

Carrie Bertling Disclafani and Jennifer C. Hill

## Experience the charm of Charm City

Visit, shop, and enjoy Baltimore's neighborhoods

**B**altimore, often referred to as Charm City, has more than 250 neighborhoods, each with its own unique quirks and personality. There's something here for everyone. Whether you want to enjoy homemade pasta in Little Italy or thrift shop in Hampden, you're bound to find hidden treasures as you explore Baltimore's historic streets and diverse neighborhoods.

Several of the most popular neighborhoods are within walking distance of the Convention Center or easy to get to by public transit. The Charm City Circulator ([charmcitycirculator.com](http://charmcitycirculator.com)) is a free bus that hits most of the downtown neighborhoods. Taxis and Uber rides are also easy to get throughout the city. For a more scenic view, you can ride the Baltimore Water Taxi ([baltimorewatertaxi.com](http://baltimorewatertaxi.com)) to locations around the Inner Harbor and even out to Fort McHenry. We've highlighted several of the most popular neighborhoods nearest to the convention center, but check out Visit Baltimore ([baltimore.org/neighborhoods-maps](http://baltimore.org/neighborhoods-maps)) for additional options and information.

The Convention Center is located within the **Inner Harbor**, a main tourist destination for people visiting the city. Pratt and Light Streets are often bustling with a mix of business people and visitors, strolling through Harborplace and checking out Baltimore's historic ships. Harborplace, a cluster of shops and restaurants lining the waterfront,

opened in 1980 as a flagship for the downtown revival. It's comprised of several local shops like Hats in the Belfry and McCormick World of Flavors, which offers unique spices and blends not often found at grocery stores. It also includes many national retailers that you may be familiar with, such as H&M and Urban Outfitters. There is additional indoor shopping located directly across Pratt Street in the Gallery Mall. If you want a break from shopping, check out the National Aquarium

or the Maryland Science Center. Need advice or directions? The Baltimore Visitor Center (401 Light Street) is also located in the Inner Harbor.

Walk a few blocks east of the Inner Harbor along the waterfront and across the pedestrian bridges to find **Harbor East**, a chic neighborhood with a mix of local boutiques and popular stores, such as J. Crew, Lush, and Anthropologie. Walk down President Street to the traffic circle, which will put you on Aliceanna Street. One of our favorite shops is Curiosity, a home and gift boutique that is carefully curated by an interior designer. Harbor East is also home to the regional chain South Moon Under, a

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Storefronts on Thames Street from across the Patapsco in Fell's Point. Photo credit: Preservation Baltimore (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/presmd/21416727309/>), CC BY-SA 2.0.

popular women's and men's clothing store. More upscale shops include Handbags in the City and Sassanova shoes. Warby Parker is a new addition, offering trendy glasses at affordable prices. Finally, a shopping trip to Harbor East would not be complete without visiting the Under Armour Brand House. Baltimore is home to Under Armour, and here you will find a large selection that includes Baltimore-exclusive products.

Only a few blocks further east along the waterfront or a short Charm City Circulator ride (orange route), **Fell's Point** is known for being one of Baltimore's oldest historic neighborhoods, complete with cobblestone streets, waterfront views, and locally owned shops. Founded in 1730 by William Fell, Clipper ships were built in and operated out of Fell's Point, and it is one of the original three settlements that merged to form the beginnings of Baltimore City. Stroll up and down Thames Street and around Broadway Square in order to hit all of the boutiques, restaurants, and bars. (You'll hear live music pouring out of many bars after dusk). While there are plenty of clothing stores, there are

many other types of shops here, as well. Visit the award-winning indie toy store, aMUSE; Zelda Zen, which contains jewelry from around the world; and Emporium Collagia, a self-proclaimed "treasure cave." In addition, browse Su Casa, a home and gift shop, which has been a Baltimore staple for more than 15 years; and check out one of the top places to buy records in the United States, The Sound Garden. Up for more adventures after the shops are closed? Grab a drink at The Horse You Came in on Saloon. It's America's oldest continually operated saloon and is rumored to be the last destination of Edgar Allan Poe before his death. Other fun attractions include taking a pirate ship ride with Baltimore's Urban Pirates ([urban-pirates.com](http://urban-pirates.com)), joining a Saturday ghost tour ([baltimoreghosttours.com](http://baltimoreghosttours.com)), or getting delicious gelato and a coffee at Pitango.

On the south side of the harbor, **Federal Hill** served as an important lookout during the War of 1812 and later during the Civil War. The historic lookout is now a park, offering fantastic views of the harbor and city skyline. The greater Federal Hill neighbor-

hood includes brick-front row homes, locally owned shops and restaurants, and a lively bar scene. Between Light and South Charles Streets, the Cross Street Market, one of Baltimore's historic public markets, is a great place to rub elbows with the locals as you enjoy a Natty Boh ([nationalbohemian.com](http://nationalbohemian.com)) and inexpensive seafood. A very walkable neighborhood, Federal Hill is great place to browse boutiques, such as Brightside, Pandora's Box, and Phina's Fine Linen & Gifts. The Book Escape is also a must visit if you are a used-book enthusiast. Fed Hill can be reached on the Charm City Circulator (purple route). Up for a little walk? The American Visionary Art Museum ([avam.org](http://avam.org)) is at the base of Federal Hill and their gift shop is worth the trek, offering eclectic wares from original artwork to novelty toys by people who are not formally trained artists. It's highly recommended for all first-time visitors to Baltimore.

Back on the northern side of the harbor and a short Charm City Circulator ride (purple route) up from the water is **Mount Vernon**. Home to the Walters Art Museum, the Maryland Historical Society, Center Stage Theater, America's first Catholic Cathedral, the Enoch Pratt Free Library, and George Peabody Library, Mount Vernon is considered the cultural center of the city. Here, the grand mansions of Baltimore's 19th-century industrialists have had their ground floors repurposed into galleries, shops, and restaurants. Support local artisans at Baltimore's newest foodie destination, the Mount Vernon Marketplace ([mtvernonmarketplace.com](http://mtvernonmarketplace.com)), then head east on Hamilton Street to find North Charles Street, the main thoroughfare in this part of the city. Starting here at Hamilton and Charles, you'll find handcrafted imports at A People United and designer eyeglasses at Paris West Optical. Walk north past Baltimore's Washington Monument and continue on to find funky, vintage clothing and accessories at The ZONE or stop in at the Spirits of Mount Vernon wine shop (free tastings every Friday starting at 5 p.m. and wine by the glass daily). To find more vin-

tage clothing or a good cigar, head northwest on Read Street to explore Mount Vernon Tobacco, Bottle of Bread, and Keepers Vintage. Antique hunters should continue just off the beaten path to the 800 block of North Howard Street, home to several of Baltimore's longstanding antique dealers. Check out Imperial Half Bushel, proffering 18th- and 19th-century silverware; Antique Row Stalls, a multi-dealer exhibition space; and Dubey's Art & Antiques, specializing in international porcelain and ceramics.

A visit to **Hampden** requires a short taxi/Uber ride, but it's worth the trip. Among Baltimore's quirkiest neighborhoods, Hampden's main drag, 36th Street (aka "The Avenue"), is lined with many unique shopping opportunities. In addition to many thrift and antique stores, Hampden is also home to several great places to find the perfect gift. Starting at Chestnut Avenue, Bazaar is truly a bizarre bazaar. Then, heading west on 36th, you'll find Charm City Chocolate; The Wine Source (just north on Elm Avenue), selling booze, cheese, and local foods; Trohy, featuring gifts and furniture; The True Vine record shop (just south on Hickory Avenue); and Milagro, trading in globally inspired goods. At the western end of 36th, cross Falls Road and find Lovelyarns knitting supply shop and Atomic Books. In addition to being a great local business, Atomic Books is where director John Waters has his fan mail delivered. Hang out long enough at the small, neighborhood bar in the back, Eightbar, and you may spot Waters and his famous mustache.

We hope you enjoy exploring Baltimore's many neighborhoods. While several are featured here, there are still many other noteworthy neighborhoods, such as Little Italy, Canton, and Locust Point, that you may also want to venture to on your own. From the upscale shops of Harbor East to the high kitsch of Hampden, there's a place for everyone in Charm City. Stay tuned for upcoming articles about Baltimore's arts and culture and where to eat and drink around the city. 