



Courtesy photos

Enjoy a chocolate bubble bath at the Seaport Hotel in Boston.

# Pursuit of perfection

## Getaways center around love of chocolate

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We can't predict the weather in New England, but we can eat chocolate.

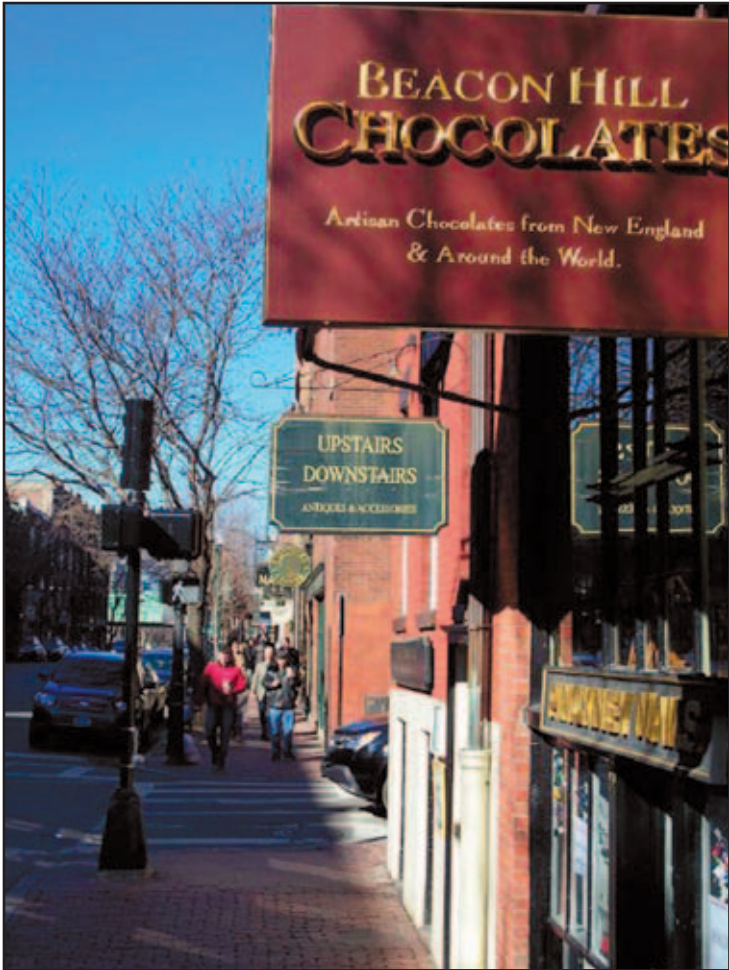
With snow accumulating in feet, not inches, temperatures holding at subzero, and blisters covering our hands from digging out, doesn't it makes sense to take a break to the beautiful worlds of "cacao" and "ka-kawa"?

Chocolate is nature's perfect food, and these getaways feature all things decadent and happy.

### City indulgence

Forrest Gump said it best: "Life is like a box of chocolates. ... You never know what you're gonna get."

If this is your philosophy, then a chocolate tour in Boston might fit the bill. The Seaport



Get your fill of decadent chocolate at Beacon Hill Chocolates in Boston.

Hotel is centrally located on the waterfront in the bustling Seaport District and offers five unique tasting tours through Boston Chocolate Tours:

Faneuil Hall, Beacon Hill, Back Bay, the South End and Harvard Square.

Lasting two hours, there are stops and samplings at seven or

eight shops and restaurants.

I pick Beacon Hill as my chocolate stomping ground. There's 3 feet of snow on the ground and the cobblestones are icy, but that doesn't deter me from my mission of artisanal tastings.

I trudge into Beacon Hill Chocolates, known for its special truffle selections, and I'm instantly hit with the moment of perfect place. Chocolate is lit up in cases like decorated jewels. With hand-painted chocolate hearts; caramels, creams, nuts, spices and fruits in white, milk and dark chocolate; truffles of every shape and size; dark-chocolate-covered cranberries with a hint of raspberry; and milk-chocolate-covered cranberries with a hint of orange, I'm in Willy Wonka Land.

I head to the specialty truffle case and choose the Bailey's Irish Cream liqueur truffle "blended with milk chocolate ganache, enrobed in milk chocolate," and it melts slowly in my mouth.

I don't even take my wool hat off until the second truffle: Chile Limon. This truffle packs a punch, and it's worth it: dark chocolate "kicked up with chili spice and a hint of tart lime." It's almost enough to knock my socks off – if only I didn't need them for the walk back outside.

Ending with Cloud Nine, a joyful moment of marshmallow over a layer of dark chocolate, I take a Chocolate Martini

### CHOCOLATE GETAWAYS

#### SEAPORT HOTEL

1 Seaport Lane, Boston.  
1-617-385-4212, [www.seaportboston.com](http://www.seaportboston.com)

Ask for the Seaport Sweet Discoveries Chocolate Tour. This includes an artisanal chocolate welcome treat from Boston Chocolate Tours, the tour of your choice and a chocolate bubble bath.

#### INN BY THE SEA

40 Bowery Beach Road, Cape Elizabeth, Maine.  
1-207-799-3134, [www.innbythesea.com](http://www.innbythesea.com)

Ask for the Chocolate Lovers package: Two-night accommodations, chocolate stout, handmade truffle, two 60-minute Swedish massages with chocolate-scented oils and a three-course chocolate menu for two.

Truffle for the road. Packaged in keepsake boxes, you can take the pleasure with you.

Next stop is Savenor's Market. Known as a specialty meat market, it's also renowned for John Kelly's Truffle Fudge – dark, bittersweet, layered in semisweet chocolate.

I grab some Taza Yerba Mate Chocolate Mexicano – a green

tea and chocolate extravaganza. I pop the Martini Truffle into my mouth and head back into the frozen tundra of New England. As the dark chocolate ganache flavored with Grey Goose Vodka, dipped in a rich dark chocolate shell with a hand-painted martini glass, melts, I brace for the wind chill.

Even though guests at the Seaport Hotel can use the Wave Health Club, which offers seminars, fitness classes, nutritional counseling and registered dietitians, I slink toward the heated pool and float around, walrus-style, in the deep end.

Upstairs, in my harbor-view room, there's a chocolate welcome treat from the hotel and chocolate-scented bubble bath. I think for dinner, I'll have cauliflower soup and roasted Scottish salmon. Chocolate on the side.

### Beach decadence

Sometimes you just need chocolate and a dog. Especially when you have work deadlines and you need the quiet.

The Inn by the Sea in Cape Elizabeth, Maine, showcases dinner as art. During February, the inn offers Chocolate Lovers Getaways for lovers of chocolate and lovers of the wild ocean in winter.

Located directly on Crescent Beach, empty except for a



# Chocolate | Inn offers a Swedish massage with chocolate-scented oils

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careening seagull, washed-up sea glass and a lobster trap, the inn is the perfect locale for contemplating the history of chocolate.

Especially after having a rich, chocolate stout beer.

Buster chases the lone seagull, but won't go near the frozen waves of the sea. I wrap my scarf over my face and head back to the warmth of the inn.

Flowers from the cacao trees were gathered by the Aztecs and Mayans for perfumed baths, and they were rumored to cure distress,

fatigue and any or all diseases. One ancient Mayan recipe for heart issues and fever includes cacao beans, maize and herbs. Perhaps cacao can cure my frostbite.

The Inn by the Sea offers Swedish massages with chocolate-scented oils – just the thing after a windswept ocean jaunt with Buster. My face is red, my hands are frozen and I can't feel my feet, but soon, in the spa, with the sounds of ocean waves coming from the stereo and my stomach rumbling from the scented oils, I'm on a Mayan beach with palm trees swaying.

Chocolate is made by fermenting, roasting and grinding the beans of a cocoa or cacao tree. The Aztecs called chocolate “bitter water” and drank it straight, for health and especially energy. Later, Europeans added milk and sugar to sweeten the bitter drink, and today, Nestle makes more than 5 million Reese's Peanut Butter Cups a day.

“It has been shown as proof positive that carefully prepared chocolate is as healthful a food as it is pleasant; that it is nourishing and easily digested ... that it is, above all, helpful

to people who must do a great deal of mental work,” said Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, a French lawyer and politician born in 1755 who gained fame as an epicure.

After holing up in a loft room with a balcony overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, I finish my “mental work” and head to Sea Glass, Inn by the Sea's intimate restaurant. Feeling more like a living room with a view, the floor-to-ceiling windows highlight the sea grasses and gray winter sky. A roaring fire glows, and candles are lit.

The first course is Hazelnut

Crusted Scallops with butter roasted gnocchi, roasted mushrooms, celery truffle salad and a white chocolate emulsion.

The Mayans drank their chocolate from bejeweled and painted bowls. Ancient pottery, found in tombs, depicted Mayan gods fighting over cocoa beans and Mayan kings waiting for their chocolate libations. This “drink of the gods” was used in ceremonies and as currency, and given as gifts.

Instead of a bowl of bitter cacao, I choose a nice Merlot.

The next course is Dried Chile and Chocolate Braised

Beef Cheeks, confit bacon hash and a red wine chocolate reduction. Although Buster is waiting back in the room, there will be no “doggie bag” tonight – even though the desert promises a triple threat of Mousse Cannoli, Brulee and Mini Chocolate Fudge Cake with Chocolate Beans.

That night, with the curtains open to the stars, I realize Lucy, from “Peanuts,” knows what she's talking about: “All I really need is love, but a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt.”

With the scent of chocolate and a snoring dog, I fall asleep.