



Picture yourself here:
watching the sun set on the
Gulf Coast of southwest
Florida. See page 59.

BOSTON TRAVELER

Everyone knows there are two types of vacations: one where the only thing you need to bring is sunscreen and a bathing suit, and the other where adventure awaits at every turn. Here in Boston, a winter holiday means something else: a chance to get away from the snow

and ice, if only for a few days. Thankfully, Logan offers plenty of nonstop flights to warmer climes, whether you want to unplug and forget about the world or plug in to a far-flung destination and learn something new. Ready to escape the gray January days? Start here.

You Really Don't Want To Be in Boston Right Now, Do You?

Edited by BRITTANY JASNOFF

A TOAST TO FREEDOM

Barbados

For the frazzled type-A worrywart in dire need of peace and quiet, a fast-acting prescription for total relaxation is available five hours from Logan's Terminal C, where one of JetBlue's newest nonstop flights can whisk you away to the tropical playground that is Barbados in about the time it takes to ride the Amtrak to Manhattan. When warm, ultramarine waves are lapping your bare feet as you sip rum punch from a beading glass, it's impossible not to melt into a carefree puddle of contentment.

After celebrating its 50th anniversary of independence from British rule, spirits on Barbados are high—and plentiful. For proof, just visit any of the island's hundreds of rum shops, no-frills neighborhood watering holes offering DIY drinks, good company, and such Bajan staples as macaroni pie and *jug jug*, a West Indian take on haggis. Or go straight to the source with a tour of the **Mount Gay Rum distillery**, which proudly takes credit for being the first to barrel this essential daiquiri ingredient, starting in 1703.

The great thing about a 166-square-mile island is that life's a beach—more than 50 of them. Over in Carlisle Bay, just outside the capital city of Bridgetown, the tourist-friendly **Boatyard** boasts calm waters—and Jet Ski rentals, if calm's not your thing. Those with an appetite for both surf and serious Bajan cuisine should head to **Enterprise Beach** in Oistins, which draws crowds for its Friday-night fish fry. Island dining doesn't get much more authentic than a platter of fresh-caught flying fish (the national delicacy) grilled on one of Oistins's open-air barbecues.

A land of cheerful contradictions—home to a rum empire founded by a man named John Sober, where fish fly and there's a church next to nearly every bar—Barbados also gives visitors the chance to experience quaint bursts of British affectation worlds away from the gray, drizzly continental rock from which they were spawned. That includes **polo matches** on Holders Field in the St. James parish (a high-roller haven where the likes of Rihanna and Simon Cowell frolic). Don't know the rules? All you need to know is this one: Like any worthwhile pursuit on the island, it's best enjoyed with a cold drink in hand. —SHAULA CLARK

✖ JetBlue to Bridgetown, Barbados (Nonstop Saturdays)

🌡 January-March: 84°-86°

🧳 Extra space in your carry-on luggage for a few souvenir bottles of the island's addictive, ubiquitous Scotch-bonnet pepper sauce



1 Equestrian pursuits abound on Barbados.

2 A view of Port Ferdinand's marina.



A DESERT ISLAND YOU'LL NEVER WANT TO LEAVE

Aruba

It's a lot of pressure to be immortalized in one of the catchiest Beach Boys tunes of all time. But Aruba, the southern Caribbean island just off the coast of Venezuela, more than lives up to the hype. Home to nearly 20 miles of soft sand, gravity-defying fofoti trees, and some of the friendliest locals you'll ever meet, the Dutch constituent country draws more than one million visitors each year. It's no secret that the island's impossibly blue, delightfully warm Caribbean waters are the biggest attraction, especially in the winter months. But there's so much more to this tropical

PREVIOUS SPREAD, LEE COUNTY VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU. THIS PAGE, SHAULA CLARK. HOTEL PRICES ARE FOR THE JANUARY THROUGH MARCH RANGE.



EAT Whoever declared that Paris is for lovers might have awarded that honor to Barbados instead had they dined at the impossibly romantic **Cliff Restaurant**, so named for its swoon-inducing perch overlooking the Caribbean.

STAY History buffs will delight in roaming the well-preserved grounds of the **Crane Resort** (starting at \$581 per night), the modern incarnation of the 1887-built hotel that hosted such boldfacers as Buffalo Bill. At the other end of the island, revel in the brand-new plush digs that have sprung up in Barbados's current building boom: With marina access to go with its gleaming villas, **Port Ferdinand** (starting at \$1,250 per night) is one of the swankiest stays you'll find.

PLAY Spend an unforgettable afternoon with **Seduced Luxury Charters**, which can craft a luxurious cruise to suit any whim. While the private chef prepares a gourmet lunch onboard the 62-foot catamaran, work up an appetite with a vigorous kayaking session.



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hideaway, with its rugged, arid desert landscape made up of towering rock formations, free-roaming iguanas, and native aloe plants—not to mention a burgeoning arts and culture scene.

For those looking to explore by foot, start by grabbing a chilled treat from Savaneta’s **Mauchi Smoothies**, a small roadside stand that relies on fresh, locally sourced ingredients to craft sizable fruit drinks and herbal teas. You’ll appreciate the extra hydration as you embark on a walking tour of **San Nicolas**, Aruba’s arts district. Strolling through the streets, you’ll come across dozens of oversized murals and found-art sculptures created by local artists.

For a more adventurous jaunt, book an off-roading excursion through Oranjestad-based **ABC**

Tours. Guides drive custom Land Rovers through all sorts of cacti-dotted (read: bumpy) terrain, stopping in front of island wonders such as the natural bridge, a massive hunk of limestone shaped by waves and wind, and the 19th-century Bush-iribana Gold Mill ruins. Be sure to bring your bathing suit for the natural pool—a breathtakingly beautiful swimming-and-snorkeling haven formed by volcanic rock. After all, you’re on “island time” now.

—ANDREA TIMPANO

 JetBlue to Oranjestad, Aruba (Nonstop Daily)

 January-March: 85°-86°

 A waterproof cell-phone case (so your iPhone can go snorkeling with you)

1 Aruba’s pristine white sand is made of crushed coral and shells.

2 Land Rovers ferry adventurers off the beaten path.

3 It’s all about the water at Divi Aruba Phoenix Beach Resort.



EAT The beachfront **West Deck** is worth visiting for the ocean views alone, to say nothing of the open-air restaurant’s top-notch tapas-style Caribbean cuisine. The savory *keshi yena*, an Aruban specialty featuring Dutch Gouda-wrapped shredded chicken with cashews and tomato-basil sauce, is a must-try.

STAY One of three Divi properties on the island, the **Aruba Phoenix Beach Resort** (starting at \$424 per night) boasts roomy suites with balconies, a bevy of on-site dining options, and a rental service offering bikes, kayaks, and snorkeling gear. Oh, and did we mention the freshwater pool with the new swim-up bar?

PLAY Test your endurance—and balance—as you battle the wind during a group or private standup paddleboarding lesson at **Aruba Surf & Paddle School**, located near the Marriott on Palm Beach. It’s just a short walk to **MoomBa Beach Bar & Restaurant**—the perfect place to refuel (and dry off) after an hour on the water.



SUNSHINE, SEASHELLS, AND SERENITY

Sanibel and Captiva Islands, Florida



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It's called the Sanibel Stoop. Crouch close to the shoreline, canvassing for conchs, sand dollars, and tulip shells. Watch the bottlenose dolphins splash in the distance as the Gulf waters lap the sand. Repeat.

If that was the most you wanted to exert yourself on the barrier islands of Sanibel and Captiva, connected to mainland Florida by a bright-white causeway, that would be just fine. Under an hour by car from the Fort Myers airport, the lush destination's unique east-west orientation brings bucketloads of exotic shells—and, by extension, tourists—to its shoreline. But unlike Florida's other resort areas, family-friendly Sanibel and Captiva have remained wholly unspoiled: There are no traffic lights and no buildings higher than the tallest palm tree. As the road narrows and inches closer to the coastline on the way from Sanibel to Captiva, it begins to resemble the drive from Wellfleet to Provincetown. Indeed, with pastel buildings instead of gray shingles and palm trees in place of hydrangeas, the

vibe on these laid-back islands is Cape Cod meets Key West, all year round.

The white-sand beaches, of course, are the main draw, but there are many other ways to connect with nature. Kayak through the mangrove forest on a **Tarpon Bay Explorers** guided tour of the **J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge**, home to endangered sea turtles and 245 species of birds. Explore the islands' nooks and crannies by bike on one of many cycling trails. Or just watch the sun fade into the Gulf of Mexico over drinks on the string-lit patio of Captiva's decidedly tropical English-style pub, the **Mucky Duck**.

Relaxed yet? When you're ready for a change of pace, head back to Fort Myers for a tour of the **Edison & Ford Winter Estates**, the impeccably preserved summer homes and botanical gardens of famous snowbirds Thomas Edison and Henry Ford. Or catch a Red Sox spring-training game at the team's home away from home, known as **Fenway South**. Reminders of the Bay State, it seems, can be found at every turn. —BRITTANY JASNOFF



JetBlue to Fort Myers, Florida (Nonstop Daily)



January-March: 72°-77°



Ziploc bags for your treasure trove of shells

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The best souvenirs are free on Sanibel and Captiva.

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The islands are home to more than 200 species of birds.

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Dolphins frolic in the Gulf waters.

4

A sophisticated dish from Sweet Melissa's.



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EAT

Farro fettuccine tossed with duck confit, pomegranate, and kale. Crab fritters perched atop a curry emulsion. There's no bland tourist food at **Sweet Melissa's**, a white-tablecloth restaurant on Sanibel with a sophisticated menu and creative cocktails. Got a serious sweet tooth? Nothing tops the cake tray at kitschy Captiva favorite **the Bubble Room**, filled to the brim with '30s and '40s antiques and Christmas decorations no matter the season.

STAY

With shops, tennis, golf, kids' programs, and its very own marina, the 330-acre **South Seas Island Resort** (starting at \$289 per night), on Captiva, is like its own village. Accommodations run the gamut from waterfront hotel rooms to four-bedroom manses with private beach access. Across the bridge in Sanibel, the smaller but equally plush **Casa Ybel** (starting at \$379 per night) offers kitchen-equipped suites with screened lanais or balconies, all of which overlook the Gulf.

PLAY

Get first crack at the best shells on a morning excursion with **Captiva Cruises**, which takes groups to the remote Cayo Costa State Park, one of several islands near Sanibel and Captiva reachable only by boat.

HISTORY AT EVERY TURN

Mexico City

 Aeroméxico to Mexico City, Mexico (Nonstop Thursday-Monday)

 January-March: 70°-78°

 Your appetite—Mexico City's restaurants are first class

1 An aerial view of the Bosque.

2 Frida Kahlo's jewelry at La Casa Azul.

3 The striking Metropolitan Cathedral.

In Mexico City, all roads lead to the castle in **Bosque de Chapultepec park**. Set atop a hill with sweeping views of the Paseo de la Reforma, a boulevard modeled after Paris's Champs-Élysées, the one-time imperial residence is now a museum dedicated to the area's origins. And it's just one example of the incredibly rich history you'll find in Mexico City, a bustling capital surrounded by mountains and volcanoes that's just now getting the attention from tourists it deserves.

A UNESCO World Heritage site, the metropolis's historic center tells the story of its past: In Zócalo square, you can see the ruins of ancient

Tenochtitlán, the Aztec city on top of which the Spanish built the new city, as well as the **Metropolitan Cathedral** (the largest in the Americas) and the **National Palace**, where Diego Rivera painted *The History of Mexico* from his own very opinionated point of view. And yet the area is also incredibly forward-thinking: Why yes, you can borrow any of those pink bikes for a couple hours (particularly fun when the Paseo de la Reforma goes car-free on Sunday mornings). Find a cute *fonda* around the La Roma area for lunch. Drink at **Jules Basement**, a speakeasy-style cocktail bar in Polanco you enter via a refrigerator door.

Or just shop your way through the city at markets like **La Ciudadela**, which peddles authentic, one-of-a-kind finds (colorful folk-art sculptures, silver jewelry) direct from local

makers, and **Mercado de Coyoacán**, 6 miles south from the center of the action. Brave the formidable traffic to spend half a day in this neighborhood, where you can also visit **La Casa Azul** (the Blue House). The tragic story of Frida Kahlo comes to life here at the home she shared with Rivera, a brilliant artist but a horrible husband.

Back in the city, keep one night of your trip open for a show at **Palacio de Bellas Artes**, an art nouveau/art deco-style venue where you'll marvel at a Tiffany curtain made of a million iridescent glass crystals. But remember, no matter how modern something in Mexico City feels, the allure still harkens to days of yore. UNESCO named the palace an artistic monument in 1987, and that sparkling curtain depicts the landscape of the Valley of Mexico. —YIQING SHAO

CIUDAD DE MEXICO; YIQING SHAO (NECKLACE)



DANA FRIEDLANDER/ISRAELI MINISTRY OF TOURISM; YALE ENGELHART/POLI HOUSE (POOL)

EAT If you don't reserve early, the tasting menu at Enrique Olvera's Michelin-starred **Pujol** might be out of reach. If so, look to Olvera's protégées at the urban-chic **Hotel Carlota**, where Joaquin Cardoso and Sofia Cortina are serving up cool modern dishes with a focus on regional ingredients.

STAY Seven treatment rooms, a beauty salon, a sauna, a juice bar...and that's just the spa. The **St. Regis Mexico City** (starting at \$605 per night) has all the luxuries you'd expect, plus top-notch city panoramas. Around the corner from the Angel of Independence is the **Galeria Plaza** (starting at \$73 per person per night)—understated and economical, but with a new restaurant and rooftop pool.

PLAY Spend a day exploring the vast **Bosque de Chapultepec**, known as one of Mexico City's "lungs" for its oxygen-producing green space. Twice the size of Central Park, it offers endless recreational opportunities, from a zoo and museums to lakes for peaceful rowing.



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MARKET VALUES

Tel Aviv

✈ El Al to Tel Aviv, Israel (Nonstop Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday)

🌡 January-March: 64°-67°

🧳 Plenty of layers for an easy transition between hot afternoons and chilly evenings, with an umbrella for the hard winter rainfalls that come and go quickly

1 From beach volleyball to biking, outdoor pursuits abound in Tel Aviv.

2 The rooftop pool at the Poli House.



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Tel Aviv, situated on the warm coast of the Mediterranean Sea, is renowned for many things, not the least of which are its markets. Each of these outdoor, year-round *shuks* offers a fresh lens through which to view Israeli culture, whether it's the smoky spices of the **Levinsky Market**, in the quirky southern neighborhood of Florentin, or the crammed antiques and vintage clothing stalls of Jaffa's **Shuk Hapishpeshim**.

But nowhere can you get a better taste of Israel than at the **Carmel Market**. There, stalls heaped with vibrant produce and ice-packed fish compete for attention with bakers' seed-studded breads, roasted nuts, and exotic dried fruits. Falafel, hummus, fresh juices, espresso, even burritos—it's a dizzying array of food, and a feast for the senses.

A fascinating mix of surfboard culture melded with hip design, art, and culinary scenes, Tel Aviv is a world-class metropolis that doesn't take itself too seriously. Even at the height of rush hour—the city is overflowing with finance and tech

EAT For higher-end dining, two restaurants have created the standard for all others. **Manta Ray**, overlooking the beach, specializes in fish and other seafood, but also offers a hearty Israeli breakfast each morning. If you go for dinner, be sure to get there in time for sunset. **Yaffo-Tel Aviv**, from the renowned Israeli chef Haim Cohen, serves up the freshest ingredients with an intriguing wine list.

STAY It's worth hiring a guide to see the best of Tel Aviv's markets and design scenes—**Delicious Israel** takes visitors through the *shuks*, while **TLV Style** specializes in custom tours for fashion and design lovers. If you're there for an extended period, consider a side trip to Jerusalem to see the Western Wall and more of the area's abundant history.

PLAY Designed by architect Karim Rashid, the shiny new **Poli House** (starting at \$198 per night) is a fusion of space-age décor and original Bauhaus architecture in the middle of the action.

companies—the vibe is all casual, as locals saunter around in jeans and flip-flops many months of the year. Thanks to the beach and the perennially warm weather, people live outside here, biking and scooting everywhere, often with their kids and dogs in tow.

One reason to head indoors, however, is the renowned **Tel Aviv Museum of Art**, a soaring space of modern and contemporary works. Or soak up the city's culture in the charming Neve Tzedek neighborhood, home to quaint cafés, chic boutiques, and the **Suzanne Dellal Center for Dance and Theater**, which hosts the modern dance troupe Batsheva.

Should you prefer to soak up the sun instead, it's easy to rent bikes at one of many sidewalk kiosks. Peddle up and down the boardwalk along the shore, starting at the northern port and riding all the way south, where Tel Aviv meets Jaffa, its artsy sister city. Along the way, be sure to pull up a low-slung chair at one of the outdoor bars along the beach and, digging feet into cool sand, watch the best show of all: the gentle waves of the Mediterranean. —**JESSICA STEINBERG**

THE OTHER CITY THAT NEVER SLEEPS

Hong Kong



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As the hub of global business in the East, nighttime is just when the sun sets in Hong Kong, not when the work—or the fun—stops. A diverse population of locals, tourists, and expats commingles along tight streets lined with buildings that extend to dizzying heights, devouring street vendors' fluffy egg waffles en route to bars in hip neighborhoods like Sheung Wan and Wan Chai. Steeped in both old traditions and modern innovation, the culture here is equal parts leftover British colonialism and Chinese convention. It's an ever-expanding city of dichotomies on a tiny island that explodes vertically between a stunning harbor and luscious mountains.

Twenty years after the end of British rule, 2017 will be something of a turning point for this autonomous territory. An increasing series of constrictions from the Chinese government means the region's idiosyncratic identity is on the precipice. It's not often a nearly 16-hour flight would be considered worth taking, but with four nonstop trips leaving Boston weekly

(daily flights start in March), there's never been an easier—or more auspicious—time to explore Hong Kong.

Get the full picture of the metropolis with a steep, rickety tram ride to the top of **Victoria Peak**, where you can watch the dense skyscrapers fade to southern Chinese mountains. An equally impressive panorama is yours for around 32 cents aboard the **Star Ferry**—grizzled ships that run almost every 10 minutes between the tip of Kowloon and the ferry terminal in Central. Like if the Green Line were a boat, and didn't constantly malfunction.

The comparisons to the MBTA end there, as the rest of Hong Kong's transit system is world class. A space-age subway system and dirt-cheap cabs ferry you between the highest and lowest cultural touchstones. Temples like **Man Mo** will provide moments of quiet reflection before you haggle over a trinket within the organized chaos of **Ladies' Market** or hike to the bronze **Big Buddha** on Lantau Island. This city doesn't sleep, and to experience a fraction of what it has to offer, you won't want to, either. —LLOYD MALLISON



Cathay Pacific to Hong Kong (Nonstop Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Sunday)



January-March: 66°-71°



Comfortable shoes that embody form and function—Hong Kongers are a stylish bunch

1 Lantau Island's towering Big Buddha.

2 The bars and restaurants of the hip Sheung Wan neighborhood.

3 Navigating the harbor aboard the Star Ferry.

4 Hong Kong's cityscape from Victoria Peak.



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EAT

A modern Chinese diner serving up creative cocktails and shareable plates, **Little Bao** offers outstanding Asian fusion for the city that best embodies the term. As the Hong Kong snack known as the egg waffle begins to make its way stateside, take your opportunity to try one in its natural habitat: At **Hung Kee Top Quality Egg Waffles**, they're cooked to perfection on the side of the street by a guy in a tank top.

STAY

Sleek, modern, and sexy, **the Upper House** (starting at \$618 per night) is your respite after a day of whirlwind sightseeing, while still being steps from the excitement of downtown. All of the rooms are above the 38th floor, so each has a spectacular view to wake up and fall asleep to, whatever time that may be.

PLAY

Formerly a dormitory for police officers, the revitalized **PMQ** complex is Hong Kong's answer to SoWa, brimming with fashion and home-design stores, art studios, trendy restaurants, and more.



JEREMY THOMPSON (BUDDHA); MOJO BARON (STREET); BERNARD SPRAAG (FERRY); DAXIS (SKYLINE)

