

# COUNTDOWN TO SALEM

THE WORKBOOK



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CREATED BY  
THINGSTODOINSALEM.COM

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## HELLO THERE!

So you're planning a trip to Salem. How exciting!! There is truly no place like it and I hope this workbook helps you organize yourself. Before we begin, I want to just point out that there is no right or wrong way to do Salem. *Just visiting the witch city and enjoying yourself is doing it right.* There are no absolutes. The goal of this workbook is just to help you get the logistics sorted so you can have the best trip possible.

Be sure to follow along with me online as you plan and keep an eye on my blog for events, travel tips and more. I can be found on Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest @thingstodoinsalem and on Twitter @witchcityguide. Feel free to tag me in your pictures!

Now...let's get started!

# ONE: WHERE ARE YOU STAYING?

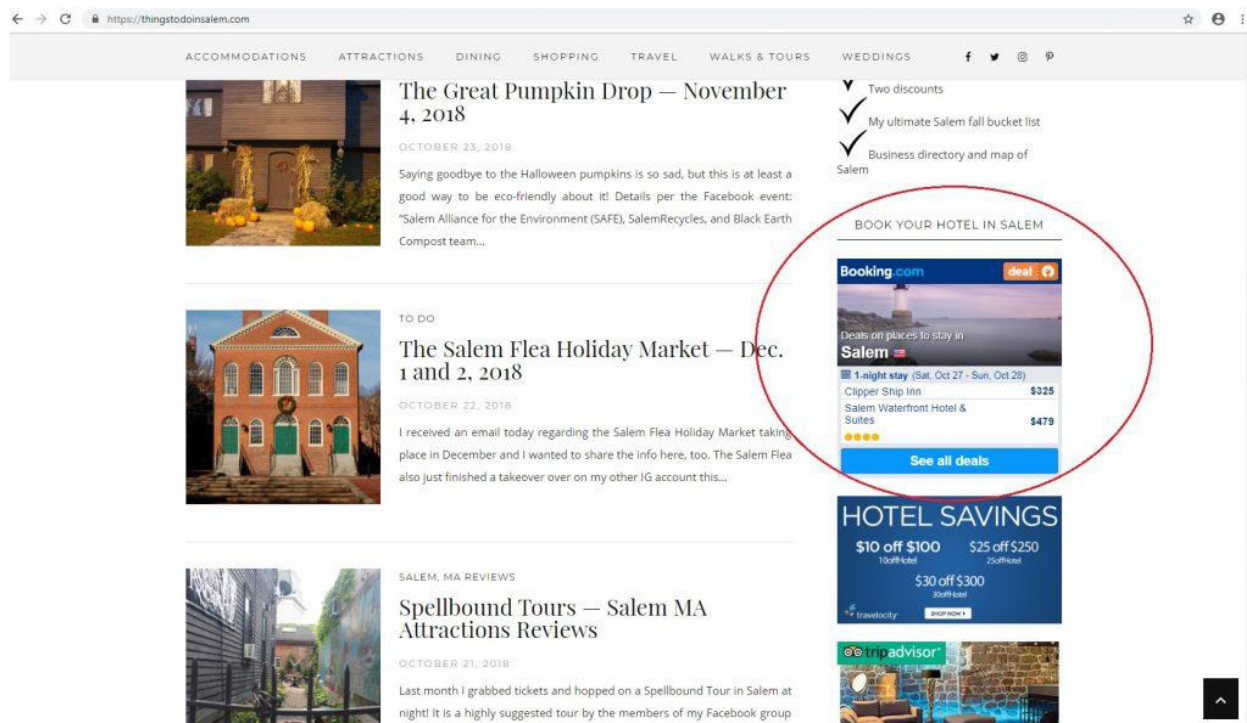
The first thing I suggest that everyone does is book your hotel. This goes extra, double, triple for visits in the fall. *Most people secure their hotel room for fall visits six to twelve months in advance*, so be sure to get that settled first.

## Looking to stay in Salem?

Head over to my website and hit “Accommodations” in the navigation bar to see what your options are. Salem is home to many hotels, bed and breakfasts and Airbnb locations.

## Discounts and savings

Things to do in Salem is an affiliate of many travel websites such as Travelocity, Tripadvisor, Booking.com, VRBO, HomeAway and more. As such, they often send me discount codes, sales and other info to pass along to you guys. One of the best ways to keep tabs on this is via the search tool in my sidebar from Booking.com. It updates in real time with discounts and sales on accommodations in Salem. See the following screenshot:



## What if you're booking a hotel late in the game?

First, check the search tool in the sidebar that I just mentioned. If you are looking the day of your trip and see a room shown in there, grab it. *That means there is a room open*. It might not be on sale and might cost a pretty penny but it's open. At the time of taking the screenshot, the Clipper Ship Inn and Salem Waterfront Hotel and Suites had availability.

Second, call the hotel directly and ask about cancellations. If you have a certain hotel in mind that you'd like to stay in, give them a ring. They might have cancellations they're trying to fill that happened same day. You never know, you might luck out! You might also ask if they have a wait list or call list while you have them on the phone, just in case they're keeping a log in case of openings.

Next, take a good look at the hotel's social media accounts and websites. This last Haunted Happenings season, the Stepping Stone Inn posted on Facebook that they had a last minute cancellation that fell right over Halloween day! Follow the hotels you're checking out on Facebook, Instagram and hop onto their newsletter list if they have one. You never know when a room might pop up.

Now that you've hit social media, I'd suggest setting up alerts online. If you have a certain site you like to book travel through, see if they have an option to send you notifications when rooms open up. Having that pop into your email in real time might help you land a hotel.

If you do see a room become available and you want it – book right then. The opening might go quickly so don't delay.

Last, be flexible with your travel dates. You're way more likely to find an opening during the week than a weekend in October. Being open minded can help a lot in this way.

**So now, where are you staying?**

Fill in the blank fields below with the hotel's name, address, phone number and notes in case you need to reference it:

Hotel: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number and address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Booking info, reservation numbers, etc. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

## TWO: IF YOU'RE BRINGING THE CAR

Parking in Salem can be challenging. The best option is parking at your hotel, if you're driving into Salem and staying overnight. Check with the place you're staying to see if they have a parking lot or will validate for other garages.

Does your hotel have parking?

Yes  No

If no, where are the two closest lots or garages you could use?

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## THREE: IF YOU'RE NOT BRINGING THE CAR

A common logistics question I get a lot over social media is getting into Salem from the airport, from Boston, from along the north shore, etc.

The first option I would consider in this situation is **the train**. There is a station located right in Salem, only a short walk from all of the action. If you go to the MBTA website ([www.mbta.com/stops/Salem](http://www.mbta.com/stops/Salem)), you can find information on tickets, schedule, etc.

Second, I'd look into **rideshare programs** like Uber or Lyft. Check rates ahead of time and see what the fees are - it might be easier to call a car and go right in on your own schedule instead of working around the train.

Last, if you're coming from the Boston area during operating season, you can hop onto **the ferry** and take it right into Salem. You can read about the ferry over at [www.bostonharborcruises.com/salem-ferry/salem-ferry](http://www.bostonharborcruises.com/salem-ferry/salem-ferry).

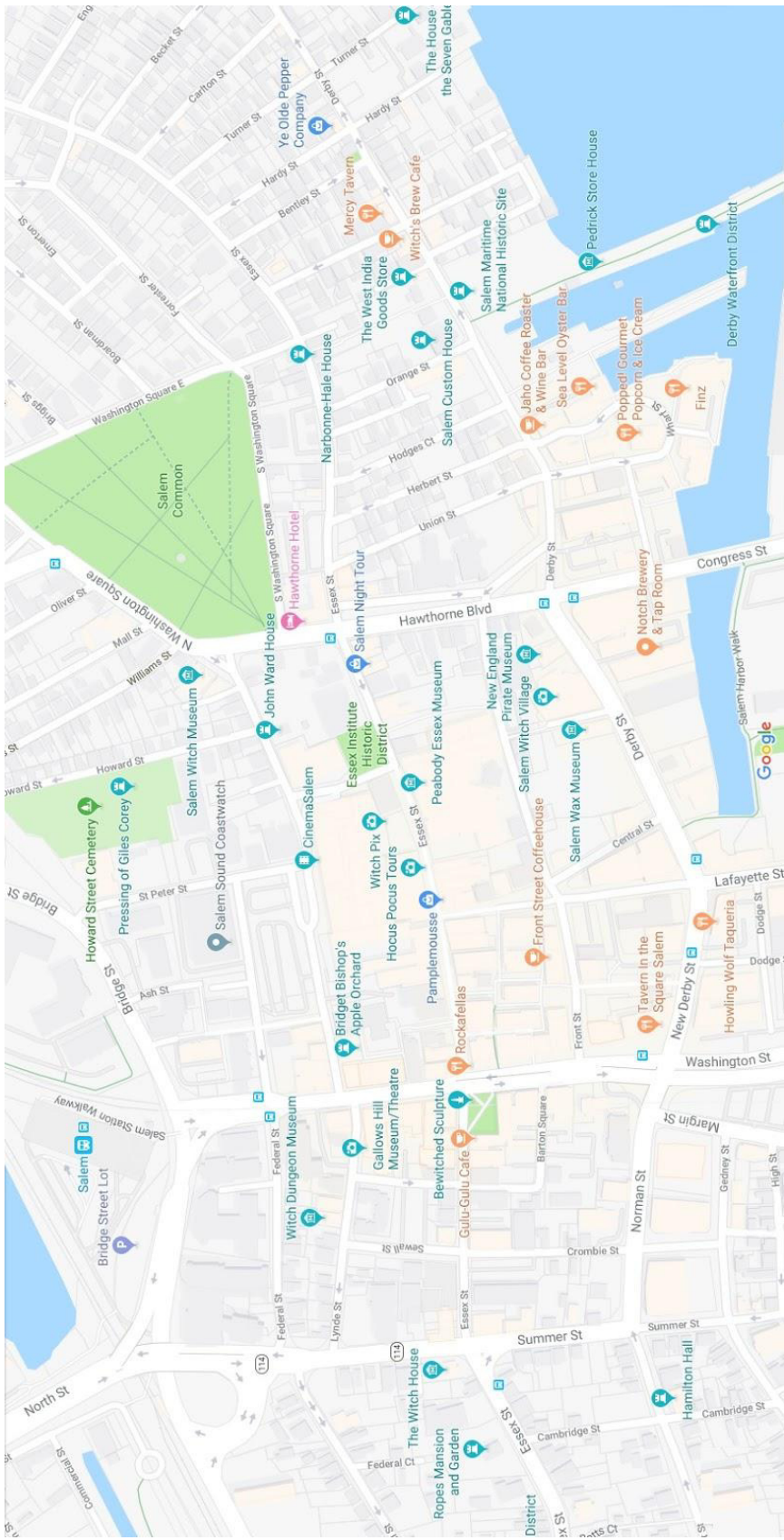
To read more details on any of the above options, head over to my website and click "Travel" in the navigation.

# FOUR: ATTRACTIONS

Salem is home to so many awesome attractions, restaurants, shops, museums, etc. Many of the things to do around Salem (especially seasonal ones) offer the option to purchase tickets ahead of time, which is great. If you're coming from a serious distance or during peak season, I would strongly suggest buying ahead of time for anything you can. It would be a shame to miss something you had your hopes hung on. Use the lines below to list out the top items on your "must see" list and go through the checkboxes buying anything you can before you get there.

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On the next page is a compact map of Salem...take a few minutes and mark the attractions you listed out above on the map. Which ones are close together? Which ones are a bit of a hike?



Now based on the map, what is the order in which you should see the attractions you're interested in? Use the lines below to lay it out.

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# **FIVE: TIME FRAMES FOR TICKETS**

This question is probably in the top ten most asked! How far in advance should things be booked for your Salem, MA vacation? The following is a little run down of my opinions on the matter.

## **Hotel and accommodations**

- During the fall or around Halloween:

If you are visiting Salem in the fall, book ASAP. The sooner the better, and if you're planning a Halloween visit or anywhere near Halloween I'd suggest booking your hotel in the beginning of the year. Yes, for real.

- Other times of the year:

If you're coming into the city any other time of the year you're probably okay booking within a few months of your trip.

- Salem, MA festivals

If you're coming to Salem for a certain festival you might want to allow some extra wiggle room and book a tiny bit earlier, just to be safe.

## **Tickets for Halloween or Haunted Happenings events**

Tickets for October events can go quickly depending on what they are, so I'd suggest purchasing as soon as they are available and you're able. If you can pre-order or buy online and print ahead of time, I'd say do it. This way you know you're going to be able to visit the attractions you want. Examples include the Hawthorne Hotel Halloween party, the official Salem Witches' Halloween Ball, Salem Horror Fest panel tickets, etc.

## **Smaller scale Halloween events**

In addition to the larger scale Halloween events, there are smaller ones all over the city. Tickets for these ones, in my opinion can be waited on a tiny bit. I still wouldn't wait until the very end but I'd secure your hotel and other big ticket events first.

## **Salem, MA weddings**

Just like a wedding in any other location, I'd secure your venue and vendors at least a year out. This will allow for time to plan logistics, have money for deposits, etc.

## **Non Halloween events other times of the year**

These tickets are easier to wait on than Halloween ones. I still wouldn't wait until the last second if you have the option to secure it ahead of time, but you have some more wiggle room when it's not in the fall.



## SIX: WHAT SHOULD YOU BRING?

You're likely going to be on your feet for long stretches, and that backpack or purse that is super full is probably going to be bothersome after a while. I'd stick to the basics and remove items that you aren't going to need beforehand. What are some simple items you should probably have on you?

### A camera

This one should be obvious. Salem is *gorgeous* and there are many landmarks and historic locations that just beg to be captured. I even wrote a blog post a few months back on some of the most Instagrammable locations in Salem! A cell phone camera will do just fine, but you're definitely going to want to snap some photos.

### Cash

There are still a small number of shops in Salem that are cash only, believe it or not. There are also others that ask a minimum purchase amount before a credit card can be used, so having some cash is a good idea.

### A loose itinerary or plan of where you're going and tickets

This will just make things easier and eliminate walking in circles. This pertains in particular to October where crowds are at a peak and the city has hundreds of thousands of visitors. I also suggest purchasing or booking tickets and time slots to the attractions you want to visit ahead of time wherever possible. This will ensure you're able to see everything you want to.

### Layers

New England weather is notoriously unpredictable. There have been fall seasons in Salem where I was walking around in jeans and a long sleeved shirt just fine and others where I was bundled like the kid in *A Christmas Story*, unable to put my arms down. I highly recommend bringing or dressing in layers, just to make sure you don't turn into a human popsicle or roast in the summer sun.

### Comfortable shoes

I can't stress this one enough. Salem is a walking city and the bricks under your feet have been there for a really, really long time. They are uneven, spaced at different heights and have gaps between them. You're going to be on your feet a lot and on uneven terrain, so sneakers are a good idea. I really can't imagine walking around Salem in heels or uncomfortable shoes for any length of time before becoming miserable.

# SEVEN: SALEM WITH THE KIDS

Are you coming into Salem with the family? Questions regarding kid friendly activities is way up there on the list of common messages I receive, believe me. Luckily, Salem does have quite a bit of family friendly options.

## Hop onto the Salem Trolley

The trolley is a great way to sightsee with kids because of a few reasons. First, you don't have to walk or push a stroller. Second, you can use it as transportation through the day. Your ticket is good all day, allowing you to hop on and off their flag stops as you want. Lastly, you can visit multiple landmarks through the hour long tour leaving time for other activities you might want to include in your day.

## Candlepin Bowling at Flatbread Pizza Co.

Stop in for some delicious pizza for lunch and knock down some pins with the kiddos! Bowling is a good way for them to run out some energy.

## Catch a showing of Cry Innocent: The People vs. Bridget Bishop

Now, this one requires some discretion on your part, as the parents. Cry Innocent is a mock 1600's witch trial where you as an audience member are part of the jury. This attraction would be best suited for older children (not toddlers) as it could potentially be a little scary for younger ones. It also lasts about 45 minutes, so little kids might have trouble sitting still for that long. Also, keep in mind Cry Innocent doesn't run all year long. Check out their website for showtime info to see if it's playing while you're visiting.

## Swing by Wynott's Wands

This is one of my favorite places to peek into as I walk by. Are the kids into Harry Potter?? Well, Wynott's Wands is a remake of the wand store from the books. Believe me when I say, they nailed it. Absolutely worth checking out with the family.

## Take some pictures at Witch Pix

Dress up like witches and wizards and have your picture taken with Witch Pix. They offer different backgrounds, props, costumes, etc. for everyone. Take some fun pictures to remember your trip into the witch city!

## Visit the New England Pirate Museum

Are the kids into Jack Sparrow? Love everything pirates? Swing by the Pirate Museum to learn and relive adventures of Captains Kidd and Blackbeard.

## Play some games at Bit Bar

Now yes, this is a bar, so keep that in mind. However, it's also an arcade and restaurant and accompanied minors are welcome before 8PM. After that, it's 21+. So depending on how old the

kiddos are exactly, this could be fun. If they're super young though, you might want to skip this one.

Get your sugar fix at Ye Olde Pepper Companie

Swing by to get your hands on their famous gibralters and blackjacks. They also have tons of other sweets to pick from and their set up is super cute.

Tour the Friendship

Walk the Wharf in Salem, check out the Friendship and check with the Maritime NPS about coming aboard!

Wander the Salem Wax Museum

This is an open style gallery featuring key figures and situations in Salem's history. It also leads into an interactive area where you can learn knot tying and do some gravestone rubbings on recreated headstones from the old burying point cemetery.

BONUS: Take a picture at the Elizabeth Montgomery/Bewitched statue

I decided to throw this one in because it's a quick stop and the girl is always having her picture taken. Once you're done, the Gulu-Gulu cafe is right behind her and has delicious hot chocolate and hot apple cider if you need a break from walking or to warm up.

## EIGHT: WHAT IF IT RAINS?

It's New England...the weather does whatever it wants, pretty much. So what if you're in Salem and the clouds are rolling in? I have a few indoor options for you right here. Some of the options are the same as the "with kids" list you just read...that's because I wanted to include some family friendly ideas here, too.

### The Peabody Essex Museum

The PEM is great, weather problems or not. They have multiple exhibits at once which are always very well done, I strongly recommend stopping in if you have to stay indoors for a bit.

### Sip coffee at Jaho

This one is simple, but always relaxing in my opinion. Grab a comfy chair in the window and watch it come down. Jaho offers everything from regular coffee and tea to sandwiches, snacks and creative caffeinated mixtures of their own. Bring a book or your laptop and chill a bit. Maybe the weather will pass while you read.

### The House of the Seven Gables

This one is good in the rain but has a few drawbacks in inclement weather, however I still wanted to include it. It works because you are (for the most part) inside the main home. You get to wander, see some amazing history and brave the staircase if you are okay with enclosed spaces. However, when going from house to house once the main tour is done you might get a little bit wet. You also miss out on sitting in their GORGEOUS gardens outside and taking in the view of the water. Lastly, think their gift shop is lovely but I'll let you make the call on this one yourself.

### Cinema Salem

Wander into the Witch City Mall and catch a movie at Cinema Salem! Once you're done I'd definitely suggest a stop into Jodi Bee Bakes for some delicious treats and coffee.

### Cry Innocent: The People Versus Bridget Bishop

If you're in Salem while Cry Innocent is showing I would absolutely suggest checking it out. It's a reenactment of a 1600's witch trial where you're able to interact with the cast and decide as a jury member what you think should happen. Tickets are available in multiple locations around town.

### Escape Room Salem

Inside the Witch City Mall is one of the ever popular escape rooms. Check out the "Outbreak" themed room, "Dracula's Tomb" or "Spellcaster: The Wizard's Book of Secrets".

Pro tip: Check Groupon! Escape Room Salem runs them quite often.

### Bit Bar

Play retro video games, grab a bite to eat and have some drinks while you wait out the rain! Bit Bar also hosts events, so be sure to check out their website for trivia and more.

Visit one of Salem's breweries or distillery

Salem is home to Notch Brewing, Far From the Tree Cider and Deacon Giles Distillery. They are each awesome in their own way, hold events and are well loved in the witch city.

Pro tip: The Salem Spirits Trolley will bring you to all three! Check out their website for tour info and tickets if they're operating while you're visiting.

Stop into a New Age shop for a read

Salem is home to many psychics and tarot readers, so if you're only waiting a bit for the storm to blow over consider getting your cards read. I know this one might not be for everyone, but there are plenty of folks who like the idea of a glimpse into the future. Be sure you feel comfortable with the shop and individual you have selected as you may not vibe with everyone.

Go bowling

Flatbread Salem has four candlepin bowling lanes that are just waiting to be enjoyed. Have some pizza and a drink while you knock some pins down!

## **NINE: JUST A BUNCH OF HOCUS POCUS**

Pretty much anyone interested in coming to Salem knows (or will quickly discover) that many areas of Salem were used in the filming of the movie Hocus Pocus. I get tons of messages regarding this, so I figured a quick list here of the Salem locations was appropriate. So here we go:

- The Old Town Hall
- 4 Ocean Ave. Salem, MA
- The Ropes Mansion
- Pioneer Village
- The Salem Common
- Phillips Elementary School on the Salem Common

If you want more info on any of those locations, just search "Hocus Pocus filming locations" in the search tool in the sidebar of my website and you can find an entire post dedicated to it.

# TEN: FIVE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SALEM

There is so much to know and learn about our beloved witch city. What are a few things you should know before visiting?

First up is an obvious one and something I have said many times – if you're visiting in the fall, there are going to be crowds. Salem brings in tons of tourists annually, the majority of them coming during October. Be aware that there will be lots of people, potential lines for attractions and restaurants, road closures and more. Be aware of your surroundings as you travel in and around the witch city during the fall.

Next up relates to Salem's history. Everyone associates Salem with the witch trials of course, however Salem has an extensive history regarding the sea, trade, spices, the National Guard, historic figures and more. There are many areas in the witch city that relate to this and are accessible to tourists. So my next item is to please be respectful of the history. Salem is home to historic buildings, landmarks and burial grounds so please watch your step, when in doubt: don't touch and be mindful of the city. We need to keep it in tact for all to enjoy.

On your visit to Salem, you might be looking for something a little spooky to do, and believe me you're in good company. Many tourists come into the city for its creepy vibes. However, know that no place in Salem has been confirmed to be haunted or is advertised as confirmed haunted. There is speculation and certain places you hear tourists and locals alike talk about, however nothing is 100%. Some of those areas include: The Hawthorne Hotel, Turner's Seafood at Lyceum Hall, Wicked Good Books, Bunghole package store, Bit Bar, Engine House Pizza, The Merchant Inn and more. Just know that it would be questionable for someone to try to sell you on a place or attraction being 100% confirmed haunted.

Speaking of "vibes" and all things witchy, Salem is home to many New Age shops, or shops that cater to practitioners of Wicca, Witchcraft or Pagan based paths. Don't let that throw you, it's entirely normal and there are many people in Salem who practice those faiths openly. It's not uncommon to see individuals walking around with jewelry that reflect this or dressed in a certain way for their faith. Don't be surprised and don't hesitate to ask a shop owner a question regarding something they offer in their store. Most are more than happy to answer genuine questions and willing to help spread knowledge to dispel the rampant stereotypes and misinformation out there.

Last is the fact that Salem is home to a thriving art community. Outside of the spooky vibes and presentation, Salem hosts an arts festival, an ice sculpture festival, is home to the Peabody Essex Museum, Creative North Shore and more. Many streets are decorated with art thanks to the Punto Urban Art Museum project so be sure to have your camera handy to snap

pictures of the gorgeous street art. It's not all jump scares and witches here in Salem, the city has so much more to offer than just that.

## **THANK YOU SO MUCH!**

I hope you found all of this info helpful and I hope you have an amazing visit into Salem. I am honored that you turned to me to help you plan it out. <3 Feel free to tag me in your pictures on social media and most importantly...HAVE FUN!!

With so much love,

Alyse



@thingstodoinsalem



@witchcityguide