

Checking In: Prime property at the Boston Seaport

Marriott is close to waterfront tourist attractions

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE OCTOBER 25, 2013



The suites at the new Residence Inn by Marriott Boston-Seaport are decorated in industrial-chic style.

The new Residence Inn by Marriott Boston-Seaport is at the heart of the city's glorious waterfront, a burgeoning development of major hotels, gourmet restaurants and tourist attractions that has become an exciting, emergent neighbourhood over the past 10 years.

The Marriott opened two months ago, a repurposed publishing house transformed into a model of industrial-residential design, with four-metre ceilings and wooden beams to add vintage warmth. The hotel's courtyard atrium creates a bright indoor lounge with a garden feel, and the breakfast space is open and modern.

The 120 practical suites multi-task to suit many needs. For travellers doing business in the booming Seaport-Innovation waterfront and Boston's financial hub, the hotel's location and setup are invaluable. The combination of a bedroom, full stainless-steel kitchen and living room with work station functions as a spacious office-away-from-headquarters. The good lighting and spare, modern furniture make the Marriott easy living.

The apartment-style accommodations also make comfortable homes-away-from-homes for families. Parents have privacy in their own bedroom, the kids bunk down on the living-room sofa bed and

everyone has snacks from the fridge. Perhaps best of all, there are TVs and phones in each room, plus free Wi-Fi.

One of the Marriott's best family features is its proximity to Boston Seaport's stupendous attractions: the Boston Children's Museum, famous for the Arthur and Friends television characters; the New England Aquarium, which has seals, sharks, penguins and a tank with 2,000 marine animals surrounded by a spiral staircase; and the new Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum, where costumed actors recreate the explosive Boston Tea Party rebellion all day, every day.

The Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum embraces interactive exhibits, with live actors, a multi-sensory film called *Let It Begin Here* and two replica tall ships bobbing in the harbour. Visitors meet the captain and experience revolutionary life in the 18th century. The tour winds up at the Abigail Adams Tea Room, overlooking the water, for a pick-me-up of Earl Grey and cinnamon shortbread.

The museum's ships are docked in Fort Point Channel, an inlet of Boston Harbor near the spot where the Boston Tea Party took place in 1773. On Dec. 16, the event will come alive again: the museum will mark 240 years since the famous protest by colonists took place. A historical recreation of the big day will feature hundreds of actors and thousands of spectators, starting with a fiery debate about the tea tax at Boston's Old South Meeting House.

Then a lively procession will work its way to Boston's waterfront, and the ersatz Sons of Liberty will dump tea — just as the real protesters did in 1773. Dedicated fans of American revolutionary history can buy tickets to have close-up VIP access to these events, or simply join the crowds revelling in the street.

Long on convenience but short on food, the Marriott gets you started with a full buffet breakfast, and then you are on your own for lunch and dinner. But you won't go hungry: there are about 20 outstanding restaurants and cafés within a few blocks of the Marriott. At the top of the gastronomy scale is Menton (354 Congress St.), a Relais & Châteaux property with a \$95 prix fixe menu with such delicacies as foie gras, bluefish and lamb. At the exceptional Flour Bakery (12 Farnsworth St.), you might have a salad of Tuscan white beans with mozzarella or a curried tuna sandwich and a lemon tart. You can't let your Marriott kitchen lie fallow, though, and the Bee's Knees (also at 12 Farnsworth St.) is a cornucopia of fine groceries.

To match the Marriott's style — fresh, modern and design-conscious — I had dinner at Sportello, a gourmet trattoria next door to the hotel and a sister enterprise to Menton. Sportello is all bright, white and modern, with an open kitchen, a new intimate bar and communal counter with seats for about 40 diners.

Well-known Boston chef Barbara Lynch has turned pasta into art with divine dishes like tagliatelle bolognese, duck with farro, polpetti (meatballs), porcini polenta, orecchiette with sausage, fennel and radicchio and fettuccine with shrimp, hen of the woods mushrooms and spicy Calabrian chili. I thought the primarily Italian wine list was particularly sophisticated, and then found out wine director Cat Silirie also handles Menton.

IF YOU GO

Boston is a 500-kilometre, five-hour drive from Montreal via Highway 10, Routes 35 and 133 to the U.S. border at Vermont, and Highways 89 and 93 south.

Residence Inn by Marriott Boston-Seaport: 617-478-0840, bit.ly/1aEwZMt; 370 Congress St., Boston, Mass.

Price: Studio suites starting at \$299 US per night, for up to four or five people, adults or children, including breakfast.

Self-parking costs \$29 per day; \$49 for valet.

Sportello: 617-737-1234, sportelloboston.com; 348 Congress St. Open for lunch and dinner daily and brunch and dinner on Sat.-Sun.

Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum: 617-338-1773, bostonteatartyship.com; one-hour tours depart every 30 minutes, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily; 306 Congress St. VIP tickets for Dec. 16 re-enactment: 800-838-3006; bostonteatarty2013.bpt.me.

Boston tourism information: 617-536-4100, bostonusa.com.

The writer was a guest of the hotel. The hotel did not review the story.

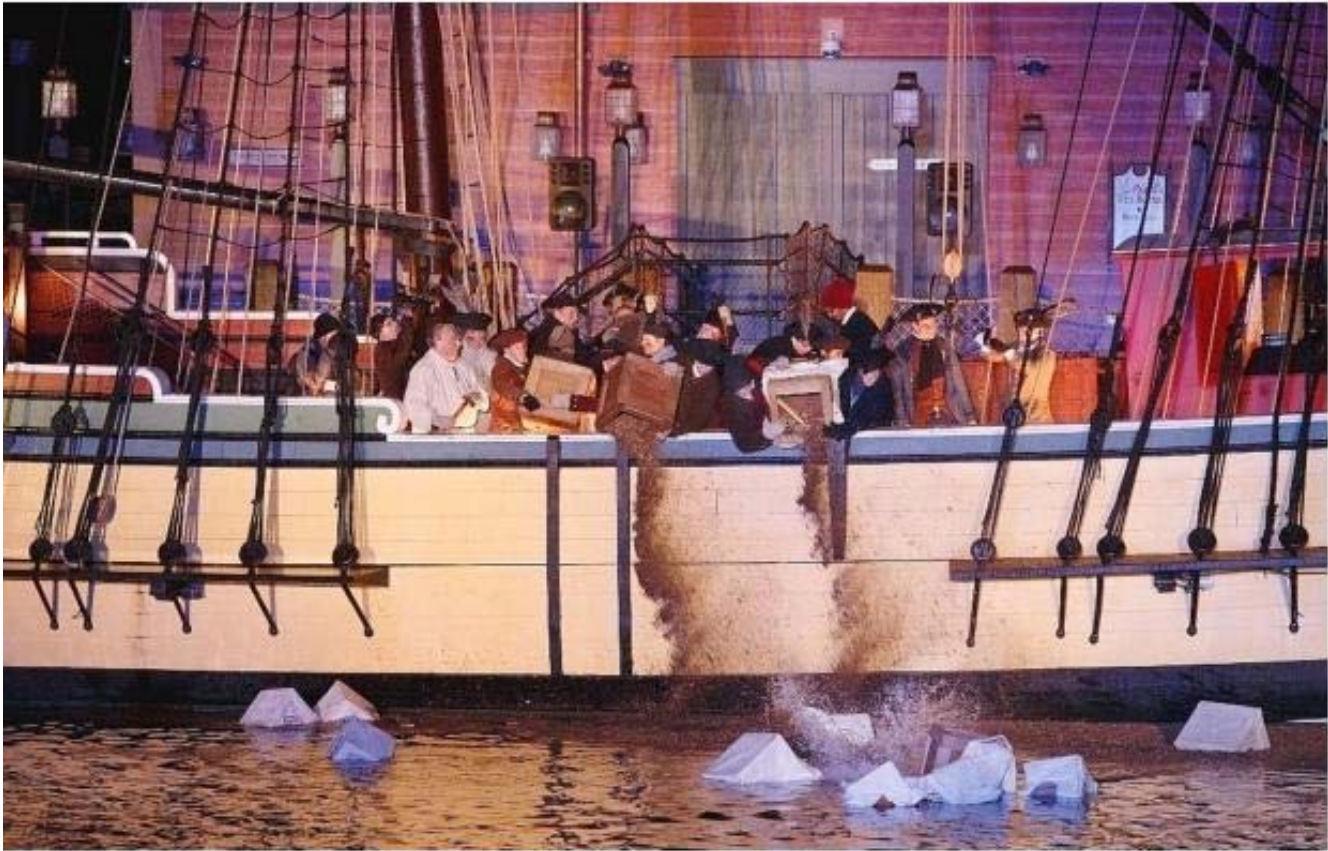
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A re-enactment of the Boston Tea Party at the new museum in the Boston Seaport.

