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OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Boston's Beacon Hill

Reporter and Boston-area native **Tamara Audi** on what to do, where to stay and where to eat in the city's Beacon Hill neighborhood.

■ **What to do:** As sleek, modern development pops up along the skyline, savor Boston's cobblestone past in one of its oldest and most walkable neighborhoods, Beacon Hill. Stroll along picturesque Charles Street, lined with independent antique shops, bookstores, boutiques and restaurants. Scout for trendy fashion gems at Wish (49 Charles St.) and Moxie (73 Charles St.). Stop at Beacon Hill Chocolates (92b Pinckney St.) for chocolate-dipped figs and basil-infused caramels. Skip the touristy golden-domed State House building and head to a lesser-known dome with a fascinatingly gory history: the Ether Dome, site of the first public demonstration of anesthetic ether for surgery in 1846. Located on the campus of Massachusetts General Hospital (55 Fruit St.), the dome is free and open to the public—though you will likely have the place all to yourself to shudder at antique surgical tools on display, a vivid painting of that historic surgery, and a 6th-century mummy from the city of Thebes. It is open



Brownstone homes on Beacon Hill

Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., though the hospital uses the room for occasional meetings. If there is no meeting and the door is locked, pick up the house phone and ask security to unlock it.

■ **Where to stay:** In its previous life, the Liberty Hotel was an infamous jailhouse. It is now transformed into chic luxury lodging with plenty of historical context and preservation. The hotel is also home to one of the city's current hot spots, a bar called Alibi (get it?) featuring celebrity mug shots hanging on brick walls, and crime-themed drinks (Rooms start at \$250, 215 Charles St., www.libertyhotel.com).

■ **Where to eat:** For a stellar breakfast, at times preceded by an excruciating wait, head to the Paramount. Be

warned, the seating rules are strict and unconventional: Wait in line, order at the counter, and only when you have your food may you take a table (44 Charles St., 617-720-1152, www.paramountboston.com). Yes, the famous Cheers bar is in this neighborhood, but to find actual Bostonians and servers who really do know their names, slide up to the friendly wine bar at Bin 26 Enoteca. You can choose from over 60 wines by the glass, or 200 by the bottle. Try the cocoa tagliatelle with porcini ragout. The food is sophisticated, but delivered without pretense or a shocking bill. The kind of place where you might have found Sam—and Diane—on a night off from the beer crowd (26 Charles St., 617-723-5939, www.bin26.com).