

Where to Run, Jog, Walk Around Boston

By Warwick Ford

Boston – home of so many of the nation’s top colleges – is a city of the young and the young at heart. This makes it a dream city for running, jogging, or walking. There is a massive foot-mobile population, so if you feel like a jog almost anywhere here you will rarely feel out of place.

However, wise choice of route always makes a run or jog more enjoyable and easier to start and finish. For a training or recreational route to be motivating and enjoyable, I look for four attributes: **Comfort** from both the safety and underfoot perspective; **Attractions** to make it interesting; **Convenience** to city center and public transit; and a worthy **Destination**, such as a good pub/restaurant, to help motivate you to finish the route.

Applying this model to Greater Boston comes up with many excellent routes. Here are snapshots of some of the very best.

Boston-Cambridge: Charles River and Back Bay

The Charles River is blessed with the Dr. Paul Dudley White Bicycle Path, a paved loop stretching from the Science Museum upstream nine miles to Watertown on both sides of the river. There are several bridges, allowing you to construct your own route of virtually any distance from three to 18 miles. The most popular running place in Greater Boston is the section between the Longfellow Bridge and JFK Bridge near Harvard, with Boston on one side of the river and Cambridge on the other. It is convenient to MIT, Harvard, Boston University, and the Hynes Convention Center, and to hotels in the financial district, Back Bay, and Cambridge.

One example of a route for someone staying downtown is as follows. Start at the Boston end of the Longfellow Bridge. Run upstream on the Boston side through the Esplanade, past Boston University, to Harvard. At Harvard, cross the river and return downstream on the Cambridge side, to the Massachusetts Ave. bridge. Cross the bridge to Back Bay. From this point, you can conveniently follow the pleasant Commonwealth Ave. mall to the Boston Common, close to the shopping, financial, historic, and theater districts.

South Boston: Shore, Sugar Bowl, and Core

This 7.9-mile route represents the best seaside running convenient to downtown Boston and the Boston Convention Center. Furthermore, its historical and cultural attractions make it irresistible.

Take the subway (the “T”) red line to JFK/U Mass station. Exit towards the east and bear right along the sidewalk of Morrissey Blvd. Cross the pedestrian overpass and continue to the main entrance road to U Mass where you find the start of the waterfront trail.

Follow the shore around, past the university and the JFK Library and Museum. Continue around to Carson Beach. Continue further along the beaches to City Point and the Castle Island or “sugar bowl” area. Go around the causeway that circumnavigates Pleasure Bay. Pass old Fort Independence. Continue around to Farragut’s statue, which marks the start of Broadway, the main east-west route through historic South Boston.

If you are ready for a drink or snack, there are some great Irish pubs around here. There are various choices of ways to get back to downtown Boston, including on-foot to the Boston Convention Center, or take the T from Broadway station or a bus in Broadway.

Newton-Brookline-Back Bay: Finishing the Marathon

The Boston Marathon, the oldest annual marathon in the world, is well known to us all. However, not all of us are ready to take on a 26-mile on-foot journey as an exercise outing. The good news is that we can construct a comfortable and exciting 9.7-mile exercise route that takes in the final part of the marathon route, including such famous stretches as “Heartbreak Hill” and the “Haunted Mile.” Catch the “T” green line D branch from downtown or Back Bay to Woodland station. The ride takes about 35 minutes from downtown. Follow the sidewalk of Washington Street to the right. At Commonwealth Ave., turn right past the fire station. This four-mile stretch of Commonwealth Ave. through Newton is wide, lightly trafficked, and very pedestrian-friendly. Expect plenty of other runners here, especially in early spring in the lead-up period to the marathon. This stretch includes “Heartbreak Hill,” the only significant uphill part of the marathon course. After Boston College, you can divert around Chestnut Hill Reservoir, or keep to the marathon course, bearing right into Chestnut Hill Ave. to Cleveland Circle. Then follow Beacon Street to Kenmore Square. Follow Commonwealth Ave. into Back Bay, near the Hynes Convention Center, and optionally continue to downtown.

Swampscott-Lynn-Nahant: Lynn Shore and Nahant

This 10.6-mile route is further out of the city, but is breathtakingly beautiful and an outstanding training run. You can drive and park on Lynn Shore Drive, or take the “T” commuter rail from Boston’s North Station to Swampscott. Pick up the seaside trail heading south from Swampscott. Follow it along the causeway out to Nahant, enjoying the sea breezes and the rest of the environment. Follow the Nahant streets out to Lodge Park, with its outstanding scenic overlook, at the tip of Nahant. Return through Nahant streets to the causeway, and retrace your steps to the start.

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[Warwick Ford is author of "Fun on Foot in America's Cities" and "Fun on Foot in New England," the books that describe and map the best on-foot routes in U.S. cities. See the www.funonfoot.com website for more information.]



The Charles River Trail near the Esplanade



Runner-Friendly Commonwealth Avenue in Newton



The Lynn Shore Pedestrian Path