cream pie, etc. Cash only.

Modern Pastry and **Bova's Bakery** (open 24 hours!), also in the North End, are popular with the locals as well

Levain Bakery (Back Bay) churns out monstrously large, mind-bogglingly good chocolate chip cookies.

LA Burdick (Back Bay, Harvard Square) has an indulgent hot chocolate

Gâté Come des Filles (Inman Square) Chocolate shop. Luxurious hot chocolate in the winter, and iced chocolate (!) in the summer.

Ice cream

Lots of options all over the Boston area. They're all pretty good; just hop in a place and you'll likely be happy with the results.

That is, unless you're a connoisseur, in which case, please enjoy the following notes I have made:

The best ice cream texture that I've had was at **Forge Baking Company** (Union Square): smooth and thick, almost chewy. **Gracie's Ice Cream** (Union Square) probably has the most off-the-wall flavors in the area (for example: black raspberry Oreo Reese's; apricot gingersnap; chocolate Frito pie; butter ice cream with M&Ms and Junior Mints; etc.), but they have more typical flavors as well, and the ice cream has both good texture and flavor. I had the Sweet Cream, which you might expect to be meh, and I was blown away. You can also find Gracie's at **Earnest Drinks** near MIT (which sells scoops and pints) and at smaller markets (like *Formaggio*) around the area.

In the *East Cambridge* & MIT area, people will fight between **Toscanini's** (which I think has poor texture) and **New City Microcreamery** 🌱 (which has good flavors—try the baklava, which astoundingly manages to have crispy pieces of phyllo pastry in it).

In nearby *Inman Square*, there is also **Christina's Ice Cream**, which has a large variety of interesting flavors (rose petal; lime & mint; carrot cake; adzuki bean). I had molasses ice cream here, and it was pleasantly chewy. If you go to **Christina's Spice & Specialty Food**, you can find other flavors, too (chocolate Chinese 5-spice; roasted black sesame; masala chai; and so on).

If you're looking for vegan options, go to **FoMu** 🌱, which has *only* vegan flavors; they're delicious. (Locations in North End, South End, and Fenway.)

The local ice cream chain is **J.P. Licks** 🌱 (locations throughout Boston), which mostly has typical flavors, but a few outliers (past flavors include noodle kugel; cucumber; fruity pebbles cereal milk). They let you mix as many flavors as you like even in the "1 scoop" size, which is super nice. Among all the stores, J.P. Licks probably serves the largest scoops.

Places I haven't tried:

Honeycomb Creamery 🌱 (Harvard Square) has Taco Tuesdays, where you can get your ice cream in a waffle-cone taco. **Van Leeuwen** is a national chain with a location in Harvard Square; their sour cherry flavor really astounded me.

If your goal is indulgence, direct your attention to **The Scoop N Scootery** (Arlington, Allston, East Cambridge), which has outrageous ice cream sundaes. You can order online for delivery.

Crescent Ridge Farm makes their own ice cream, which you can find at supermarkets throughout the area and at Boston Public Market in the North End.

Far Out blends freeze-dried fruit into their soft-serve ice cream right before serving, which is a great concept whose execution I was disappointed by.

SERVICES

NEWS

[Cambridge Day](#) has Cambridge & Somerville news and events (free). They also publish a (physical!) paper called *The Week*, which covers local news and upcoming events. It's free and you can find it at any library and many local businesses.

[Boston.com](#) also has Boston events and news, but it's more BuzzFeed-y.

There is also the [Boston Globe](#), if you want to be completely overwhelmed by news. (Paywall, but you can bypass it by disabling Javascript for that site)

GROCERIES

Market Basket is beloved because prices are low and produce quality is high. When the UK royalty William and Kate came to town and their security blocked access to Market Basket, locals grumbled and a city councillor apologized, saying he “didn’t invite these people”.

Star Market is expensive and the produce is in general not good. (It is owned by Albertson’s, which also owns Safeway, if you’re familiar with these brands.)

Whole Foods and **Trader Joe’s** are what you expect.

Pemberton Farms (near Porter Square) has good produce, cheaper than Star Market. (The packaged foods are more expensive, though.)

Haymarket (Downtown Boston, near Boston Public Market) On Fridays and Saturdays, vendors crowd the streets to sell produce at a steep discount (2 bell peppers for \$1 or 3 mangoes for \$2). Cash only. *Excellent* place to load up on produce for cheap.

How does it work? The Haymarket vendors buy the produce in bulk from area supermarkets, which are clearing stock that’s near the end of its shelf life. So you should cook what you buy within the first few days of buying it (especially easily damaged foods, like berries and tomatoes). But even if you have to throw out a portion of the food, the price you paid will still be a deal.

Too Good to Go is an app that allows you to buy a “surprise bag” from local restaurants, bakeries, and grocery stores, which is leftover food at a discount. Since the food is whatever is left over, you don’t know what you’ll get until you arrive; but the discount is steep. (And if you get a surprise bag from a good restaurant, the uncertainty is part of the fun!)

if you’re looking for ingredients from a particular region . . .

Little India (Union Square), **Foodland** (Porter Square) for Indian

Reliable Market (Union Square) for Korean and Japanese (plus lots of seafood).

Super 88 (Allston) or **C-Mart Supermarket** (Chinatown) are large East Asian supermarkets.

Table Mercato (North End), **Capone Foods** (Union Square), **Eataly** (Back Bay) for Italian foods & fresh pasta; **Dave’s Fresh Pasta** (Davis Square) also has (you guessed it) fresh pasta.

Al Bara Market (Inman Square) has a variety of mediterranean and Turkish foods (olives, dates and date syrup, saffron water and rose water, labneh, pita, blackberry juice, fig jam, grape leaves, baklava halwa, big containers of spice, . . .) and is a halal butcher. But they don't have prices, so ask before you buy.

Tropical Dimension (Inman Square) has Jamaican foods, including fufu mixes, cassava flour, soft drinks, palm nuts, and ackee. Also no prices on many items, so ask before you buy.

Yoma (Allston) small selection of Burmese foods (including fermented and pickled tea leaves). See online stock [here](#)

Turco Market (Allston) has some Turkish supplies. See online stock [here](#)

Bazaar supermarkets (Allston) Russian and Eastern European foods (rye bread, pierogi, pickled things, eggplant dips, fresh-baked goods, prepared foods & meats, poppy seeds, cheeses, sausages, etc.)

Sophia's Greek Pantry and **Eastern Lamejun Bakers** and **Super Vanak** (Belmont) Greek and Mediterranean

but where do I get good bread?

Good question. **Iggy's Bread** and **When Pigs Fly** are sold in supermarkets all around Cambridge, and are pretty good. The Davis location of When Pigs Fly has \$3 sourdough loaves on Wednesdays. **Clear Flour** (Brookline) is regularly awarded "best bread" in Boston; **Formaggio Kitchen** (several locations) stocks their bread (and others). **PRB Boulangerie** (East Cambridge) and **Hi-Rise** (West Cambridge) also have fresh breads. In the North End, you can head to **Bricco Panateria**. **La Saison** (North Cambridge) has exceptional loaves.

SPECIALTY PRODUCTS

Christina's Spices & Specialty Foods (Inman Square) has a massive collection of spices, grains, beans, and harder-to-find foods. A lot of fun to look around, and I find something new every time I do.

Superior Nut Company (East Cambridge) has nuts, dried fruits, and nut butters (including pecan and pistachio!). I'm not yet sure the quality is better than Christina's or Star Market, but if you want to buy in bulk (for example, many pounds of nuts), it's notably cheaper.

Elmendorf Baking Supply (East Cambridge) Almost any baking item you could want, plus freshly ground flour (!) and quality masa harina (!)

China Fair (Porter Square) for kitchen and dining supplies (unlike other kitchen supply stores, things are not ludicrously expensive)

Taza Chocolate (Union Square) Tasty chocolate. You can buy Taza Chocolate throughout the area, but the factory is in Union Square and has the largest selection of flavors. I especially like their disc chocolates for their interesting texture.

Formaggio Kitchen (several locations). Extensive cheese selection (you can try samples!), plus assorted specialty products (local and international) and fresh bread.

COOL GIFTS + WARES

[Lilliputian Landscapes](#) makes adorable and stunning scenes using everyday objects and mini figurines.

CAFÉS

I look for: A nice place with quiet or no music to hang out and do some work. Good food is a plus. I don't care about the coffee.

Bloc (Union Square) Used to be a bank building; you can sip your coffee in the vault. Big, cool place to hang out.

Yafa Café (Somerville) Palestinian bakery with *amazing* food. Everything I've had I loved. They give a free mini cup of chai when you come in—and it's astoundingly good. Good place to eat & talk; bad place to work.

Lehrhaus (Somerville) Jewish cafe & "house of learning"; tavern in the evening. Offers classes & community events, plus a co-working pass.

Caffè Nero (chain throughout Boston area) Nice dark wood interiors with books.

Tatte (everywhere) No music, good food.

Elmendorf (East Cambridge) small baking supply store with great baked goods and a cafe nook housing four small tables. Music is quiet; free wifi for 2 hours. Plus their sandwiches are pretty good. Love it.

Gufo (East Cambridge; cafe 'til 4pm). When I went in the morning, almost no one was there. Quiet music, great salt+pepper pecorino scone. Nice outdoor patio; come to the patio at **night** for what looks like a great ambience

PRB Boulangerie (East Cambridge) has lots of pastries (\$4-5 in 2024), a mix of large and small tables, and music that's not loud. (They also sell real bread)

Amba (East Cambridge) Open late (til 8pm). Vibe is okay, food is good.

Satellite (Remnant Brewing) (East Cambridge) Bar in evening; cafe in the morning and afternoon, starting at 8.00 (weekdays) or 9.00 (weekends). Spacious stained wood interior.

Mamaleh's (East Cambridge) is not a cafe but looks uncrowded on weekdays and has good bagels (& Jewish food)

Curio Coffee (East Cambridge) Coffee & waffles (both savory & sweet). Nice early on weekdays, but crowded on weekends. No laptops on weekends.

Lamplighter (The Port [Broadway @ Columbia]). Bar in evening, but cafe 7.30–15.00 (weekdays) or 8.00–14.00 (weekends)

1369 Coffeehouse (Inman Square; Central Square) On weekdays, it's popular but not too busy. Music isn't distracting. Good place to work.

Andala Coffeehouse (Central Square)

Cicada (Central Square) has a cute back yard. Try the **banh mi**

Mariposa (Central Square)

Barismo (Mid-Cambridge, on Broadway). No wifi.

Asaro (Harvard Square) smooth jazz covers of pop classics. Nice woody interior with plenty of space. The breakfast sandwich is very tasty. Pastries are expensive.

Faro Café (Harvard Square) — very busy on weekends

Circus Coop (Harvard Square) Good sandwiches, though expensive. Too small to comfortably work.

Bluestone Lane (Harvard Square) — slightly more formal (they seat you), crowded on weekends; but looks nice

Peet's Coffee (Harvard square)

Hi-Rise Bread (West Cambridge) No music, woody aesthetic, smells like wonderful bread, huge windows with lots of light, great sandwiches. Not much seating, busy on weekends.

Trident (Back Bay, west side) Styled like a cafeteria—not so comfortable as a cafe.

Cafe Vittoria (North End) dark, looks more comfortable for conversing than working

Sip Café (Downtown Boston) completely windows; wanted to go with Olivine but was closed

Beacon Hill Books & Café (Beacon Hill)

Thinking Cup (Boston Common, Back Bay). Dark wood decor & lots of space (in Back Bay location)

L.A. Burdick's (Back Bay) [Also in Harvard Square, but that location is much busier]

Central Perk (Back Bay) *Friends*-themed, I guess. Comfy couches & chairs.

Bittersweet Shoppe (Back Bay)

Library branches can also be nice places to work. The Valente Branch in East Cambridge even has a silent study room, and of course the main branch of the BPL (near Harvard) is great.

Also, the **Cambridge Foundry** is open until 8pm every day and has a nice central atrium to work in. The **Kendall Center** has a [public lobby](#), but I don't know its hours. The **Boston**

Public Market has tables (near the east entrance) which are suitable for working (bathroom code 1810 as of April '24).

Evening hangout/work spaces

Copley BPL (Back Bay) is open 'til 20.00 M–Th

Trident Booksellers & Cafe (Back Bay) is open 8.00–22.00. The cafe has diner-vibes and isn't really comfy.

Cambridge Public Library (main branch) (Harvard Square) is open 9.00–21.00 M–Th

Valente Branch of CPL (East Cambridge) has a silent study room, open until 8pm Wednesday–Friday.

Cambridge Foundry (East Cambridge) open until 8pm every day

Someone recommended **hotel lobby bars** as comfy and fairly uncrowded

Cloud & Spirits?

Satellite?

BOOKSTORES

some stores sell remaindered books, which are new books, but discounted by publishers because they printed too many. The used book scene is great in Cambridge and Boston.

Bryn Mawr Books (West Cambridge) Used book store near Mt. Auburn Cemetery. *Lots of books across genres! The books outside the store are \$1 each. Each month, a different genre of books is 50% off. All profits support scholarships for Bryn Mawr College. (Check their social media or stop by in person to see which genres are discounted.)*

Harvard Book Store (Harvard Square) Used & remaindered in the basement, and there are *lots* of them! Frequent [author talks](#).

Rodney's Bookstore (Harvard Square) Used books, good prices. Big selection of older nonfiction books. Also sells inexpensive postcards (Boston-themed and eclectic) and nice posters.

Brookline Booksmith (Coolidge Corner) Discounted new books at the front of the shop, used books in the basement. Lots of fun housewares, as well.

More Than Words (South End) Nonprofit bookstore that seriously supports foster, homeless, and other disadvantaged youth. New & used books at good prices.

Brattle Book Shop (Downtown Boston) Stacks and stacks of books. If you want to have the experience of looking through oodles of used books, come here.

Commonwealth Books (Downtown Boston near Haymarket). Lots of used books and map prints. Browsing here is like thrifting for books: You have to sort through a bunch of stuff that doesn't fit you, but sometimes you'll stumble upon something good. (Unless you're a history buff, in which case you'll be in heaven here.)

Trident Booksellers & Café (Back Bay) Mainly new books; many [events](#): trivia, author events, speed-dating, poetry open mic, etc.

Porter Square Books (Porter Square; Seaport). Mostly new books.

Pandemonium Books & Games (Central Square) mainly sells board games and card games, but they also have some science fiction and fantasy books in the basement (only new books).

Seven Stars (Central Square) is an astrology/new-age/etc. bookstore that also sells crystals. Only new books.

[BPL Book Sale](#): first Saturday of every even-numbered month. All softcovers \$1, all hardcovers \$2!

HAIRCUTS

Razors Barbershop Reliably excellent cuts; only men's style, though. Locations in Somerville and East Cambridge.

I don't know a good salon, sorry :(

LIBRARIES

BPL has tons of [online resources](#) for language learning, job search, and research. Local libraries also offer many free or discounted museum passes: Here are the links for the [BPL](#) or [CPL](#). The CPL has a [makerspace](#).

There are a *ton* of Little Free Libraries in Cambridge & Somerville—[here's](#) a map. (At the bottom of that page is a little of other useful maps in the area, including [public bathrooms](#).)

MAKERSPACES

The Cambridge Public Library main branch has [one](#). MIT has many; [here's](#) a place to start. And there are [many others](#), too.

HOSTING EVENTS

The [Cambridge Foundry](#) is run by a nonprofit and has affordable room reservations (sliding scale based on income). If you're looking to hold a small event, this could be a great place.

HOTELS

Be prepared to spend Money if you want to stay in a hotel. If you know someone at MIT or Harvard, ask them for a hotel discount code. The most expensive time is June through October. Airbnb is just as expensive as hotels.

If you're willing to stay in a hostel, there are a few in Boston. Otherwise, check out [A Friendly Inn](#), which claims to have better rates (though the website doesn't work for booking—you'll have to call to check).

PUBLIC TRANSIT

You can travel by bus or subway, both run by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). Buses are notoriously late; be prepared to wait. The subway is more reliable.

For directions, you can use the [MBTA's app](#) or Google/Apple Maps.

You can pay for a ride on a bus using cash. This is annoying for all the other passengers and the machine will not give you change. If you have a credit or debit card with contactless payment (aka “tap payment”), you can pay for all bus and subway fares by tapping your card. If you don't, you can go to any subway station and purchase a **Charlie Card**, which you can use to pay on any bus or subway; if you run low, top it up at any subway station. Click [here](#) for a subway map.

Subway directions are labelled strangely: *Inbound* means “toward downtown” and *Outbound* means “away from downtown”. (“Downtown” is defined as the quadrangle formed by the Government Center, Park Street, Downtown Crossing, and State Street stops.) If you want to sound like a local, call the subway “the T”.

Bus stops are marked by signs like this:



Fares are somewhat cheaper for buses than subway. With a Charlie Card, you get a free transfer for up to 2 hours.

AIRPORT

To

If you can conveniently commute to Back Bay, consider the [Logan Express shuttle](#). It's only \$3 round trip—a *lot* cheaper than Lyft/Uber.

Other options: Take the subway to the Blue Line Airport stop, then take the airport shuttle. (This is what I do from East Cambridge.)

Or take the Silver Line SL1 (transfer from the Red Line at South Station). This is okay if you have lots of time, but I find the Blue Line is more reliable.

Or Lyft/Uber.

From

Logan Express is still an option.

The other is to take the blue airport shuttles (free; follow signs for *ground transportation*) to the Blue Line Airport stop. Then take the Blue line *inbound* toward Bowdoin and navigate the subway system to your destination.

Or, take the Silver Line to South Station and navigate from there.

BIKE-SHARE

Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville have a bikeshare system called Blue Bikes. The most convenient way to use it is to download the app.

TRIPS FROM BOSTON

AMTRAK

Use code [V814](#) for a student discount of 15% on any train. If you book ahead, prices can be very reasonable.

NYC

Amtrak is the best option. If you book a few weeks in advance, then it's ~\$40 each way.

Here's a [link](#) for Amtrak sales.

See my [Notes on NYC](#) for more info.

CAPE COD

Idk, I **haven't been** there yet. Here's a relevant [link](#).

DAY TRIPS

Revere Beach (East Boston) It's not a golden-sanded vacation beach, but it does have sand and is America's First Public Beach. Nearby is **Bell Isle Marsh Reservation**, which is a small secluded park, great for reflection or a quiet walk. (Bring bug spray, though—I got 5 bug bites from an hour there.)

Harbor Islands National Park about 30 minute ferry ride from Boston. Very relaxed way to spend the day, and surprisingly not crowded. The best spot on the boat over is at the front (to the left as you enter the boat; behind the concession booth). Ferry runs May through October. [website](#)

Plum Island

MOVING TO BOSTON

Hi! Welcome. Moving to Boston can be a stressful process, so let me at least let you know what you're getting into.

Most leases are for 1 year. Around 70% of all leases begin September 1st. That's what you get for moving to a city of college students. (There are 28 colleges and universities in the Boston area with at least 1000 students.) When you sign a lease, you may have to pay up to 3 months' rent upfront: for the first month of rent, the deposit (up to one month's rent), and the broker's fee (up to one month's rent). This, however, is the maximum you can be

obligated to pay. Do not pay any money before you've signed the lease—there's a good chance that's a scam.

That, in short, is the bad news. Here are my tips for navigating Boston's housing market.

where to look for housing

If you're an MIT student, you could live in the dorms (they have them dorms for grad students, too). There are benefits and drawbacks; you'll have to decide if it's for you.

MIT students, postdocs, and staff can look for off-campus housing on this [MIT website](#). If you're affiliated with Harvard or MIT, you can search these [three facebook groups](#). Facebook groups are also a good place to search for summer sublets.

Otherwise, you can search on all the usual apartment rental sites, or you can work with a broker. (They'll forward apartment listings to you and "help" you find one that fits. Only pay the broker if you sign a lease; if they ask for payment before signing it's a scam or a sleazy broker.)

You may find many apartment listings by a company called SplitSpot. Do not rent from them. Their management is unresponsive and careless, and people routinely have terrible experiences.

what to do before signing a lease

Make sure you see the apartment in person. Sometimes it's less appealing in person, and sometimes online postings are scams. Visiting rules out both possibilities (or at least makes them much less likely.)

And: Do not pay the landlord any money before you sign a lease.

obtaining furniture, etc.

Consider joining a [Buy Nothing](#) group. People post things to give away, anything from silverware to couches.