Next year Plymouth and Massachusetts will commemorate the 400th anniversary of the 1620 arrival of the Mayflower Pilgrims in the New World. This voyage was the catalyst for waves of settlers, who fanned out into four other New England states. Here are some of the places where their heritage lives on.

THE PILGRIMS' PROGRESS

THE LEGACY OF THEIR ARRIVAL IN NEW ENGLAND 400 YEARS AGO LIVES ON IN FIVE NEW ENGLAND STATES

BY PAUL WADE
MASSACHUSETTS

Greater Merrimack Valley
North of Boston • Plymouth County
Cape Cod, Nantucket & Martha’s Vineyard

Greater Merrimack Valley: Adventure Awaits
Just a half-hour drive northwest of Boston lies the Greater Merrimack Valley, the changing seasons add to the vibrancy of the region. There is an undeniable spirit in the Greater Merrimack Valley – the same spirit that gave birth to our country. Each of our 21 towns and cities has its unique charm and itinerary you need, your next adventure awaits you here. MerrimackValley.org

North of Boston: A Story in Every Mile
Just 30 minutes north of Boston, discover Salem, home of the infamous Witch Trials and Gloucester, America’s oldest seaport. Enjoy land and sea attractions, museums, historic sites, shopping, parks, 320 kilometers of coastline, 12 lighthouses and plenty of fresh lobster. NorthofBoston.org

Plymouth & Plymouth County: History is Just the Beginning
Settled in 1620 by the Mayflower Pilgrims, 2020 marks 400 years for “America’s Hometown” . Join the commemoration of the arduous journey, Massachusetts’ Mayflower II is picturesque Provincetown. There, from the top of the 252ft-tall Pilgrim Monument, I saw the same rolling sand dunes and Atlantic Ocean seascape that greeted the travellers. But this was not what they had expected. Having set sail from Plymouth, Devon, their destination was the Colony of Virginia. But the Mayflower had gone off course and they ended up hundreds of miles to the north. After 65 days at sea, the Pilgrims were exhausted and ill. It was winter, so their first priority was to find food. And they did – a stash of Indian corn at what is now Corn Hill Beach in Truro, where a weathered plaque marks the spot. But the Native Americans, who had stored it, were not pleased. In nearby Eastham, they confronted the newcomers on First Encounter Beach, where families play and paddle today. Farther west, the long-ignored Native American story is told in Mashpee, at the Wampanoag Tribal Museum and Old Indian Meeting House. Seeking a friendlier environment, the Pilgrims sailed across the bay. As every American schoolchild knows, they called their landing place Plymouth in honour of their home port. Legend has it that Plymouth Rock – now sheltered by a granite canopy – marks the very spot where they allegedly first set foot. I strolled along the waterfront to Mayflower II, the 1956, full-sized replica of the Pilgrims’ ship, measuring about 80 feet long and 24 feet wide, like a time machine, whisked me back through the centuries. Down the steps on the ‘tween deck, the low ceiling and cramped conditions made me feel claustrophobic; yet, this was ‘home’ for 102 men, women and children during the crossing. Mayflower II is currently undergoing restoration at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut, but next year she will make a triumphant homecoming to Plymouth for the 400th anniversary. Plymouth’s Pilgrim Hall Museum, reputedly one of the oldest continuous museums in America, boasts paintings inspired by the original Mayflower voyage, as well as the only portrait painted from life of a Pilgrim Father, Edward Winslow. But, for a real sense of Pilgrim life, I headed about three miles north of Boston to the arduous journey, Massachusetts’ Mayflower II is picturesque Provincetown. There, from the top of the 252ft-tall Pilgrim Monument, I saw the same rolling sand dunes and Atlantic Ocean seascape that greeted the travellers. But this was not what they had expected. Having set sail from Plymouth, Devon, their destination was the Colony of Virginia. But the Mayflower had gone off course and they ended up hundreds of miles to the north. After 65 days at sea, the Pilgrims were exhausted and ill. It was winter, so their first priority was to find food. And they did – a stash of Indian corn at what is now Corn Hill Beach in Truro, where a weathered plaque marks the spot. But the Native Americans, who had stored it, were not pleased. In nearby Eastham, they confronted the newcomers on First Encounter Beach, where families play and paddle today. Farther west, the long-ignored Native American story is told in Mashpee, at the Wampanoag Tribal Museum and Old Indian Meeting House. Seeking a friendlier environment, the Pilgrims sailed across the bay. As every American schoolchild knows, they called their landing place Plymouth in honour of their home port. Legend has it that Plymouth Rock – now sheltered by a granite canopy – marks the very spot where they allegedly first set foot. I strolled along the waterfront to Mayflower II, the 1956, full-sized replica of the Pilgrims’ ship, measuring about 80 feet long and 24 feet wide, like a time machine, whisked me back through the centuries. Down the steps on the ‘tween deck, the low ceiling and cramped conditions made me feel claustrophobic; yet, this was ‘home’ for 102 men, women and children during the crossing. Mayflower II is currently undergoing restoration at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut, but next year she will make a triumphant homecoming to Plymouth for the 400th anniversary. Plymouth’s Pilgrim Hall Museum, reputedly one of the oldest continuous museums in America, boasts paintings inspired by the original Mayflower voyage, as well as the only portrait painted from life of a Pilgrim Father, Edward Winslow. But, for a real sense of Pilgrim life, I headed about three miles...
GETTING THERE:
Boston is well-served by an array of international airlines (www.bostonusa.com). America As You Like It (020 8742 8299, www.americaasyoulikeit.com) has special packages for the 400th celebrations and also tailor-makes New England holidays.

WHAT TO READ ON THE PLANE:
The Wicked Pilgrim (www.thewickedpilgrim.com), covered in the accompanying feature by Chris Coplans, and, for a hands-on account of the voyage, Mayflower II Diary: Sketches from a Lost Age (www.Amazon.co.uk), by one of the last surviving crew members, 87-year-old Peter Padfield. It is beautifully illustrated with his original sketches.

THREE LITTLE-KNOWN THINGS ABOUT THE ORIGINAL MAYFLOWER
www.Plymouth400inc.org

1. The Puritans or ‘Separatists’ as they were known (the term Pilgrim came much later), originally intended to sail on two ships but, after the Speedwell developed leaks, half of the passengers had to stay behind. The rest were crammed into the Mayflower. This development meant that the departure point, originally scheduled for Dartmouth in Devon, became nearby Plymouth.

2. The Pilgrims made up only about half the 102 passengers on board. The rest were the so-called Strangers, funded, as were the Pilgrims, by a group of London merchant investors who saw the voyage as a way to open up further business opportunities in the New World.

3. There is no record of anyone stepping off the ship onto the now-famous Plymouth Rock.

The Native American Wampanoags recreate their 17th century lifestyle near Plimoth Plantation

Two interpreters of the Pilgrims’ everyday life at Plimoth Plantation

JOURNEY to a world of ART AND CULTURE

Explore neighborhoods built for sea captains, novelists, and witch trials judges and discover the rich history in Salem.

Find out more at salem.org

The Pilgrims were followed by waves of settlers. In 1630, John Winthrop led a fleet of 11 ships to Massachusetts, while 20,000 Puritans followed in the next 10 years. Their legacy remains throughout New England, from vibrant cities, such as Boston, to seaside towns and picture-perfect Colonial villages inland.
The Hotel Beacon offers 278 oversized rooms and suites, all with equipped kitchenettes, flat-screen TV, free wi-fi and a trendy Upper West Side location.

The MAINE Thing: Thank God for Cod

I have long enjoyed holidays on Maine’s unspoiled rocky coast, particularly on Monhegan Island, ten miles off the mainland. Even before the Pilgrims’ journey, English fishermen ‘wintered over’ there. ‘They salted their catch to preserve it,’ Emily Grey, curator of the Monhegan Museum of Art & History, told me. ‘Part of local lore is how the Pilgrims sailed a shallop, a small boat, up here to get food, when they were battling starvation.” Long known as an artists’ colony, Monhegan later inspired 20th-century American painters, such as George Bellows and Rockwell Kent. Their works are displayed in the museum, along with exhibits about fishing. Today, Monhegan remains an artists’ colony - and locals still fish for cod and lobster.

Lured to New Hampshire by Strawberries

Like many coastal cities, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, developed because of its harbour. But, back in 1623, there was an additional lure – the wild strawberries growing along the Piscataqua River. In fact, the settlement was once called Strawberry Banana – and the name lives on at the open-air museum, where 30-or-so historic buildings range from homes and workshops to a tavern.

I discovered how this neighbourhood evolved between 1635 and 1955 by talking to costumed role players – an innkeeper, an Irish immigrant and the wife of a former New Hampshire governor. And, with her Native American heritage, storyteller Anne Jennison provided insights into relations between local tribes and English newcomers. And there are even wild strawberries growing in the garden.

Discover New England

www.discovernewengland.org

An historic interpreter at Strawberry Banke living history museum, sited in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, settled by Europeans in 1623

The Rhode Island State Capitol is located in Providence, so named by leader Roger Williams in thanks to God for protecting him during his exile from Massachusetts.

Rhode Island: Small State, Big Idea

Rhode Island may be the smallest of the American states, but it is home to a big idea – religious freedom. That’s thanks to Roger Williams, who disagreed with the strict religious rules of Massachusetts, left the colony and, in 1636, founded Providence Plantation, today’s Providence, the state capital. Students at prestigious Brown University provide the buzz, while Colonial-era homes on Benefit Street reflect the past. And at the Roger Williams National Memorial, enthusiastic park rangers explained to me those revolutionary ideas that helped to shape American history.

The Jewel of the Upper West Side

www.essentiallyamerica.co.uk