

## **Boston Tries to Keep Visitors Coming to the City**

Welcome to This Is America from VOA Learning English. I’m Kelly Jean Kelly.

And I’m Mario Ritter. Today we talk about the city of Boston, Massachusetts. Boston has been in the news recently because of the two bombs that exploded during the Boston Marathon on April 15. Boston is also a popular place for visitors from the United States and around the world—partly because the city played an important role in American history.

Three people died and more than 260 people were hurt at the Boston Marathon bombings. Some of the most seriously injured victims have already said they want to run again. Boston also wants to make sure that travelers keep coming to the city.

Jason Clampet is one of the founders of a company called Skift. Skift studies the travel industry. Mr. Clampet says some travel agencies had to cancel trips to Boston after the bombings. He says no one knew what was happening between the Monday when the bombs exploded and the Friday when the second suspect was captured alive.

“So I think everybody who was planning a trip hit the pause button.”

Mr. Clampet says that in recent weeks, travel to the city has returned to normal. He says one reason is because transportation networks and hotels were not seriously affected. The Boston bombings did not have as big an effect as the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York City or Hurricane Katrina in 2005 in New Orleans.

Mr. Clampet says people come to Boston for many reasons.

“You know, in addition to being the colonial capital in a way, it also has major universities there and some very popular sports teams.”

In fact, Mr. Clampet says more people may want to visit Boston now. He says they may have heard the phrase “Boston strong” that many residents are using to describe their feeling of pride in their city.

“It’s become kind of a fan favorite this year in U.S. tourism. So if a family in the mid-Atlantic is deciding, ‘Oh do I go to Philly this summer for the trip or do I go to Boston,’ or, ‘do I go to DC or do I go to Boston?’ They’ve got a lot of good reasons to go to Boston this year, and I think their heart’s going to point them in that direction.”

Mr. Clampet says international tourists may also be more interested in Boston this year. He says tourism boards around the world announced they were encouraging their citizens to visit Boston.

“And so you had a very rare instance of Tourism Dubai and Tourism Israel agreeing on the same thing. They’re saying, ‘Go to Boston.’”

### **Boston Is One of America’s Oldest Cities**

Boston is the largest city in Massachusetts and the state capital. More than four million people live in the greater Boston area. A little more than 600,000 live in the city itself.

Boston is a center of finance, education and music. And it is a major seaport. The city and nearby communities form the largest industrial center in the New England area of the northeastern United States. Boston occupies about 135 square kilometers along the Atlantic coast.

Boston is one of the oldest cities in the United States. The first people of Massachusetts were Native Americans.

In 1630, a group of Christians known as Puritans arrived from England to escape religious oppression. Many Puritans came from the English city of Boston. So that is what they named their new home. Boston is also known as "Bean Town." Beans were an important trade crop for the city in colonial days.

American schoolchildren learn that Boston is the birthplace of the nation's freedom. Boston is where the war that separated the American colonies from Britain began in 1775.

Today, lots of people learn about the city's part in the American Revolution by walking the Freedom Trail in Boston. This trail is almost five kilometers long. It takes people to 16 historic places. One of these is the Old North Church. Lights placed at the top of the church warned American colonists that the British would soon attack.

Also along the walk is the area where British soldiers shot into a crowd and killed five colonists. The anger that followed helped fire the spirit that produced the American Revolution.

From the Boston Freedom Trail you can also see the first public school in the United States. Students first attended Boston Latin School in 1635.

## **People Love Boston for Many Reasons**

The Boston area is full of colleges and universities. Harvard, in nearby Cambridge, was established in 1636. Harvard is the oldest institution of higher education in the United States. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology is also in Cambridge.

The city of Boston is home to many top medical centers. The city is also known for its museums and libraries. The Boston Public Library opened in 1854 and soon opened the first space just for children. The Children’s Room had more than 3,000 books. Marie Shedlock from France introduced the art of storytelling in the Boston Children’s Room in 1902.

Music lovers have the Boston Symphony. There is also the Boston Pops Orchestra. It performs popular and semi-classical music in the spring and summer. John Williams is a famous American composer who conducted the Boston Pops for 13 years. In 2012, John Williams wrote music to celebrate the 100th anniversary of a very special place in Boston – Fenway Park, where the Boston Red Sox play baseball.

Downtown Boston contains a mix of tall modern office buildings, old factories and historic landmarks. Major building and improvement projects in the 1960s and 1970s gave the city some of its more current look.

But the city also keeps its historic feel. Some narrow streets are still laid with red brick. And 18 hectares of downtown is the park called Boston Common. In the 1600s, women accused of being witches were hanged on Boston Common. During the Revolutionary War, British soldiers camped there.

The Public Garden is a historic botanical garden next to Boston Common. Many people like to ride the boats that look like swans on the lake in the Public Garden.

### **Boston’s Neighborhood Are Like Small Cities**

Boston has neighborhoods with names like Back Bay, North End, South Boston and Roxbury.

Many people of Italian ancestry live in North End. This area is along the waterfront. Ships brought large numbers of immigrants to Boston from southern and eastern Europe between 1880 and 1914. Many Italians arrived to start a new life in America.

The Irish population in Boston began to grow sharply in about 1845. Large numbers of people left Ireland when potato crop failures led to starvation. The traditional center of the Irish-American community in Boston is South Boston, or “Southie.”

The children and grandchildren of the first Irish families in Boston became political leaders of the city. These included politicians like John Francis Fitzgerald. He was known as "Honey Fitz." He served two terms as mayor.

One of his grandsons became a senator from Massachusetts. Then, in 1960, that grandson was elected the 35th president of the United States. His name was John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

“And so my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.”

### **Boston’s Mix of People Help Gives Life to the City**

The population of Boston has been changing. The city's Hispanic and Asian populations have grown. Boston also has a large African-American population.

Black people began to move there in large numbers from the Southern states after World War One ended in 1918. Many African-Americans and Hispanics live in Roxbury, in the center of the city.



Non-Hispanic whites are no longer a majority in Boston. But leaders of other groups say white Bostonians still control the city.

The racial and ethnic mixture of people in Boston helps give life to the city. But it has also caused deep divisions over the years.

In 1974, a federal judge ruled that Boston school officials had illegally separated students by race. The judge ordered the city to transport students to different schools to create a balance between blacks and whites.

Many white parents protested. Some threw rocks at buses that carried black students to white schools.

A new transportation plan will start in 2014. Many more students will go to school closer to their homes. But some parents still criticize the new plan. Efforts at racial balance have failed. Many white families moved their children to private schools. Or the families moved out of the city. Today only about 13 percent of the students in the Boston public schools are white. Most of the students are Hispanic or black, and three-fourths of them are poor.

As the capital city in Massachusetts, Boston was at the center of another civil rights issue. In 2004, Massachusetts became the first American state to permit same-sex marriage. Some people compared the measure to an act of rebellion that is one of the best known events in Boston -- and American -- history.

That event happened in 1773. Colonists dressed as Indians threw shiploads of British tea into Boston Harbor. They were protesting British taxes. The protest is known as the Boston Tea Party.

Our program was written by Jerilyn Watson. I'm Mario Ritter.

And I'm Kelly Jean Kelly. Join us again next week for This Is America from VOA Learning English.