From Boston to Cape Cod: How we planned the ultimate 14-day New England family adventure

Our writer and his husband and son embarked on an unforgettable road trip across Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire and Rhode Island



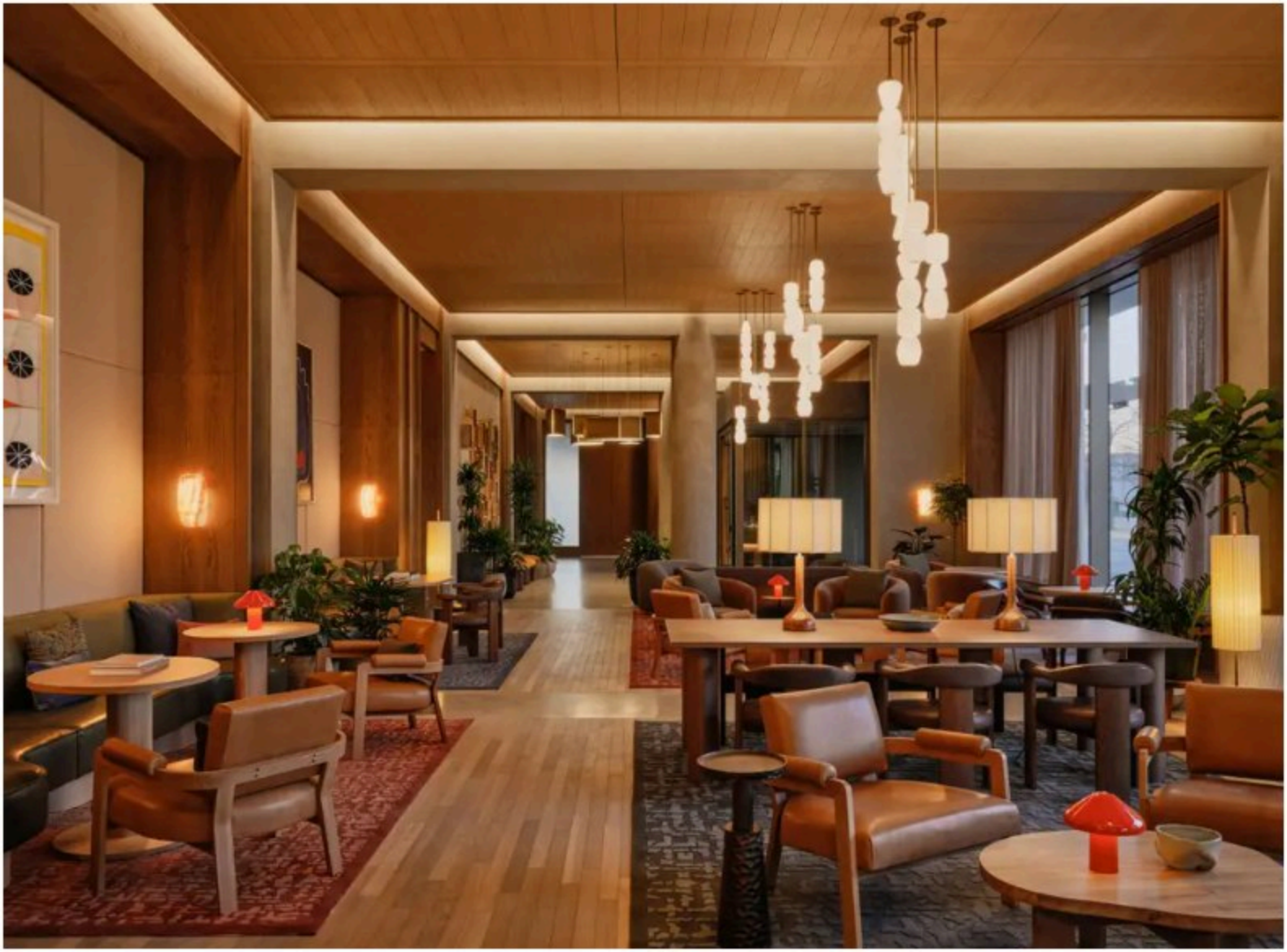
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In the grand scheme of things, cancelled holidays were fairly low down the list of Covid-19's consequences. But scrapping a family road trip to New England in summer 2020, after months of planning and saving, was still a disappointment. Life got in the way for several years, but this summer, with my husband Oliver and our 10-year-old son Wayne, we finally made it happen.

City life in Boston

Arriving in Boston as late summer turned to fall, we began our 14-night adventure through America's magical North East. First, we shook off the jet lag with strolls around the pristine campuses of Harvard University, spotting wild rabbits on its manicured lawns, followed by the Boston Harbour City Cruise, with its panoramic views, local history and hilarious guide.

After shopping along Newberry Street and grabbing excellent coffee at Thinking Cup, we checked into the trendy **The Atlas Hotel** in Allston. Tasteful wooden interiors, friendly staff and comfy beds made a great first impression, but the star was its restaurant, **AMA**. The pork belly with veggie dumplings and a Garden Party cocktail were delicious, while chicken tenders, burgers and mac and cheese kept our fussy little one happy.



The Atlas Hotel in Boston

Standout seafood and charming digs

Next, we drove 90 minutes north to Kennebunkport, Maine, a charming coastal town famous for lobsters and the Bush family's summer residence. **The Rugosa Lobster Tour** let us catch and handle these impressive clawed creatures before cruising past Walker's Point Estate, the family's secluded 'Summer White House'. Back on shore, we joined the queue at the legendary Clam Shack for lobster rolls. At $37 each, they were pricey, but an essential experience.


The Clam Shack
Coca-Cola
Coca-Cola
ORDER
PICK-UP
The CLAM SHACK
BLUEBERRY
HAND PIE
$8.95

Our accommodation, **The Lodge On The Cove**, captured the nostalgia of classic American family summers, combining retro motel charm with modern comforts. Wayne loved the pool and roasting marshmallows using the complimentary s'mores kits. Breakfast was included, while dinner at sister restaurant Tides Beach Club was followed by ice cream at Rococo's (top tip: the Maine Whoopie Pie flavour is a must).



The Lodge on the Cove

Our next stop was Bar Harbor, a historic Maine town straight out of *Gilmore Girls*, with indie bookshops and insta-worthy cafés galore. Our base was the nearby **Woods of Eden Glampground**, which offered spacious Americana themed canvas tents with all the comforts of home. Just a stone's throw away, Acadia National Park was also a highlight. An early start for a ranger-led bike tour rewarded us with breathtaking views and fascinating local history. Afterwards, we caught the shuttle to Jordan Pond House for its legendary popovers, a heavenly cross between Yorkshire pudding and a croissant.



Woods of Eden Glampground

Mountain highs in New Hampshire

Halfway through our trip, we crossed into New Hampshire and the stunning White Mountains. **The Innstead Getaway's** luxurious hillside cabins were the perfect place to stay. We made the most of relaxing with a glass of wine around the communal fire pit after spending the day browsing the nearby flea markets of Fairlee and kitschy general stores of Woodstock. For families, **Lost River Gorge** and Boulder Caves is a must. This mile-long attraction winds down boardwalks with more than 1,000 steps, passing eleven caves. Some are so narrow you have to crawl through them, which was enough to put my claustrophobic husband off, although Wayne showed no fear.



The Innstead Getaway

Packing up after two days – no time to let the grass grow under out feet on this whistle-stop trip – we headed back into Massachusetts for a stay in Lenox, a picturesque Berkshires town surrounded by rural beauty, quaint bakeries, organic food markets and fine dining. Book a patio table at recently opened Bea's House to watch the world go by (we enjoyed some seriously good upscale comfort food here).

We stayed at **Cornell Inn**, a cosy, historic bed and breakfast, in the Emily Dickinson room. Its peaceful courtyard with koi pond and waterfall was the perfect setting for an artisanal breakfast or a slice of freshly baked cake. A short drive took us to neighbouring Stockbridge, where curiosity shops charmed us before lunch at The Red Lion Inn, which felt like stepping back into 18th-century New England.



The Cornell Inn

Coastal chic in Rhode Island

Our next destination, Newport, Rhode Island, offered another journey through time. Known for its spectacular Gilded Age mansions, including the Vanderbilt family's $150 million estate, The Breakers, Newport also features extensively in *Downton Abbey* creator Julian Fellowes' HBO drama *The Gilded Age*.



Views from the Island House

We loved the three and a half mile coastal walk, with the ocean on one side and grand historic homes on the other. Afterwards, we tucked into clam chowder at The Black Pearl on the wharf before retiring to **The Island House**, a luxury boutique hotel offering apartment-style suites in downtown Newport.

Feeling at home in Cape Cod

As a gay couple, however, our trip's highlight was still to come: Provincetown, Cape Cod's LGBTQ+ haven, affectionately known as P-town and dubbed 'the gayest town in America'. Bustling ahead of Labor Day weekend, it was the perfect place to finish our adventure. **Mercury West**, inspired by Queen frontman Freddie Mercury, provided an Art Deco bolthole in the heart of town. We began with **Art's Dune Tours**, an exhilarating 4x4 ride across rolling sand dunes and scrubland. Next came a three hour whale-watching trip with **Dolphin Fleet Whale Watch**. Long, perhaps, but worth every magical minute.



On our second day, we explored art galleries and boutiques, while Wayne loved the candy stores filled with saltwater taffy and The Shell shop, with its astonishing variety of – yep, you guessed it – seashells. After dark, Commercial Street came alive with drag shows, bars and dance parties. I embraced the nightlife, while Oliver and Wayne enjoyed a quieter evening of seafood at Pepe's Wharf followed by a film at Water's Edge Cinema.



How to book it

Scott Dunn has a 14-night New England family self-drive from £9,100 per person, B&B, including flights and car hire (020 4600 5387, **scottdunn.com**).

More information: visittheusa.com; discovernewengland.org

Nathan was a guest of Visit USA and Discover New England. All hotels and experiences have been independently reviewed by our expert writers, who are usually hosted on a complimentary basis, but this never affects our review process.

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