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Hello from the North of Boston Region! With 34 cities and towns just north of the city of Boston and up to the New Hampshire border, we are sure you'll find a story in every mile! Here is a sampling of story ideas for 2008/2009.

America's Witch Hysteria and the Ultimate Halloween Party Destination

The North of Boston region is the location of America's Witch Hysteria of 1692. In 1692, 19 citizens of Danvers, Topsfield, Marblehead and beyond were tried and killed in Salem. Today, practicing witches make up 10% of Salem's population. Each October, a **month-long Halloween celebration** takes place and attracts people from all over the world. Halloween in the Wiccan religion is the equivalent of New Year's Eve with memorable, spirited events happening all over the city.



Fall Foliage Ideas Major scenic driving routes 133 and 1A wind through the region and offer rural farm land or ocean and marsh vistas. Autumn in the North of Boston region also includes the annual tradition of Topsfield Fair. Apple picking, cider pressing and home cooked blueberry pies and cider donuts round out the true New England experience at family-run farms. View **the changing hues from a kayak** on the marshes or take a sail on a schooner to see the ever-changing color from a water perspective.



Enjoy the County's Oldest Fair – The North of Boston is home to America's Oldest County Fair, the Topsfield Fair **celebrating 190 years in October, 2008**. A highlight is the Giant Pumpkin Weigh Off. In 2006, the heavy-weight champion crushed the competition at **1,689 pounds** and garnered a Guinness World Record. That's a lot of pies. Come see livestock, watch tractor pulls, play a game of chance, or go for a spin on the Ferris wheel for some good, old-fashioned fun.

Architectural Treasures Essex County was once the summer playground for New England's elite families. Visitors can glimpse what it was like to live in grand mansions or work in the mills that dot the Merrimack River, some of which are open to the public for tours. You will find more examples of First Period homes (c. 1626 –1725) than anywhere else in the country. The area also boasts wonderful examples of Georgian Colonial style, Federal style, Greek Revival, Italianate and several European-styled buildings. 2007 was the 250th anniversary of Salem architect Samuel McIntire's birth and offers a range of tours that highlight McIntire's architectural diversity and distinctive decorative arts. For more info and suggested itineraries, visit www.escapesnorth.com.

Hidden Wonders, Off the Beaten Path Leave time to meander and explore. Enjoy fried clams where they were invented or visit the oldest museum in the U.S., the Peabody Essex Museum. Stay at an historical inn that is a destination unto itself, including a Great House open to the public, with miles of hiking trails to explore and one of the most pristine beaches on the North Shore. Discover a museum whose **collection of more than 1,000 dolls** includes everything from Egyptian tomb figures to tiny dressed fleas. Or shop at over 24 antiques shops — all within one small town.



Lights, Camera, Action: Hollywood Movies in the Region An inspiring backdrop for many major Hollywood movies, the North of Boston region has welcomed movies such as “**The Perfect Storm**” in Gloucester, “The Crucible” in Ipswich and “The Love Letter” in Rockport. Other movies shot in the region include “The Witches of Eastwick,” “Moonlight Mile,” and “Stuck on You” and new films are being shot all the time in this quintessential New England setting.

Girls Getaway Weekends Special girls’ getaway weekends include deep-sea fishing excursions “**Fish & Chicks**” or adventure hiking weekends. For a more relaxed holiday, participate in the Cape Ann Artisans Open Studio Tours in June or October. Now celebrating its 25th Anniversary, the tour lets you meet the artisans and learn everything from glass blowing to pottery and jewelry making.

Boat Building Bonanza Learn about the artistry of building boats at some of the nation’s earliest, most famous and prolific boat producers. Breathe in the scent of freshly hewn lumber and see hand-crafted vessels at Lowell’s Boat Shop in Amesbury, the birthplace of the fishing dory and the oldest continuously operating boat shop in America. Watch history unfold at the **Essex Shipbuilding Museum**, where the replicas of the *Schooner FAME* and the *Schooner Thomas E. Lannon* were created and are now available to the public for sailing out of Salem and Gloucester, respectively.

Fun on the Farm Pick Your Own – Pumpkins, apples, nectarines, strawberries, and more! There are a number of wonderful farms in the North of Boston region that offer hours of family fun options from picking apples to hay rides. Check out **Cider Hill Farm and Russell Orchards**. For adults, join in the grape harvest at Alfalfa Farm Winery and earn your community shares in tasty wine.

Women Iconoclasts Leading the Way On July 8, 1856, **Hannah Jumper**, a 75-year-old seamstress led Rockport’s women in a rebellion on “demon rum” and took hatchets to any keg, jug, or cask containing alcohol. This temperance movement was in direct response to the seasonal nature of the local fishing industry and three-month “vacation” that the townsmen idled away, consuming enormous amounts of liquor. As a result, Rockport remained a “dry” town until 2005. On the other end of the spectrum, **Lydia Estes Pinkham**, a resident of Lynn, was a patent holder and promoter of “pink pills for pale people.” She developed home remedies and mass marketed them from 1875 on. Her Lydia Pinkham’s Vegetable Compound, targeted at menopausal women, used testimonials from grateful customers and became one of the best known medicines of the 19th century.

Whale Watching Wonderland! Whale watching on the North Shore offers more “whale watching” time due to its proximity to major whale feeding grounds like Stellwagen Bank and Jeffrey’s Ledge. Did you know that the World Wildlife Fund rates Gloucester as one of the “**Top Five Whale Watch locations in the World**”? Whale watching season begins in May and runs through October with most companies guaranteeing sightings. Deep sea fishing, charters and dinner cruises are also great options.

Tea for Two or More The region offers a number of beautiful spots to enjoy tea. Whether you are interested in a “floral tea” at Glen Magna Farms in Danvers, a “**seaside tea**” at **Beauport Mansion** in Gloucester or the Great House at Castle Hill in Ipswich, or a “teddy bear tea” at the Hawthorne Hotel in Salem, we can serve up a lovely and memorable “cuppa” across Essex County.

Gas Pains? No problem. Day trips are easy. **Hop the Salem Ferry from Boston** to arrive in downtown Salem. Ride the train to Ipswich and hop aboard the Ipswich Essex Explorer Bus for a car-free way to beaches, grand estates, and quaint towns. Two MBTA commuter rail lines serve the area for easy access – Newburyport/Rockport and Haverhill depart from Boston’s North Station. Starting this year is ferry service from Gloucester to Provincetown on the tip of Cape Cod.

A River Runs Through It Outdoor enthusiasts will find no shortage of things to do North of Boston. The mighty Merrimack River passes through many communities and offers a variety of water sports in the warmer months to ice skating in winter. Hike along the Merrimack on trails in Maudsley Park in Newburyport. Today’s recreation was once yesterday’s commercial thoroughfare. History buffs can see how the river served as a catalyst for growth in such towns as Lawrence and Haverhill.

Take Wing and Soar – A Birder’s Paradise

Grab your binoculars, camera and notepad so you can note how many of the more than 300 species of birds that live in the area and migrate through, including herons, white-tailed hawks and even bald eagles. There are a number of Audubon sites to explore, the newly built Joppa Flats Education Center as well as Plum Island, where Parker River Wildlife Refuge conserves birding habitat from by development.

Kayak Tours, Marsh Cruises, Sunset Schooner Sails, Gambling Getaways There’s more than one way to stay afloat. Paddle a kayak in fresh or ocean water during the day or under the light of a full moon. **Take a river cruise on a pontoon boat** through the ever-changing marshes and see the former setting for some of Hollywood’s major motion pictures. Help hoist the sails on a replica of a historic schooner. Or try your luck on a casino cruise with slot machines, blackjack, poker, roulette and craps tables.

Literary Footsteps The North of Boston region is named after American poet, Robert Frost. His second book of poems *North of Boston* (1914) contained some of his best-known poems. Frost was raised in Lawrence, MA, which hosts an annual Robert Frost Festival in October. From Nathaniel Hawthorne to John Greenleaf Whittier, the region produced and continues to inspire literary lions. Each April, the Newburyport Literary Festival lures contemporary authors and avid readers. For more info on the region’s literary heritage, visit www.escapesnorth.com

Step Back in Time Learn how the Witch Hysteria of 1692 evolved, how labor laws were shaped in Lawrence during the Bread & Roses Strike, and how “flying machines” were flown out on Plum Island competing with the Wright Brothers. History is evident as you walk the halls of a grand estate or view a celebrated collection of American Folk art or see the original "**Spirit of '76**" painting in Marblehead.

Support the Thriving Art Scene Home to America’s first artist colony, the North of Boston region has long welcomed creativity. Visit seaside galleries to shop and discuss their work with the artists themselves. Experience the Peabody Essex Museum, **America’s oldest museum** and explore centuries of art and architecture from New England and the world, including a Chinese merchant’s home from the Qing dynasty. Take in the new works by emerging artists at studio shows in former industrial mill spaces. View a show at Montserrat College of Art in Beverly to see talented teachers and students.

Bon appetite! We’ve come a long way from the China Trade when pepper was a leading import used to mask the taste of food that was past its prime. The region boasts unparalleled cuisine. Choose from traditional summer favorites like fried clam rolls and coleslaw to upscale fine dining experiences. Discover the ethnic specialties and dining options in Lawrence, a multicultural city of immigrants and industry. Dine on boiled lobster as you watch the fishermen coming in with their daily catch in Gloucester, America’s Oldest Seaport, and Marblehead, the Yachting Capital of the World. Or have your dinner served to you and your mate for **a romantic and unforgettable meal in a lighthouse!**

Antiquing – Everything Old is New Again A variety of shops beckon as you stroll along the streets in the many seaside villages and search for the perfect souvenir for your collection. Wander along Route 133 from Essex to Andover scouring **quintessential New England antique shops**. Or bargain with the locals at flea markets. From ephemera to furniture, there’s a virtually unlimited supply of antiques hidden away in local attics that can pop up in the marketplace to the delight of shoppers, novice and experts alike.

Unique Lodging Options There are overnight accommodations to suit every budget and desire in the North of Boston region. Select from charming, bed and breakfasts, many housed in historic homes, or one of our full-service hotels or resorts, complete with golf courses. Splash with the family at Coco Key, an indoor water resort at the Sheraton Ferncroft in Danvers. **Pull your RV up to a beachside campground in Salisbury** or camp out at one of our state parks or private campgrounds. Stay overnight on a dockside B&B boat. Family-friendly and romance packages are available at many locations.

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