

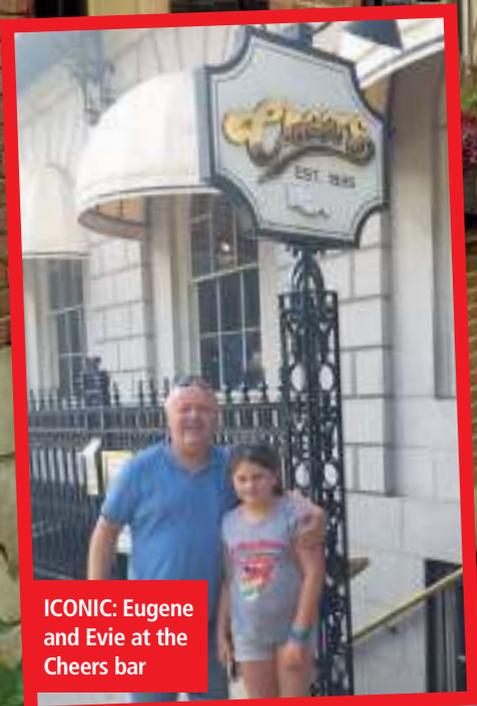
# ESCAPE

FIVE PAGES OF THE BEST TRAVEL IN THE WORLD



GET ON  
YER BIKE  
FOR A  
SUPER  
BERLIN  
BREAK

HEART OF THE CITY:  
The Beacon Hill  
neighbourhood



ICONIC: Eugene  
and Evie at the  
Cheers bar

Explore this grand city  
in just two days, writes  
**Eugene Costello**

**S**ITTING in the low-lit Emmet's bar with a pint of Guinness, the hurling on several screens dotted around the place and with signs bragging about the bacon and cabbage with champ, my 11-year-old daughter Evie and I could pretty much have been anywhere in the 26 counties, or even the 32.

In fact, we were in Boston, USA, and it may well be a tribute to the huge influence the Irish have had over the development of that grand city that even the Irish pubs seem authentic, with none of the Scruffy O'Murphy/O'Neill's fakery you can see everywhere from Hollywood to Hong Kong.

We'd taken advantage of some great deals with Aer Lingus to snag a few days in Boston and Cape Cod at the end of summer.

You might think it's too far for a long weekend, but you'd be wrong. Take the Aer Lingus mid-morning flight from Dublin (where you can clear US immigration, saving a big old headache on landing), and after the free shuttle ride into the city centre, you'll be enjoying a pint of the black stuff shortly after lunchtime, thanks to the time difference.

To be fair, in our case we (alright, I) held out until 6pm. Emmet's is opposite the superb Beacon XV hotel (recently voted second best hotel in the whole of the US), which was a fabulous place to stay ([www.xvbeacon.com](http://www.xvbeacon.com)).

The 63-room Beaux-Arts building dates back to 1903, all dark wood and vintage cage lifts, teamed with contemporary touches such as brushed steel and state-of-the-art music and TV sets. Try to nab a corner room (ending in 06), also known as Boston Common Studios - they're double aspect and filled with light, and the higher the better (the hotel goes up to nine storeys).

That said, such class doesn't come cheap, with rooms around \$328 per night. So if you're watching the pennies, try sites like [booking.com](http://booking.com) - Boston has a wide range



# Three Cheers for Boston

**GREAT QUACK:**  
The Boston Duck  
Tour is a must



of mid-market hotels in the 3-4\* bracket, and you can nab a bargain.

XV Boston, though, does lay on a complimentary limo for guests, so our driver Mark (originally from Russia but, after 25 years in the US, he proudly declared himself as an American) gave us a tour of the area and beyond, showing off the historic Beacon Hill neighbourhood, criss-crossed with cobbled streets and townhouses that date back to the 18th century.

He even let us out to pose for the obligatory selfie outside the famous Cheers bar, for those of you old enough to remember the eighties sitcom, which starred Ted Danson as owner Sam Malone.

That first night we ate in the hotel's steakhouse, Moo - said to be the best in Boston. It was great, especially the Beef Wellington and the side order of macaroni cheese with lobster. But be warned - you'll pay for being in such a highly-rated eatery. The bill (with effectively a compulsory tip, between 15 and 25% according to your mood) came to more than \$200 for the two of us - admittedly including a couple of large glasses of Daddy's special grape juice.

Now, we only had two days to explore the city, so the next morning we hit the ground running.

Brevity is the soul of wit, and more pressingly, I have limited space here to tell you of the many

joys Boston unfolded, like an oyster shell shyly giving up its pearl.

So to be brief, before you even leave home, invest in a Boston CITYPass (adults, \$55, children \$42, [www.citypass.com/boston](http://www.citypass.com/boston)). This gives you free admission to four top draws, and even allows you to queue jump, so it's money well spent. Be sure to take in the Skywalk Observatory, at the top of 'The Pru' (the 52-floor Prudential Building, Boston's second-tallest skyscraper) for a great feel of how the city developed.

We loved the stunning view over Back Bay, a neighbourhood of brownstone buildings similar to those in Brooklyn and built largely by the Irish, block by block on reclaimed swamp land. The rubble from one block provided the foundations for the next, and the money from selling the new houses funded the next as well.

A quick tip: when you make it down to the Back Bay on foot, you'll find a superb and buzzy brunch venue and steakhouse, the MET Back Bay ([www.metbackbay.com](http://www.metbackbay.com)), packed with affluent young Bostonians. It has an Upper West Side feel and great burgers at really affordable prices - definitely worth a visit.

Be sure to take in a Boston Duck Tour - with a fleet of garishly coloured amphibious WWII DUKW vehicles such as were used for landing on the Normandy beaches, these are a Boston institution. As well as a great tour of the city and its neighbourhoods - in our case, with a running commentary by a baseball cap-wearing Bostonian that was high on life - the real fun starts when your 'bus' suddenly drives into the Charles River for a tour of the Boston and Cambridge shoreline by water (family pass, \$110, [www.bostonducktours.com](http://www.bostonducktours.com)).

With entry included in your CITYPass, don't miss the New England Aquarium, which boasts a superb collection that includes seals, penguins, octopuses and even whales. You can quite happily spend half a day here in the faint blue half-light, admiring these denizens of the deep.

After leaving the aquarium you're right on the Long Wharf - perfect for a Boston Harbor Cruise, which is handily also complimentary

with your CITYPass. We opted for an afternoon cruise around the Harbor Islands, a two-hour jaunt that shows you a necklace of islands where many Bostonians head out for the day to mountain-bike, walk, hang out and picnic.

Film buffs will recognise the location for Martin Scorsese's Shutter Island (in reality, Peddocks Island), which starred Leonardo DiCaprio. Your pass offers the alternative of a sunset cruise, which sounds equally entrancing - a beautiful Cape Cod sunset to savour, with Boston Harbor lit by a myriad of twinkling lights.

And a note about eating. Boston has a superb array of restaurants, with many good mid-range options. One of the best we discovered was right on Long Wharf. State Street Provisions sees itself as the answer to the harbourside taverns that once kept the sailors and whalers in food and booze, and they continue that tradition with aplomb.

Evie loved it so much that, having had dinner there on Saturday night, she dragged me back for Sunday brunch. Prices are incredibly reasonable, lower than in Ireland, and the food is fresh and expertly cooked. I had beer-battered fresh cod with hand-cut chips for \$13, and a good tip for those with a late-night thirst (they have a superb range of craft beers and steam ales) and hunger is that after 11pm, they sell New England oysters at just \$1 a pop. Needless to say, I only had about a dozen... OK, 15, tops.

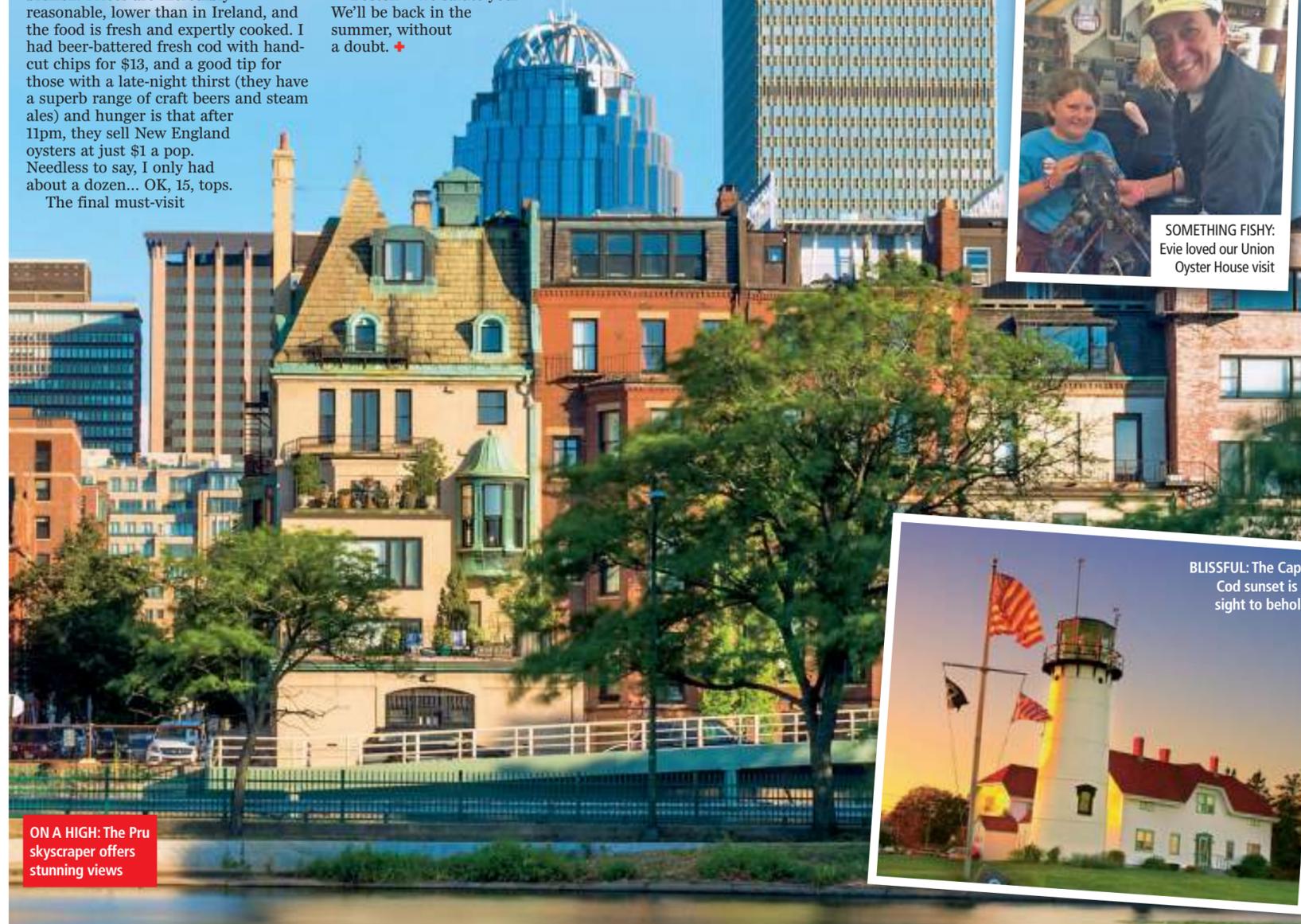
The final must-visit

is the Union Oyster House ([www.unionoysterhouse.com](http://www.unionoysterhouse.com)), which has the proud honour of being America's oldest restaurant, first serving oysters and scallops to customers back in 1826. This family-run place is full of character - it's actually several old shops now knocked together in a building that dates back to the early 1700s - with narrow staircases, low ceilings and dark-wood beams.

For such a prestigious and venerable place, prices are reassuringly fair - kids eat well, with macaroni cheese, at six bucks, while Daddy plumped for a plate of pan-seared scallops and shrimps in a chilli tomato sauce with linguine for just over \$15. Whatever you do, ensure that this piece of gastronomic history and deliciousness is on your itinerary.

After following in the footsteps of a huge roll call of US presidents and celebrities who have eaten at the Union Oyster House, we jumped in a cab for the 30-minute drive to Logan International for a civilised night flight back to Dublin. Sleep on the plane and you'll arrive home back in sync with your fellow countrymen.

Boston - we salute you. We'll be back in the summer, without a doubt. +



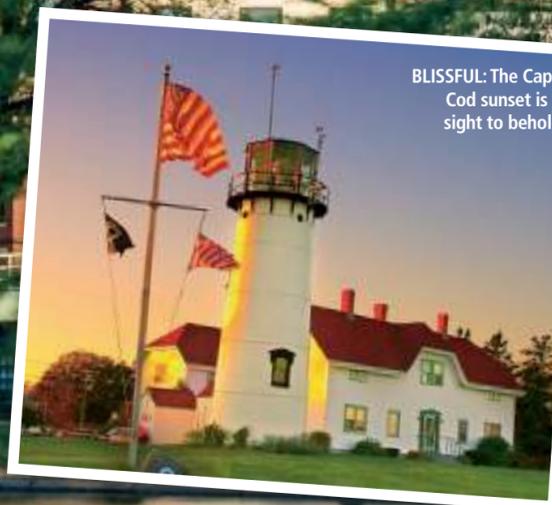
**ON A HIGH:** The Pru skyscraper offers stunning views

## Getting there...

- Aer Lingus operates a twice-daily service from Dublin to Boston and a daily service from Shannon. As part of Aer Lingus' January Seat Sale, each-way fares including taxes and charges start from €259 from Dublin and €249 from Shannon for travel from April until October 31, 2017.
- Aer Lingus transatlantic fares have the added bonus of being all-inclusive, offering free 23kg baggage allowance, plus complimentary meal and drinks during the flight. For further information visit [aerlingus.com](http://aerlingus.com).
- Research your trip and start planning at [www.bostonusa.com](http://www.bostonusa.com) - packed with useful features such as guides to free events, as well as hotel and restaurant guides, it should be your first port of call.



**SOMETHING FISHY:** Evie loved our Union Oyster House visit



**BLISSFUL:** The Cape Cod sunset is a sight to behold



# This week's top late deals

## Say "I do" to Jamaica

You can avoid all the stress of planning and hosting a wedding by having the ceremony abroad.

Jamaica's castaway backdrop, paired with its easy-going vibe, means that the island is the ideal location for a relaxed beach wedding.

Alternatively, Jamaica is packed with secret coves, sugary sands and crashing waterfalls, including the 600ft-tall Dunn's River Falls - where couples can swap vows right next to its thundering cascade.

Or how about exchanging vows on horseback in plantation gardens, or on a raft on the Martha Brae River? More traditionally, many of the hotels in Jamaica offer weddings on their very own private white sand beaches.

Both Falcon Holidays and Thomson Weddings offer good value for a Jamaican wedding and honeymoon combined. Some hotels offer wedding packages for free, while others start from €1,164, with couples having the option of upgrading their packages depending on their budget.

Many of the basic packages include a decoration set-up for the ceremony, registrar fees, wedding cake, bridal bouquet, candlelit dinner and of course, the all-important marriage certificate. See [www.falconholidays.ie](http://www.falconholidays.ie) or call 1850 45 35 45 for more.



## A party across the pond

It will be a non-stop party for young couples when they head for the popular long-haul combination of Mexico and Las Vegas.

Cassidy Travel has seven nights all-inclusive in the 4\* Riu Cancun, with three nights in the 4\* Luxor Hotel & Casino Las Vegas (room only) from €1,719pp, including flights with Virgin and AA.

Book by January 31 for travel between May 1 and June 24. Call Cassidy Travel on 0818 332 500.

## Make a splash in Canada

Combine a trip to Niagara Falls with a visit to nearby Toronto.

American Holidays has four nights at the Marriott's Courtyard Downtown Toronto hotel and two nights at the Radisson Hotel & Suites, Niagara, from €889pp.

The price includes flights from Dublin, six nights' accommodation, a two-day sightseeing tour in Toronto, Niagara Falls Adventure Pass and all transfers, taxes and charges, based on a March departure. For more, see [americanholidays.com](http://americanholidays.com).



## Summer breaks with a difference

If you're giving the beaches a wide berth this year, then there's always the mountains and lakes of Europe to visit.

Crystal Summer have just released a host of new offers for amazing holidays to some of Europe's most beautiful destinations, including Italy, Austria and Slovenia.

For Lake Garda in Italy you can stay for a week from June 3 at the 3\* Hotel Prince, Riva, on a B&B basis, from €595pp, or on September 2, stay at the 3\* Hotel Cristallo, Malcesine, on a half-board basis, from €675pp.

Alternatively, in Austria, there's a week from June 7 at the 3\* Hotel Obermair, Mayrhofen, B&B, from €558, or on May 31 at the 4\* Hotel Austria, Niederau, half-board, from €635.

You can discover Slovenia on August 23 at the 3\* Hotel Kompas, Kranjska Gora, on a half-board basis, from €675.

Call (01) 433 1080 for a brochure, or visit [www.crystalsummer.ie](http://www.crystalsummer.ie).

## A road of discovery

Grizzly bears, thunderous waterfalls and the emerald waters of glacial lakes are all part of a Rocky Mountains exploration trip.

Sunway has a seven-day escorted coach trip on May 22 from €2,439pp, which includes visits to Calgary, Lake Louise, Jasper and Banff.

Highlights include finding out what to do if you come face-to-face with a bear in the Rockies, with advice from a wildlife expert, or venturing onto Athabasca Glacier. See Sunway.ie

## There's Universal appeal

Universal Orlando has just announced its newest ride, Race Through New York Starring Jimmy Fallon, will officially open on April 6.

The latest addition to the Florida park will give visitors the ultimate Tonight Show and New York experience.

Riders will make their way through Studio 6B at the famous '30 Rock' to board the world's first-ever flying theatre, which seats up to 72 audience members, for the race of a lifetime.

Visit [www.universallorlando.com](http://www.universallorlando.com)

**HOUSE SPECIAL:**  
Union Oyster House is America's oldest restaurant

