

# Explore New England



ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM

**DAY 1 | GARDNER MUSEUM**

The courtyard of Isabella Stewart Gardner's Venetian-style palace reflects her avid world travels.



ESSDRAS M SUAREZ/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

**DAY 2 | ICA**

The cast of Sara Rudner's "Dancing-on-View," a four-hour site-specific happening last month.



NECEE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

**DAY 3 | MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS**

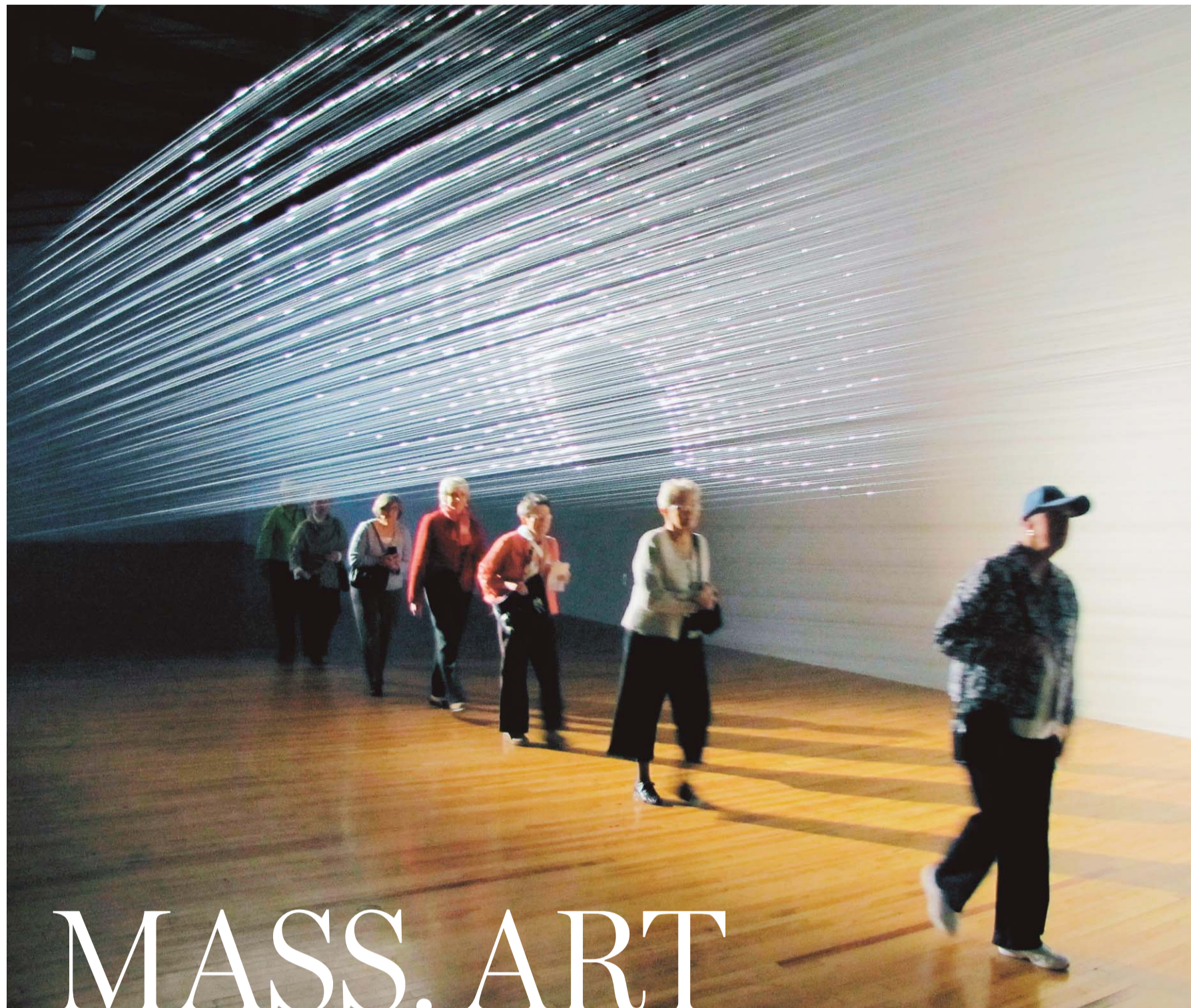
Nancy Lytwyn, left, Priscilla Grundy, Mary Benck, and Nancy Hill with a docent in a room of masterpieces.

**DAY 4 | MASS MoCA (photo right)**  
The tour in the outsized space for Tobias Putrih's light projection "Re-projection: Hoosac, 2010."



NECEE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE/FILE

**DAY 5 | NORMAN ROCKWELL MUSEUM**  
Last stop: Stockbridge. Seeing the collection and artist's studio warms hearts as the tour looks homeward.



NECEE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

## MASS. ART STEP BY STEP

Tours in Boston and beyond entice energetic tourists from the heart of the Midwest

By Necee Regis  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

WILLIAMSTOWN — "This being a tourist is exhausting," said Betty Wehrli. And I had to agree.

It's day four of a jam-packed tour, The Best of Massachusetts Art: Boston and the Berkshires. I'm tagging along with the Naperville Community Associates of the Art Institute of Chicago, a group with endless enthusiasm and stamina whose itinerary includes visiting nine museums, two historic homes, and one gallery in five days, squeezing in as much art appreciation as possible. It's a fine arts marathon, so to speak, which leaves me wishing I had squeezed a pair of sneakers into my suitcase.

"We're the Midwest museum warriors!" said Joan Myers, who — I can't help but notice — is wearing sensible shoes.

My contribution to this tour, conceived and choreographed by Meg MacDonald of Travel Muse, is to assist counting heads (42) each time the bus departs a destination, and ensure everyone is properly hydrated by handing out bottles of water.

In between, I've seen a plethora of terrific art in a dizzying array of styles from 16th-century tapestries, to Edo Period Japanese prints, to sculpture

made of light, to meticulously painted scenes of tall ships sailing in tranquil harbors. We've perused works by Monet, Degas, LeWitt, Horn, Sargent, Avery, Prendergast, Avedon, Rembrandt, and Matta — a partial list — and are cruising to the finish line with only the Norman Rockwell Museum left on the schedule.

This might sound crazy, but the trip has been quite fun.

At each destination, we break into smaller groups and follow docents or guides through the museums. Although our tours were prearranged, most venues offer scheduled gallery talks as part of their ticket price, so this itinerary can be reproduced, with or without 40 of your closest friends.

**DAY 1:**

We begin at the **Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum** in Boston, an eclectic collection housed in a Venetian-style palace. Our docent explains that looking closely at art improves critical skills. So rather than speeding through the galleries, we spend time discussing several key works, with our docent asking questions such as, "What do you notice about the person in this portrait?" and "Why do you think this painting created a scandal?" I'm busy scribbling notes when a museum guard taps me on the shoulder and offers a

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### BREWSTER

## History you can see and feel and a beach that goes forever

By John Powers  
GLOBE STAFF

Inside the blacksmith shop next to the 18th-century windmill at Drummer Boy Park, a charcoal fire crackles. "Old school," says Peter Hirst, as he cranks up the Civil War-era blower to fan the flames. "The way we did it 200 years ago."

Down the road at the Brewster Ladies' Library readers in comfy armchairs thumb through newspapers as if they are sitting in a Victorian study. Around the bend, patrons sun themselves on the benches in front of the bunting-draped Brewster Store, which sells penny candy, homemade fudge and taffy, and has a functioning nickelodeon. Next to the ancient herring run the water-powered grist mill still grinds corn as it did in 1873.

You don't need a time machine to dial yourself back a century or three in this throwback town on the north side of Cape Cod between Dennis and Orleans. What Henry David Thoreau termed "the modern-built town



BILL GREENE/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

The grist mill on Stony Brook Road stands on its original 1663 site and uses the force of the water from several ponds to grind fresh cornmeal on Saturdays in the summer.

of the Cape" when he passed through around 1850 retains most of the well-to-do charm that dates to when prosperous mariners lived in mansions along old King's Highway.

"America's Sea Captains' Town" is what the Chamber of Commerce calls it and their salty legacy endures. Many of their homes along Main Street (Route 6A) have been transformed into cozy inns and bed-and-breakfasts: Isaiah Clark House, Old Manse Inn, Pepper House Inn, Candleberry Inn, Bramble Inn. The town-run golf course is named Captains and each hole along its adjacent "port" and "starboard" layouts is named after former seafarers like Benjamin Berry, Isaac Weatherbee, Enos Godfrey, Elkanah Winslow, and Freeman Bangs.

Some of those captains probably dropped in at the Brewster Store, which was built as a church in 1852 but has been selling general merchandise since 1866. In addition to candy, coffee, pastries, and hot roasted peanuts, the store, which features a coal-burning stove in winter, is chock-a-block with myriad necessities like spare lamp parts, bayberry candles, soaps, dishcloths, and Mrs. Stewart's Liquid

BREWSTER, Page M6

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# All afoot to take in art and its many gifts

► **ART TOUR**  
Continued from Page M5

pencil. No pens allowed. In the late afternoon, we saunter over to the family-run **Vose Galleries of Boston** on Newbury Street, a multilevel gallery featuring American paintings from the 18th through 20th centuries, and a good introduction to the works we'll see in Salem and Gloucester.

**DAY 2**

The **Peabody Essex Museum** in Salem opens at 10 a.m. and we arrive then for the "Highlights of the Collection Tour," a one-hour zip through this museum that showcases decorative arts, paintings, costumes, and textiles from North America, China, Japan, Korea, India, and beyond, as well as an extensive collection of maritime art and culture.

Our docent does an admirable job, discussing several works in depth, especially the Chinese moon bed, an elaborately carved round structure inlaid with ivory. One renegade group member abandons the tour, paying extra for a headset and ticket to the Yin Yu Tang house, a 200-year-old merchant's home transported from China and reassembled in the museum.

► **SHOEHORNED IN**

Treat your feet to art from the Bay State's coast westward at [www.boston.com/travel](http://www.boston.com/travel).

At the end of the tour, most of the group makes a beeline to the gift shop. As we board the coach, ready for lunch in Rockport, I notice arms laden with shopping bags.

"Maybe I should design a Gift Shops of the World Tour. Museums optional," quipped MacDonald.

At the **Cape Ann Museum** in Gloucester, described by our docent as "a big little museum," the history, art, and culture of the region are told through artifacts, historical photographs, and fine and decorative arts collections from the 18th century through the 20th. We view intricate paintings of maritime luminist artists such as Fitz Henry Lane, and also see the tools, equipment, and models of the fishing industry and maritime trade.

Then before one can say, "Is the gift shop open?" it's time to head south to the **Institute of Contemporary Art**, the other end of the artistic spectrum.

Located on Fan Pier, the ICA exhibits contemporary art in all media. Though, on the whole, this group's taste in art runs more to traditional than cutting-edge, no one raises an eyebrow as our transgender guide — in fishnets and heels — deftly guides us through the "Roni Horn a.k.a. Roni Horn" exhibition, as well as galleries featuring work by Mexican tattoo artist Dr. Lakra. The one-hour tour leaves a little time for viewing the permanent col-



CAPE ANN HISTORICAL MUSEUM (ABOVE); RON BLUNT/FILE

lection. Sadly, the gift shop is closed as we finish at 5 p.m.



and studio of Daniel Chester French, a preeminent sculptor of public monuments best known for his towering marble sculpture of Abraham Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington.

**DAY 3**

After a quick trip to Cambridge to check out the **Frank Gehry** building at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, spirits are high as we cruise to the **Museum of Fine Arts** in Boston for the "Masterpieces" tour. This quick overview of the museum's greatest hits whets my appetite to return, and has me wondering how the out-of-towners are coping.

"I have some background in art," said Joanne Nadelhoffer. "It's hard to not stop and look at everything that interests you. There's a tension between wanting to go back and look, and listening to the speaker. I love it."

"You always wish you could see a little more," said Nancy Hill.

With that in mind, some eschew lunch, grabbing a snack-to-go in the cafeteria for a picnic later on the bus, while others dine leisurely in the first-floor cafe, and make good use of time in the museum store. Then it's off to Western Massachusetts.

In Stockbridge, we tour the grounds and house of **Naumkeag**, the 44-room summer retreat of Joseph Hodges Choate designed by the architectural firm McKim, Mead and White in 1885. Then it's on to **Chesterwood** to visit the country home

and studio of Daniel Chester French, a preeminent sculptor of public monuments best known for his towering marble sculpture of Abraham Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington.

**DAY 4:**

The **Stone Hill Center**, designed by Japanese architect Tadao Ando, isn't open but we peek in the windows, and view the Juan Muñoz sculptures on the terrace before walking down a woodland path to the **Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute** in Williamstown. Here, our guides lead us through the collection that includes paintings, porcelain, silver, prints, and drawings from the 14th century to the 19th, featuring the works of French Impressionists like Renoir, and the Barbizon School. My feet are screaming in the heels that, this morning, were the only comfortable shoes left to wear of the three pairs I packed.

At the **Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art**, in North Adams, I'm asked, "Does an artist need to be crazy to make art?"

"No. That's a myth," I said. But I begin to wonder, as we wander through cavernous exhibitions of contemporary art, whether one needs to be crazy to embark on a trip like this. After three floors of Sol LeWitt wall paintings, and seven site-specific installations aptly titled "Material World," I'm in a kind of art-induced coma.

A shot of espresso and a brownie at the cafe pick me up as we head to the **Williams College Museum of Art**. And who can be lethargic when John Stomberg, the deputy director of the museum, steps in to lead our tour?

"There's a thesis to each gallery," said Stromberg. His lecture on Matta's paintings, which mine interior consciousness in a manner "akin to psychoanalysis in history," makes me want to enroll in school again. As we head upstairs, I slip out of my heels and pad around in my socks, hoping no one will notice.

**DAY 5:**

The **Norman Rockwell Museum** is the last stop. It houses a large collection of the artist's work and we can view his studio.

After a grand farewell lunch, we clamber onto the bus for the Albany, N.Y., airport, where the group will fly back to Chicago.

"It's been an action-packed five days. It's a great overview," said Judy Kovarik.

"We've seen a wide range of art," said Myers. "The mood of the people was affected by each previous two-hour experience. We came out of the Rockwell Museum all warm and fuzzy. At Mass MoCA we were totally energized. The Clark, serene. People absolutely loved it. Certainly art changes your mindset and mood."

Do you have to be crazy to plan such a trip? Not at all. Just pack the right shoes.

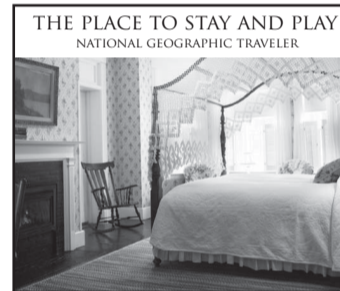
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## Cape Cod

Continued from preceding page

Chillingsworth, the gourmet's delight on the grounds of a 300-year-old estate, and the Brewster Fish House are situated prominently along King's Highway. But Peddler's Bistro, which plates French fare like escargots, duck a l'orange, and steak au poivre along with gently-priced wines, is tucked away on Thad Ellis Road. And El Guapo's Taqueria, which serves up fish tacos made from local cod, is down along Underpass Road next to the bicycle trail and across the way from the Stony Brook Elementary School where the Brewster Whitecaps, who perform in the 125-year-old Cape Cod Baseball League, still play their home games in daylight.

If the Whitecaps wanted to, they could lay out a diamond on the enormous acreage at Drummer Boy Park on the town's western edge, where summer concerts are held on Sunday evenings at the old wooden bandstand. Drummer Boy has become a theme park for 18th- and 19th-century structures that have been uprooted, restored, and moved there from elsewhere in town.

The Harris-Black House, which once accommodated a family of 13 in a single room, is a post-and-beam Cape classic. The Higgins Farm Windmill, with its enormous wheel, still works. So does the blacksmith shop, which was built in 1867 by Henry Hopkins and moved to the park last year along with its original chimney and forge.

Hanging from the doors open-

ing outward is a variety of fire-place and garden tools that give a 19th-century style to 21st-century tasks. "You name it, we can make it," says Hirst, an Orleans resident who also has his own biochar business. The village smithy still works by daylight, no electricity needed. "We're totally off the grid," says Hirst. Come autumn, when dusk arrives early, he'll light an oil lamp. In Elder Brewster's modern-built town, old-school is still as good as new.

*John Powers can be reached at [jpowers@globe.com](mailto:jpowers@globe.com).*

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