

Atlantic DREAMS

From the pine tree state of Maine in the north to the sunshine state of Florida in the south, the east coast of the USA has plenty to offer those embarking on a study travel trip. NICOLA HANCOX takes a road trip down the length of the eastern seaboard.

A total of 14 states make up the eastern seaboard of the USA, each with their own history, individuality and unique selling point. New England, considered the birthplace of America, is a region that comprises six of the 14 states and is where a journey of cultural and historical discovery begins. “New England is known for its autumn season with fall foliage,” describes Marlena A. Karami at American Language Programs (ALP), a company specialising in English language homestays throughout the USA. “It is spectacular!” she says.

The ‘bay state’ of Massachusetts is of great significance to American heritage. Its capital, Boston, is considered one of the oldest cities in the USA and was founded by Puritan colonists from England in 1630. And Boston’s reputation for education is well-documented. According to Linda Walsh from Embassy CES New England for Boston & NYC, “Boston is home to the very first public school system, college, public library, elementary school and public school in what would have become the United States of America,” she states.

Given such sterling academic credentials, it is unsurprising that Boston boasts the highest concentration of students per capita in the USA. According to Daniel Schulstad at International House Boston, more than 250,000 students travel to Boston each year to study at universities in the area. And this rich academic tradition is appealing to international students, he asserts.

Described as a ‘walking city’, visiting students can get a real taste of days gone by through taking the city’s 2.5 mile Freedom Trail, which leads to 16 historically important sites. “It has the walkability and green park space of a small city and the rich cultural offerings of a much larger city,” depicts Christopher Malenfant at accommodation provider ESL Townhouse.

Did you know, says Casey Sherman at EC Boston, that more than 18 million people visit Boston each year? She suggests students visit Faneuil Hall, a marketplace and meeting hall since 1742, or taking a ride on one of the swan boats in the Boston Public Garden. Meanwhile, Karami advises students expand their minds by visiting Boston’s Museum of Science or Museum of Fine Arts.

As for a couple of off-the-beaten-track suggestions, Malenfant suggests stopping at The Top of the Hub [a restaurant at the top of one of the city’s tallest buildings] for a drink and to enjoy the

unparalleled views of the city, or taking the ferry out to St George’s Island to explore the American Civil War era fort. Sherman, meanwhile, recommends exploring 40 miles of untouched beaches at Cape Cod or taking a ferry ride over to Martha’s Vineyard, an island located south of the cape.

“Northampton is one of the greenest towns in Massachusetts,” attests Caroline Gear at International Language Institute (ILI). A medium-sized city with a population of around 28,500, it is, she observes, a very artistic, liberal and accepting city. “There are not many people in Northampton that speak your mother tongue, and the residents are friendly so you can speak English with them,” she adds. As well as taking in an exhibition at Smith College Art Museum or a concert at the Academy of Music, she suggests taking a scenic bike ride across the Connecticut River into the town of Amherst.

South of Massachusetts is the state of Connecticut, named after the longest and largest river in New England. Jed Stuart at coeducational day and boarding school The Gunnery observes that the school’s location in a beautifully rural area makes it an appealing choice for students and their parents. “Being a small school in a rural setting, parents feel that their children are safe and well taken care of,” he observes.

The school is based in the colonial town of Washington and, says Stuart, is bordered by a two-acre nature reserve. “There is a lot to see and do outdoors around us. Steep Rock Preserve is right next to campus and is great for hiking/walking and enjoying the beauty,” he relates. The school also has a colourful history. “Our founder, Frederick W. Gunn, was part of the Underground Railroad [a network of secret underground routes and safe houses used by 19th century slaves escaping persecution] and at one point was exiled from Washington!”

The school frequently organises excursions to destinations outside of the state, with New York only an hour and a half away, says Stuart. That said, the surrounding area is just as picturesque, characterised



EAST
COAST

by undulating hills and high plateaus. The Berkshire Mountains is a popular retreat and offers a wide array of music, arts and recreational activities.

New Jersey, the garden state, and New York, the empire state, are located directly next to one another. And for Shannon English at Felician College in New Jersey, it is all about location for students opting to study there. She says, "The college is 20 minutes from New York City. Our campuses, however, are nestled in the quiet and safe towns of Lodi and Rutherford, NJ, making Felician an ideal place to study and live." Points of interest, says English, include popular vacation spot the Jersey Shore, packed with attractions including theme parks, restaurants and beaches. Unusual extracurricular activities organised by student services include game and movie nights, trips to Amish country in Pennsylvania, Broadway and shopping excursions to NYC, she enthuses.

The bright lights of NYC, however, continue to attract students in their thousands. Walsh recommends students sign up to free daily newsletter *The Skint*, which offers plenty of ideas as to what visitors can do in their spare time without breaking the bank. Embassy CES NYC's social programming is also packed with

daily trips. Current offerings include a Brooklyn Bridge experience and excursions to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the New Museum, which is devoted to contemporary arts pieces.

In the city, Linda Comac at the New York Institute of Technology ELI affirms that "it is easy for students to find foods and newspapers from their home countries, and they will often hear their own languages spoken on the streets". And while first-time visitors may be quick to buy tickets to visit some of the city's major tourist attractions, Comac notes students can enjoy some for free. "The best sightseeing bargain is the Staten Island ferry. Enjoy New York's harbour and up-close view of Lady Liberty without having to pay a penny."

New York Language Centers has four branches throughout the city, each with its own character. Students at the Midtown school will find they are conveniently located in the heart of the fashion district, minutes from Times Square and Broadway explains the school's Barbara Dick, while those at the Upper West Side campus will find they are within walking distance of Central Park. Students at its Queen's location can expect to immerse themselves "in the lively and culturally diverse Jackson Heights neighbourhood", while the Yankee

Agent viewpoints

"There are many reasons why students choose the East Coast. Some the best academic institutions in the country are based on the East Coast, from Philadelphia up to Boston. As far as the cities are concerned, nothing beats New York. It is still the city everybody wants to be at. And, in Spain, Boston's reputation, tradition and history is also a must. What surprises students most about this area of the USA, besides the winter snow? I think the cultural richness of cities in this region is a surprise to most of them. There is a beautiful amount of historical and cultural activities there. At first students want to go shopping and then they want to attend a big sporting event. Then, they start visiting museums, and if they are long-term students they enjoy weekend excursions. I lived in Boston for two years, so I have to point out the historical value of the Freedom Trail."

Fernando Aguilar, Astex, Spain

"Students who choose to study in destinations like Northampton, MA, often prefer small towns to big cities, and implicitly a more authentically American experience than might be offered in the large cosmopolitan centres. The East Coast, particularly Massachusetts, is sometimes seen as more "European" than other parts of the USA and therefore easier to assimilate. Students are surprised by the welcome and how it's not quite "as seen on tv"! My highlights are the astounding colours of Fall leaves, the Waffle House, and the incredibly diverse array of things to do."

Denis Baker, Aventure Linguistique, Switzerland

Drawing similarities to England's capital city of London, New York City (NYC) is one of the cultural hubs of the USA with the advantages of an east coast location. Famed for its iconic yellow taxis, or cabs, the city holds some of the world's tallest skyscraper buildings and was the centre of jazz in the 1940s.

NYC, home to Major League Baseball, is also often dubbed as the capital of baseball with two of its own baseball teams. Other sports also have great prominence in the city, including basketball.



NYC is the USA's most populous location

Stadium is within touching distance of its Bronx branch. A guided tour of the United Nations, a trip to Coney Island Boardwalk and the Bohemian Hall and Beer Garden are some of the school's most popular activities. "A few of our teachers are local independent musicians who routinely invite our students to their performances at local venues, which is a great way to discover the indie rock scene in New York," Dick adds.

"We are located in the greatest city in the world," expounds Bernadette Lavin at St. John's University, "just about any interesting location is just a stone's throw away." Nearby places of interest include the 9/11 memorial

site, Grand Central Station and Madison Square Garden. And with three separate campuses throughout New York city, Lavin notes international students will be exposed to interesting demographics. "Between those three areas is an enormous amount of differing cultures, nationalities, languages and religions that come on a daily basis."

Southern hospitality and sunshine await students in the state of Florida, says Erin Ward Stanley from University of West Florida in Pensacola. With approximately 300 days of guaranteed sunshine a year, the beautiful white sandy beaches are a must-see.

"Students definitely want to take advantage of the beach," attests Ward Stanley. "We are also three hours away from New Orleans to the west and more beautiful beaches to the east," she adds.

"Miami offers a lifestyle unlike anywhere else," comments James Peever at Sol Schools International. With the refreshing Atlantic surf on its doorstep, it offers those who visit a form of escapism. "It is a great place for vacation and study," he adds. Miami Beach, where the school is based, boasts the largest collection of art deco architecture in the world, and the pastel-hued buildings that line South Beach are world-renowned.

"Students don't need a car to get around," asserts Rachel Kip-Johnson from Rennert Miami South Beach. "It is a manageable destination to conquer in a short period of time." Locally students can enjoy a café con leche at David's Cuban Cafe, a spot of salsa at Yuca Café on Lincoln Road or a walking tour of the Wynwood Arts District. Further afield the Everglades National Park beckons, she adds. These subtropical marshlands are best seen via airboat, allowing students to take in the impressive array of wildlife that may include one of 200,000 alligators reputed to inhabit the area.