



Cities by the sea. Left: USS Constitution Naval warship, available for tours, docked in Boston's former Charlestown Navy Yard. Above, from top: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, Conn.; Manhattan Bridge over the East River, connecting Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn in New York; and historic Providence, R.I.

Noteworthy Northeast

The region may be the oldest in the country, but pride in its deep-seated roots doesn't stop the Northeast from evolving. Whether it's a bustling metropolis like Manhattan or a charming New England town like Providence, each city possesses its own distinct energy and personality, complete with luxury hotels and innovative restaurants. Producing roughly a quarter of the country's gross domestic product, cities in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New York and Rhode Island are affordable, exciting and easy to reach.

Boston, Massachusetts

Perhaps best known for its rich history, higher education and wicker accent, Boston will be a major player in the convention game in the Northeast as the city's long-term infrastructure investment continues. In the past decade, the Logan International Airport received a \$4.4 billion facelift, the \$800 million Boston Convention and Exhibition Center was built and about 5,000 hotel rooms were added to the city. Last year also marked the completion of the country's largest underground tunnel system, or the Big Dig, in Boston—a \$15 billion, 20-year investment.

2012 will be a big year for the city, too. Fenway Park, home to the Boston Red Sox, celebrates its 100th birthday in April. With 15 private rooms and a 50,000-sq.-ft. meeting space, one of America's most beloved ballparks is a place to consider for meetings and special events during its centennial year. The newly renovated and expanded Boston Tea Party Ships and Museum opens in June 2012. With a capacity of 499, it's a new venue to look at as well.

If you're looking for something more traditional, Boston has three convention centers, each with its own personality: the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, the John B. Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center and the World Trade Center.

"Our proximity to the mountains and beaches makes Boston a perfect destination to take advantage of pre- and post-visits following a meeting," says Beth Stehley, vice president of convention services and sales at Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau. Stehley recommends heading out to the Boston Harbor Islands, Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket or The Berkshires for an authentic Boston-area getaway.

Andy McNeill, CEO of American Meetings Inc., often looks to Boston when planning meetings in the Northeast. "It's a major metropolitan city with great airline and rail access and can be cheaper than New York," says McNeill. "During the winter months, if you do need to meet in the Northeast, Bostonians know how to handle Old Man Winter and snow storms are handled professionally and quickly."

McNeill also likes the hotel options in the city, ranging from economy to five-star. "Boston is one of those cities that allows you to combine functionality with historical presence; that's always a nice touch and great opportunity to really engage your attendees," says McNeill, who recommends Entertainment Cruises for meetings. "It's a great company for booking private, off-site dinner events, cocktail parties or corporate award ceremonies. The fleet selection allows you to cruise Boston's port and take in the

KNOW | Facts & Figures

Boston, Massachusetts

Area guest rooms: 35,000
Convention Center:

Boston Convention and Exhibition Center

- ▶ Exhibit space: 575,000 square feet
- ▶ Meeting rooms: 84

Hartford, Connecticut

Area guest rooms: 1,800
Convention Center:

Connecticut Convention Center

- ▶ Exhibit space: 140,000 square feet
- ▶ Meeting rooms: 23

Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania

Area guest rooms: 5,000
Convention Center: Holiday Inn
Conference Center, Allentown

- ▶ Exhibit space: 15,364 square feet
- ▶ Meeting rooms: 8

New York, New York

Area guest rooms: 71,000
Convention Center:

Jacob K. Javits Convention Center

- ▶ Exhibit space: 760,000 square feet
- ▶ Meeting rooms: 75

Providence, Rhode Island

Area guest rooms: 5,500
Convention Center:

Rhode Island Convention Center

- ▶ Exhibit space: 100,000 square feet
- ▶ Meeting rooms: 23

TIPS

Old Is Cool

Hartford, Conn., is one of the country's most historic cities. It's home to the nation's oldest public art museum, the Wadsworth Atheneum; the oldest public park, Bushnell Park; the oldest continuously published newspaper, The Hartford Courant; the second-oldest secondary school, Hartford Public; and the Mark Twain House.

Laugh Out Loud

One of Boston's best venues for comedy, Improv Asylum in the North End, has group training, custom shows and a student training center.



Interior convenience. Skybridges connect Boston's Hynes Convention Center with three adjacent hotels, making winter weather a non-issue for meeting attendees. The center has 176,480 square feet of exhibit space.

beautiful view of the city skyline, no matter what your event's head count."

For larger groups, McNeill likes Boston Marriott Long Wharf, a recently renovated classic Boston Hotel located right on the harbor at historic Long Wharf, one block from Faneuil Hall and Quincy Market. "With a healthy offering of guest rooms, meeting rooms and related accommodations, we find it's a reliable resource," he says. "Plus it's conveniently located very close to Logan International Airport, which always proves a huge plus for business travelers come departure day."

One of McNeill's favorite event spaces is The Liberty Hotel. "Originally a jail house, [it] was converted into one of the more interesting meeting venues you'll find," says McNeill. "Portions of the jail cells are still present and preserved within the hotel, as part of the lobby bar. This hotel is a refreshing change for business travelers that frequent hotels for meetings."

Finally, for activities outside of the meeting, McNeill recommends historical walking tours, whale watches and the myriad of wonderful seafood restaurants. "We conduct dozens of meetings a year in Boston and will always return. We find value and quality at every turn."

Hartford, Connecticut

Hartford may be the Insurance Capital of the World, but there's so much more to the historic town. Its proximity to Springfield makes the Hartford-Springfield Metropolitan Area the second most populous region in New England and is revered by locals for its dining scene. With more than 40 independent three- and four-star restaurants within walking distance of downtown, there's something for every palate.

A sophisticated city with a small-town feel, Hartford only accommodates one large group at a time. "Everyone knows when the group is in town and they get



Modern luxury. The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts in Hartford, Conn., has a number of event spaces, including the Belding Theatre, which has a beautiful ceiling mural called “Music of the Spheres.”

lots of recognition in the restaurants and shops,” says Michael Van Parys, president of the Greater Hartford CVB. “When a [group] has a meeting or convention here, they are always blown away by the uptick in attendance,” says Van Parys.

Pam Cerrone, manager of community relations at Price Chopper Supermarkets, loves meeting in Hartford. “The Connecticut Convention Center is one of a handful of locations that can accommodate the large group of teammates [1,500] and trade partners [750+] that we bring,” says Cerrone, who opts for the four-star Hartford Marriott Downtown for accommodations. “It’s also close to a number of our stores, and the city is clean and easily accessible.”

Hartford is an obvious choice for Colleen Boles, manager of corporate meetings and protocol at United Technologies, as the company is headquartered here. “With the never-ending demands to increase efficiency and streamline costs, Hartford has

become a primary location for us to host meetings and events,” says Boles, who has several favorite meeting venues in the city, including The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, The Wadsworth Atheneum and the Connecticut Center for Science and Exploration.

“We look to partner with vendors and venues that share [our] same commitment to excellence,” she says. “They are fully aligned on issues important to us, and are instrumental in our quest to deliver successful, world class events.” Boles has also developed strong relationships with several local businesses such as the Connecticut Convention Center, the Marriott Hartford Downtown, Morton’s The Steakhouse and The Society Room of Hartford, to name a few.

Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania

Lehigh Valley, which is made up of the three towns of Allentown, Bethlehem and

TIPS

Row, Row, Row

The Charles Regatta, the largest rowing race in the world, is held in Boston every year, but you can get your team working in unison anytime with corporate teambuilding rowing programs through Community Rowing Inc., which plans outings for groups on the Charles River. Learn more at communityrowing.org.

Shuttle Around Town

Take the complimentary Star Shuttle to get around Hartford. The shuttle runs a continuous 13-minute route around downtown, connecting the Connecticut Convention Center with hotels, train stations, restaurants and parking garages.



MEET | Hotel Albany

Hotel Albany, formerly the Crowne Plaza Albany-City Center, is undergoing renovations to the guest rooms, lobby, common areas and parking garage, and adding a new indoor pool and two on-site restaurants as part of its move into the Hilton family of hotels. “The hotel is a great destination for both business and leisure travelers looking for an ideal downtown location close to state government buildings and entertainment,” said Dave Horton global head, Hilton Hotels and Resorts. The 386-room hotel has 25,200 square feet of flexible meeting space that includes 15 meeting rooms and a 10,080-sq.-ft. ballroom. Hotel Albany guests can earn Hilton Honors points.



Get in the game. Sands Casino Resort opened in 2009 in Bethlehem, Pa., providing planners with another venue option for meetings and events in the state's Lehigh Valley.

Easton, is Pennsylvania's fastest growing region. Each town is full of personality, with historic downtown districts and eclectic, trendy neighborhoods.

“We have locations for each different type of meeting,” says Marc Kaminetsky, national sales manager at Discover Lehigh Valley. For example, the newly opened ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks, located on the site of the former Bethlehem Steel plant, is a 65,000-sq.-ft., multiuse performing arts center featuring floor-to-ceiling glass walls offering a spectacular view of the plant's iconic blast furnaces.

Rema Russack, executive assistant at ADP, helped organize the company's largest-ever meeting at the new ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks Campus back in July. She rented out the 100-seat movie theater for a multimedia presentation, using in-house AV equipment. “It was a great

location because there was plenty of parking, the venue had just opened so everyone was fascinated with the view of the ancient SteelStacks and almost no one was aware of this new venue for live music, movies and art. I would absolutely come back to that location and do another meeting.”

Also in Bethlehem, the Sands Casino Resort, which opened in 2009, features 300 guest rooms, 5,000 square feet of modern meeting space and more than 3,000 square feet of exhibition space. Located 10 minutes from the Lehigh Valley International Airport, the resort has an in-house team of meeting planners and AV specialists. Another department at ADP hosted an event at the casino, reporting back with fantastic reviews of the meeting space, pricing and the service.

Russack also held a meeting at the conference center at the Best

Go to collaboratemeetings.com/new-in-the-northeast for more on Northeastern and New England meetings destinations.



Race to the finish. Lehigh Valley Grand Prix often hosts teambuilding go-kart racing for corporate groups. Past clients include Coca-Cola, Met Life, Crayola, Toys R Us and Home Depot.

Western in Bethlehem. “What’s great about this location is it is conveniently located on Route 22, and there is a hotel on-site,” says Russack. The conference center was able to accommodate her group of 110, but the venue can make room for much bigger groups. Russack also planned a lunch at the Bethlehem Township Municipal Park during one of her events, where attendees barbecued and played softball, volleyball and horseshoes.

“It was a beautiful fall day and the employees were thrilled to get outside after a morning of meetings,” says Russack. One additional venue for ADP events: Pig Pen Sports Bar in Allentown. “This location was able to provide us great pricing on food, drinks and then bowling. We broke our group up into teams and had a bowling tournament.”

The airport is a tremendous asset, says Kaminetsky. “It has very convenient flights from hub cities, the lines are never very long, parking is a lot less expensive and there’s no tram needed,” he adds. He also emphasizes the value found at the region’s various hotels. “The majority of our hotels don’t charge for parking and don’t have a lot of those hidden fees that major cities tend to hit you with.”

For teambuilding in Lehigh Valley, take your group for an exhilarating ride at the Lehigh Valley Grand Prix, or to learn something new at Sagra Bistro, a restaurant that offers mozzarella cheese making classes and murder mystery dinners. Dutch Springs recreational facility in Bethlehem offers a wide variety of activities, like trust exercises, high-ropes courses and an aqua park.



SEE | Boston in 2012

There’s a lot happening in Boston in 2012, including:

Fenway Park, America’s most beloved ballpark, celebrates its 100th birthday on April 20.

A \$7 million, state-of-the-art **National Park Service Visitor Center** at the 1806 Faneuil Hall landmark opens in May.

The renovated and expanded **Boston Tea Party Ships and Museum** opens in June.

Boston will be one of the port cities of the U.S. Navy and OpSail’s commemoration of the **Bicentennial of the War of 1812** and Star-Spangled Banner in June.

And Boston’s Grand Dame, the **Fairmont Copley Plaza**, celebrates its 100th birthday in 2012.

Go to collaboratemeetings.com/providence for more information on Rhode Island’s Providence Warwick area.

TIPS

Plan to Return

When planning meetings in New York City, don't put too much on the itinerary. New York City offers so many entertainment options, it's impossible to fit everything into one event. Plan one big event at an iconic venue, and encourage attendees to add a day or two of leisure time to their trips if they'd like to experience more of the city.

Forget the Wheels

When in Boston, an easy way to get around is on the city's subway system, known to locals as the T. The CharlieCard subway card can be purchased for \$15 for unlimited weeklong access.



Meetings at the Met. New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art can create a stunning backdrop for an event. Planners have a number of social spaces and exhibition areas to choose from for meetings.

ADP recently held an event at Lehigh Valley Sporting Clays, a local skeet shooting range. "This was a great teambuilding event because no one had an advantage over another, and the shooting course was a challenge for everyone, which made each person's success a lot of fun for the entire group," says Russack.

New York, New York

As the most populous city in the United States, New York City remains the nation's biggest draw for people who want to take care of business and have a little fun, too. The energy, vibrancy and diversity of New York City is an iconic draw offering a multitude of possibilities, from small meetings to in-house hotel conferences to large conventions and trade shows. With the promise of record-breaking attendance, New York provides your group with thousands of options, low transportation costs and easy access.

"New York's the center of the universe," says Jaclyn Bernstein, president and partner at Empire Force Events. "Business revolves and evolves here. It's a destination people want to go to anyway." When Bernstein is planning a meeting or special event in New York, she often opts for the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. "In order to get to Ellis Island, you have to take a ferry from Battery Park, so you get to see a lot of the city from the water, which accomplishes something very New York." Bernstein also recommends the skyline-sweeping rooms at the Top of the Rock Observation Deck.

Phelps Hope, vice president of meetings and expositions at Kellen Meetings, hosts dozens of meetings in NYC every year. One of his favorite spots is The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Temple of Dendur exhibit. Hope hosted an event in the exhibit recently for 23 airline CEOs and senior staff, plus their spouses, totaling about 450 people. "We created a sunset to coincide



Green meetings. “The Rhode Island Convention Center has green hospitality certification, and our event managers helped us build more sustainable elements into our catering and operations,” says Jean Plotkin, Labs21 conference manager.

with the sun setting outside the Met, since one entire 80-foot wall is glass, so the colors behind the actual Temple matched those of a desert sunset, with a starry night sky slowly illuminating,” explains Hope. “All around the moat that surrounds the Egyptian Temple, we placed 1,300 votive candles, and coordinated the evening entertainment with the white-glove banquet service.”

There are plenty of new lodging and events options in New York. “By year’s end, New York will have approximately 90,000 hotel rooms throughout the five boroughs, and 7,000 more rooms in the pipeline,” says Christopher Heywood, vice president of communications at NYC and Company. New hotels, including Hyatt 48 Lex and the Conrad New York, open this year, and many more are undergoing renovations in order to be competitive with the new inventory.

Also, the massive, glass-enclosed Jacob K. Javits Convention Center has been undergoing renovations since 2009, and is currently installing the largest green roof in the Northeast. The facility has 1.1 million square feet of meeting space after the nine-phase expansion added exhibition, pre-function and outdoor space. Gov. Andrew Cuomo has discussed the possibility of building a new convention center, the 3.8 million-sq.-ft. New York International Convention and Exhibition Center in New York, which would be the country’s largest.

Providence, Rhode Island

Known as the “Creative Capital,” Providence has a vibrant arts scene and large community of talented chefs (some of whom are James Beard award nominees). Home to Ivy League schools Brown University, the Rhode Island

School of Design, and Johnson and Wales University, Providence is truly a college town: smart, stylish, passionate and creative.

With an intimate, small-town feel, you can easily walk from venue to venue without feeling overwhelmed. And yet, there are all the amenities of a metropolis: great restaurants, noteworthy hotels, shopping and fascinating attractions, like the Trinity Repertory Theater Company, where Oscar-nominees Richard Jenkins and Viola Davis got their starts.

Jean Plotkin, Labs21 conference manager, came away with a great impression of the city after planning a meeting in Providence. “Everyone we worked with, from the Providence Warwick Convention and Visitors Bureau to the Rhode Island Convention Center to the local businesses, treated us with incredibly personalized attention, like we were their only clients.

“We took attendees over to [the universities] for off-site tours of the school’s laboratory facilities, [which] were fantastic, but the drives were particularly interesting, as we got to see a lot of the historic homes along the way,” says Plotkin. “The conference staff also headed over to Federal Hill for dinner one night. I definitely recommend that other groups go there at least once during their stay.”

Plotkin was also pleased with the city’s sustainability efforts. “Our conference focuses on green high-tech facilities, so it’s important for our event to walk the talk,” she says. She also liked that Providence is a foot-friendly city with a good public transit system and it’s welcoming for families. “[About] a quarter of our attendees brought family with them and made a vacation out of the trip,” she says. “With Boston and Newport so close by, it was easy for them to see other sights while in the area.”

—Kate Parham