

London Evening Standard

Why Baltimore is the coolest city on the East Coast

‘Charm City’ is the new millennial hotspot

What to do, eat, drink and see in Baltimore



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After decades of being overshadowed by neighbouring cities like New York and Washington DC, Baltimore is coming for its place on your travel radar - and *fast*.

Earlier this year, the humble Maryland town was dubbed the [‘Coolest City on the East Coast’](#) after experiencing one of the largest millennial booms in America, and it’s pretty clear why. The city’s impressive rise in young entrepreneurs has unleashed a whole new set of attractions - from its budding art and culture scene to its award-winning culinary, quirky neighbourhoods and fascinating history - not to mention the infectious crab craze, and electric nightlife.

The city that would once only spring to mind in passing references to hit musical *Hairspray* or HBO drug drama *The Wire* is firmly in the midst of cementing its status as a tourist hub, both

within the States and internationally. So with more to see, do and explore than ever before, it's time to plan your visit. Here's why...



Rec Pier Chop House

1. The Booming Art Scene

One of the city's main attractions is the eccentric American Visionary Art Museum. Founded by Rebecca Alban Hoffberger in 1984 - the museum, which is located in Downtown Baltimore's Inner Harbor - showcases creativity and colour at its finest. From the 'Giant Whirligig' sculpture outside the museum to the 'World's First Family of Robots', the pieces are unapologetically brash in every good sense of the term. And as the only one of its kind, the AVAM is home to self-taught, intuitive artistry which is made clear by its interactive elements and unique (to say the least) exhibitions.

And the city's creative culture doesn't stop there. Baltimore is known for its lively street art, with local artists constantly changing the face of the city - stop by the Open Walls Art Murals for the best examples of this.

If you're after a more traditional experience, however, the Baltimore Museum of Art is the place for you. With over 95,000 objects - 1,000 of which are by the famous Henri Matisse - the BMA is an art lover's dream. As well as housing a famed Cone Collection of modern art, it holds some of the finest prints, drawings and photographs in the United States.

General admission to the [BMA](#) is free for everyone. Some special exhibitions and events may incur a charge.



Baltimore's eclectic art scene (American Visionary Art Museum)

2. The Rich History

History buffs will know that Baltimore has a deep heritage worth exploring. As a city that prides itself in “making the old new again”, it’s full of historical buildings and landmarks from the 19th century - many of which have been revamped into swanky new hotels and modern properties while maintaining elements of their original architecture. Examples of this can be found in Mount Vernon - a neighbourhood that was once home to Baltimore’s Gilded Age elites (from F. Scott Fitzgerald to Wallis Simpson) and now offers tours around the well-preserved mansions, courtesy of a clued-up local named Doris Sharkey. As Baltimore’s cultural district, Mount Vernon is also where you’ll find the grandiose George Peabody library, the Walters Art Museum and last but certainly not least, the loud and proud Washington Monument.

For those who want to dive deeper into Baltimore’s history while exploring the ins and outs of the city, book the Historic Bike Tour. This will not only get your heart rate going but is by far the most exciting and informative way to see the city. Kicking off at the M&T Bank Stadium where American football team the Baltimore Ravens play, the tour takes you everywhere from the B&O Railroad Museum to the Westminster Cemetery, where historical figures like Edgar Allen

Poe are buried. Fans of *The Wire* will also be in for a treat as the cycle route takes you through the Silo Point residential complex where a significant amount of Season 2 was filmed.

Bike Tours cost £30pp. To find out more visit: [Light Street Cycles](#)

General admissions start from £8pp. For further information visit: [Explore Baltimore](#)



Baltimore History district - Mount Vernon

3. The Brunches

No city can be crowned a millennial hotspot without a bustling brunch scene and Baltimore does not disappoint. With cafes and eateries in every neighbourhood, you'll be spoilt for choice when it comes to picking a cool spot. However, there are a few standouts. Dooby's, a laid-back Korean-inspired coffee shop in Mount Vernon, is a favourite among locals due to its rustic design and delicious seasonal menu. Order one of their popular Breakfast Sammies to do brunch like a true Baltimorean, and don't forget to try the Kombucha either. If you've got a sweet tooth, treat yourself to the bread pudding with brandied butter and candied pecans at Hampden's Artifact Coffee or book a table at the gorgeous Gertrude's (located in the Baltimore Museum of Art) for a more luxurious bottomless brunch experience and a chance to sample some crab eggs benedict - yes, it's a thing.

Breakfast courses at [Doobys](#) start from £4 pp.

Breakfast courses at [Artifact Coffee](#) start from £5pp.

Brunch courses at the [Gertrude's](#) start from £10.



Baltimore does good brunch (Modern Cook Shop)

4. The Neighbourhoods

Much of Baltimore's charm is courtesy of its vibrant neighbourhoods, each with its own character and allure. Charles Village, a student and family-friendly area, is made up of postcard perfect streets and brightly coloured Victorian-style row houses. The San Francisco inspired neighbourhood is also home to the 'painted ladies' - a row of extravagantly decorated houses unique with their own vivid style. A similarly quirky vibe can be found in Hampden, located in the north of Baltimore. Home to the city's hipsters and creatives, Hampden is known for hosting street festivals (including the city's annual Honfest) and features plenty of unconventional shops like Ma Petite Shoe, a popular store selling chocolates and shoes, as well as friendly pubs and bars.

For stunning views of the harbour, visit the lively Federal Hill or enjoy a walk through Fell's Point, a romantic cobbled-street neighbourhood on the waterfront representing Baltimore's nautical roots. While you're there, check out Fell's Point Creamery for the best handmade ice cream in the city or treat yourself to a ride on a water taxi to the other side of town.



The picturesque Federal Hill neighbourhood

5. The Authentic Crab Craze

You haven't experienced the true essence of Baltimore until you've had a crab feast. Phillips Seafood is the perfect place for this as locals gather around with friends and family for an evening of hot hard shells and beer by the city's overwater dock. Get your hands dirty by cracking open a freshly caught crab and don't forget to try the award-winning crab cakes and deep fried chicken while you're at it. Just make sure you leave some room for pudding as the strawberry shortcake is a must.

Main courses at [Phillips Seafood](#) start from £15pp.



Feast on Maryland crab at Phillips Seafood

6. The Lavish Dining

If you thought chic restaurants and rooftop terraces belonged in New York, think again. The stunning Bygone at Baltimore's Four Seasons Hotel boasts Great Gatsby style luxury with its swanky 1920s interior and sweeping views of the city. Serving classic American cuisine (with special crab dishes, of course) this is perfect for both a romantic meal for two or indulgent dinner with friends. Enjoy a glass of the signature Bygone Daisy (made with Milagro Tequila, Pomegranate, Fraise de Bois, Lemon & Argyle Rose) by the bar before being seated to get the full experience.

For another top-notch dining experience, visit the European-inspired Lu Cuchara. The vibe and design here is reminiscent of a mix between southern France and Northern Spain - a theme that is also reflected by its extensive wine menu and carefully crafted Basque cuisine. While the menu changes daily, you can expect everything from wood-grilled dishes and charcuterie plates, to light 'pintxos'.

Courses at [The Bygone](#) start from £25.

Main courses at [La Cuchara](#) start from £15 pp.

7. The Nightlife

With a wide variety of University campuses based in Baltimore (including the famous John Hopkins University) it's no surprise that the city's nightlife is upbeat. Party with the students in the many pubs, bars and clubs in Federal Hill (The Charles and Mother's are clear favourites judging by their popularity on Friday and Saturday nights) or head to Fell's Point for a more relaxed evening of drinks and live music by the harbour.



Harbourside sundowners at Fells Point

8. The Sagamore Whisky Distillery & Union Craft Beer Brewery

Beer and whisky enthusiasts should pay a visit to Baltimore's Union Craft Brewing followed by the Sagamore Spirit Distillery. The latter is a five-acre complex offering an interesting insight into the history and creation of Sagamore's signature rye whisky with a tour through the different steps of the production process before tasting three of their award-winning whiskies. Previously situated along the Jones Falls River in Baltimore's Woodberry neighbourhood, Union Craft Brewing celebrated its 6th anniversary this year by relocating to become part of the newly opened Union Collective where food and drink businesses around the city co-exist. Stop by for a freshly brewed pint and some Baltimorean hospitality.

Tours of the [Sagamore Spirit Distillery](#) cost £11 pp.



Rye whisky tasting at Sagamore Spirits distillery (Sagamore Spirits)

9. Honfest

If ever there was a time to visit Baltimore, it's during the city's annual HonFest celebrations. Here, locals champion the city's 1960s blue-collar working women by dressing up like them and honouring all things Baltimore with beauty pageants, street food and live music. Think Hairspray-style carnival vibes minus John Travolta and Nikki Blonsky. Outrageous outfits and beehives are compulsory for attendance and each year, the 'Hon' (short for honey) with the most impressive costume is crowned winner. Honfest is where Baltimore's true community spirit shines through and although it may seem peculiar at first, it's not hard to see why it appeals to the masses once you join in with the fun.



The 'Bawlmer' locals party on at Honfest (Jan Exler)

10. The Cool Accommodation

Picking a place to stay in a foreign city is always hard and finding one that fits all of your requirements without leaving a massive dent in your bank account is even harder. But Hotel Revival, a newly opened Joie de Vivre property in Mount Vernon, ticks all the boxes. Situated directly opposite the Washington Monument, the newly opened hotel is in the heart of Baltimore's cultural district which also happens to be local to key neighbourhoods such as Federal Hill and the Inner Harbor. As the city's only boutique hotel, Revival's gorgeous art deco interior is a real highlight - from the reception right the way through to all 107 rooms and its in-house restaurants. The enclosed Topside rooftop bar is another standout offering incredible views of the city's famous landmarks as well as a dazzling floral lounge room. Oh, and don't forget to make the most of the hotel's three private karaoke boxes during your stay.

Standard king rooms at [Hotel Revival](#) start at £131pp inclusive of VAT.



A chic place to lay your head at Hotel Revival

For more information on Visit Baltimore please baltimore.org.