

# Nevah say 'pahkin' when you mean parking

Ever since JFK was president, many Americans have had the false (if quite understandable) misconception that all native Bostonians sound like him. That nasal twang, the lack of Rs, the Ts that sound like Ds – these all made Kennedy's voice distinctive. The Kennedy Boston accent sounds something like: 'Ye-ah, I'm pahkin' the cah ne-ah Hahvid Yahd.' To this day, this is viewed as the quintessential Boston accent. This stereotype has been further perpetuated by the television and film actors who have tried to give their Boston-based characters more authenticity by nailing this accent. This requires them to say things like 'That's wicked pissah!' (translation: really great), that nobody much says anymore.

The sad irony is that the original Irish-American Boston natives who created this accent, some of whom still reside in South Boston and Dorchester, have become a quaint minority in Boston's culturally mixed landscape. In fact, the way natives speak is ever changing, and changing very quickly. Accents in Boston today are based on whatever groups of people are currently migrating to, and forming communities in, the city. Today Boston's population is much more cosmopolitan than it once was. While it is still possible that you might happen upon an authentic-sounding cabby from Southie who spends the entire ride blabbing about 'the Sox', it's likely that your command of Spanish will come in more handy than any guide to traditional local lingo.

However, even though Boston's accent has changed, it is still a city of nicknames, and it can all be a bit confusing, so here is a brief guide to odd pronunciations and quirky names you're likely to hear around town:

## **Copley Square**

Is pronounced 'Cope-ly', not 'Cope-ly'.

## **Comm Ave**

Commonwealth Avenue.

## **Mass Ave**

Massachusetts Avenue.

## **Dot Ave**

Dorchester Avenue.

## **The Pit**

The centre of Harvard Square.

## **The Pike**

The Massachusetts Turnpike.

## **The Pru**

The Prudential Tower.

## **The Common**

Boston Common.

## **Worcester**

Pronounced 'Wooster'.

## **Gloucester**

Pronounced 'Glawster'.

## **Quincy**

Pronounced 'Quinzzie'.

## **Southie**

South Boston.

## **Rozzie**

Roslindale.

## **Tonic**

Old Boston word for soft drink.

## **Jimmies**

Chocolate or multi-coloured sprinkles on top of ice-cream – enormously popular here.

## **Frappe**

A milkshake – pronounced 'frap'.

## **Spa**

Convenience store that serves food.

## **The T**

The local subway – short for the MBTA.

## **The Sox**

Boston's beloved and beleaguered baseball team, the Red Sox. But, then again, you probably knew that by now.

## **Lift Bus Program**

1-800 543 8287.

For queries about bus access.

## **Massachusetts Office on Disability**

727 7440/1-800 322 2020.

This governmental agency is a good source for enquiries into issues like rights enforcement, building access and other information useful for disabled travellers.

## **Electricity**

The United States uses a 110-120V, 60-cycle AC voltage, rather than the 220-240V, 50-cycle AC voltage used in Europe. Laptops and most travel appliances are dual voltage and will work in the US and in Europe, but it is always a good idea to check with the manufacturer before you ever plug them in. Older computers in particular, have been known to blow.

You will also need an adaptor for US sockets; they can be bought at the airport or at pharmacies.

## **Emergencies**

### **Ambulance, Fire Brigade or Police**

For all emergency services in the US, dial 911. The call is toll-free from any payphone. 911 also works from most mobile phones.