

## TRAVEL

# The Back Bay is a great neighbourhood to stay while in Boston



The side entrance on Berkely Street.

By Mike Cohen  
The Suburban

BOSTON — It is one of the most trendy neighbourhoods in Boston. Known as the Back Bay ([www.visitbostonbackbay.com](http://www.visitbostonbackbay.com)), this is “the” destination for culture, cuisine, couture, and commerce. Boston’s Back Bay is touted as the shopping, dining, cultural, and nightlife destination in the heart of Boston. It has everything from historic homes and churches, art galleries, fashionable clothing boutiques and hair salons, fabulous restaurants, and charming neighbourhood life

Within just a quarter of a square mile, the Back Bay has world-class architecture, fun activities and attractions, quiet, residential streets, plenty of outdoor waterfront recreational space. So, when my family took a short trip to Boston recently to see one of film and stage’s most extraordinary performers, Idina Menzel, headline her own concert at the Wang Theatre, the Back Bay was our base.

The Wang Theatre is part of the Citi Performing Arts Center, one of the nation’s foremost non-profit performing arts institutions. As New England’s largest cultural venue, it honors all aspects of the performing arts, offering theatre, opera, classical and popular music, one-night engagements, international sporting events and Broadway musicals.

The performing arts have enjoyed a rich and distinguished history in Boston, reaching back nearly 200 years when Charles Bulfinch designed the city’s first playhouse in 1794. With over 85 years of history, the Wang Theatre remains a vital part of Boston’s cultural life and the anchor of Boston’s historic Theatre District.

A mere five minutes from the theatre sits the magnificent Back Bay Hotel, part of the prestigious Doyle Collection ([www.doylecollection.com](http://www.doylecollection.com)). Located in the former headquarters of the Boston Police Department, it is now an even

more arresting proposition after a stunning renovation program that has created a modern-day landmark in this magnificent city. The stylish interior of The Back Bay Hotel offers vibrancy and warmth unique to this luxury Boston hotel and their team complements that warmth with a highly engaging and personal form of service that makes your stay a genuinely luxurious experience.

The hotel is equally well located for exploring the tourist riches of Boston or doing business in this strategically important business capital. Just by the Charles River, this is the perfect base from which to explore or exploit this compact and beautiful city.

The Doyle Collection boasts a selection of eleven “collectively individual” hotels set in the most fashionable quarters of six major cities across Ireland, the U.K. and the U.S. Each hotel has its own unique and contrasting character. Their portfolio of luxury hotels can be found in prime city centre locations in Dublin, Cork, London, Bristol, Boston and Washington DC.

Guest rooms at the Back Bay feature lush fabrics in tranquil shades, down-filled pillows and comforters, and bathrooms with marble and oak. The hotel has a restaurant, the stylish Stanhope Grille and Cuffs, an Irish Bar.

The hotel has valet parking, evening turndown service in deluxe rooms, 24-hour room service, five dedicated meeting rooms, in-room safes, full audio, visual and complimentary wired and wireless internet service, a complimentary 24-hour fitness gym with state-of-the-art equipment, a 24-hour business center, 37" LCD TV's, all natural bath amenities, ADA accessibility and all non-smoking rooms.

There are 225 rooms and suites here in all: superior, deluxe, luxury and the Presidential Suite. We had a unique connecting room setup: one with a king bed and the other with two doubles. A mini fridge and a microwave, which we requested. There was one large door leading to a small hallway with two more doors on each side. You then have the option of leaving them open or ajar or completely closing them. We loved the setup.



The lounge.

The staff here, from the doorman to those at the front desk, are extremely polite and helpful. Five exquisitely designed meeting rooms accommodate five to one hundred people in a range of set-up styles with state-of-the-art equipment. A round-the-clock business center means you can write it, copy it and send it with minimum fuss and maximum efficiency.

When in Boston, my first choice for dining is always Legal Seafoods ([www.legalseafoods.com](http://www.legalseafoods.com)). The chain was born in 1950 when George Berkowitz opened a fish market in the Inman Square neighborhood of Cambridge, Massachusetts. He opened it adjacent to his father Harry's grocery store Legal Cash Market where customers were given "Legal Stamps" (forerunners of S&H green stamps) with their purchases. It's here that the "Legal" name became synonymous with quality and freshness.

In 1968, the Berkowitz family opened its first seafood restaurant, right next to the fish market. The fish was simply prepared, either broiled or fried, and served on paper plates at communal picnic tables. Despite the low-key trappings, the food was second to none and word quickly spread. This early success led to further expansion and now, six decades later with restaurants along the Eastern Seaboard, the family philosophy endures: Legal Sea Foods is a fish company in the restaurant business.

George's son, Roger, has been at the helm since 1992 and has expanded the business into new markets while maintaining the company's focus on its proud tradition and core values. Besides, of course, Massachusetts, there are now Legal Seafood locales in Washington Florida, Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Virginia.

We dined at the Boston Copley Place restaurant, located at the upper level of Copley Place (100 Huntington Avenue) and a seven minute walk from the hotel. It has direct indoor access to both the Westin and Marriott hotels as well as to the Prudential Center. Keep in mind that there is



One of the bedrooms.

also a Legal Seafoods in the Prudential Center and people often show up to the wrong locale. This can be a problem if you have reservations.

Panoramic floor-to-ceiling windows overlook Boston's historic South End. Here the views and the seafood are second to none. . Operating hours here are Monday to Thursday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; and Sundays, noon to 10 p.m.

Our party of three enjoyed a fabulous meal. We started off with a Caesar salad and two bowls of clam chowder, one of which was a clear broth with a lower calorie count. The main menu has so much to choose from. Specials on the night we visited included a swordfish, a salmon and had-dock - all good choices if you are keeping a

kosher-style dining choice. I went for the double stuffed baked shrimp with rice pilaf on the side while the other two members of my party chose quarter and a pound steamed lobsters, nicely cut up and brought to the table with butter, mashed potatoes and coleslaw. Next time I might opt for the surf and turf, filet mignon, marinated grilled chicken, crab cakes or crispy fried fillets.

Well, we definitely have to go back to Boston. This was our first visit in about 10 years. While we had a chance to do some shopping at Copley Place, the Prudential Center and Macy's, we want to return to walk famous Newbury Street and see the various museums, the aquarium and ride the "T" subway to places like Harvard University. Yes, a story to be continued.