

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



Left: Toronto Marriott City Centre Hotel. Below: Hotel Commonwealth.



ROOMS WITH A VIEW OF THE GAME

By Danielle Braff | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

If opening day is your favorite holiday, if you believe ice cream is best served in a hat-shaped bowl, and if you can recite your team’s stats offhand . . . then it’s time you really took your baseball love to the next level. Staying in a baseball-themed hotel is next level baseball love.

These hotels understand your total devotion to the sport, and they’ve hit their own home runs with these rooms and packages.

Toronto Marriott City Centre Hotel It’s literally attached to the Rogers Centre, home of the Toronto Blue Jays (but you know that already, right?). There are a whopping 70 newly renovated rooms with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the field. But the best way to catch the game? Score a bi-level suite, where you can host up to 15 of your (or baseball’s) biggest fans. The bedrooms on the second level look into the stadium. Larger groups can host a baseball experience inside the hotel’s skybox which has unobstructed views of the field facing home plate, accommodates up to 30 people, and has 18 stadium seats.

Hilton St. Louis at the Ballpark Just 100 yards away from your room is Busch Stadium — close enough to hear the bat hit the ball. When you stay here, you can look outside your window (from some of the rooms like the Executive Level Family Suite) and see right into the stadium. They’re the best seats in the stadium.

Hotel Belleclaire If it’s good enough for Babe Ruth . . . yes, the legend allegedly stayed here. So the hotel has

decorated his suite in this New York City hotel top to bottom with the coolest historical memorabilia including balls used in games, books about the games, and other baseball stuff. Of course, a baseball-related stay wouldn’t be complete without Cracker Jack, pretzels, and Big League Chew, which come in a Yankees crate (obvi).

The Otesaga This hotel hits it out of the park with its Baseball VIP Experience package. The Otesaga is an official partner of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, so they offer a rare backstage look at the National Baseball Hall of Fame & Museum. The museum contains more than 3 million books and baseball documents, and a half million pictures documenting baseball history. While you’re staying in Cooperstown, check out Doubleday Field, where baseball is alleged to have started (there’s some controversy behind that, but you can get the full scoop via a tour of the Hall of Fame).

The Lexington Hotel New York Book the Norma Jeane Suite, and you’ll be staying in the room that Joe DiMaggio lived in during his marriage to Marilyn Monroe in the 1950s. No, it doesn’t sport baseballs or a batting cage, but the luxe room, which was recently renovated and inspired by the couple — looks just like a very fancy 1950s hotel room. It’s got monogrammed Dorothy Draper cocktail glasses, a vintage bucket of Dom Perignon, and . . . a Louisville slugger baseball bat. A color palette of black, white, and blush was chosen to complement pops of red (apparently Marilyn’s favorite lip color), and an Art Deco aesthetic is a nod to Hollywood glam. This is your chance to live like a real Yankee — for at least a night.

Hotel Commonwealth Steps away from Fenway Park is this luxury hotel, where Red Sox stars including Carlton Fisk, Johnny Pesky, Fred Lynn, and Nomar Garciaparra have slept. In the Luxury Baseball Suite, you can rest adjacent to Babe Ruth, Jackie Robinson, and Lou Gehrig baseball collectibles, along with photos that include Robinson stealing home. Pesky, the longtime Red Sox player and onetime manager, was the first guest to stay in this suite, and he was there for opening day 2010. Book one of the many baseball packages — the hotel offers five — but our favorite is The Ultimate Play, which includes the suite, two dugout tickets, a pregame tour, a signed baseball from a Red Sox legend, \$100 toward the Red Sox team store, a historical guide through the Red Sox Hall of Fame, and more (starting at \$2,500).

The Vinoy Renaissance St. Petersburg Resort & Golf Club It’s not all about golf at this Florida resort. Stay in the historical section of the hotel to really feel like you’re part of history: This resort opened back in the ’20s coinciding with spring training (it also has newer rooms in the tower). Opt for the Take Me out to the Ballgame package, which includes transportation to the game, along with a cooler, snacks, and the essential baseball cap. Or, the resort will transfer all guests to the park for \$7. While you’re in the area, check out Little Cooperstown, which has the world’s largest autographed baseball collection, with more than 5,000 baseballs.

Danielle Braff can be reached at daniellebraff@gmail.com.

HERE

A SALUTE TO N.H.’S FAMOUS STEAM TRAIN

Celebrate the 150th anniversary of The Mount Washington Cog Railway on July 3 with games and festivities at the Marshfield Base Station located about 6 miles south of Bretton Woods, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The iconic train has been taking passengers on a three-hour roundtrip ride up Mount Washington powered by vintage coal-fired steam locomotives or modern biodiesel engines — all built onsite — for generations. The birthday bash features Victorian lawn games such as croquet and badminton (weather permitting), fish feeding at nearby Peppersass Pond, cake and ice cream, an acoustic guitar performance by Michael Bloom, and fireworks. Also, don’t miss the annual Railway to the Moon Festival Aug. 17 and 18, a celebration of the inventiveness of cog entrepreneur Sylvester Marsh, featuring Victorian-era costumes, live music, live steam art, and more. 603-278-5404, www.thecog.com.

A NEW HIP AND HAPPENING ROOFTOP VENUE

Check out one of New England’s largest rooftop hangouts, which opened in Quincy Center this month. The Alba Prime Roof Deck has 5,000 square feet of space with a new sushi bar, herb and produce gardens, fruit trees, a bar, and a stage that hosts live entertainment. The seasonal spot on Hancock Street — located above Alba Prime Steak and Seafood and its sister eatery Zef Cicchetti and Raw Bar — even has a lowered roof that shelters guests on rainy



summer nights. Entrees: \$30-\$50. Open Saturdays and Sundays noon to 1 a.m. (kitchen closes at 11 p.m.). 617-376-2522, www.albaquincy.com.

MEET THE WORLD’S ELUSIVE SPIRIT BEAR

Learn the story of one of the rarest animals on Earth and its secluded home in the British Columbian wilderness at the Museum of Science, Boston’s latest IMAX film. “Great Bear Rainforest,” opening July 5, tells the story of the Spirit Bear — an all-white black bear — that’s found in the Great Bear Rainforest on Canada’s rugged and remote Pacific Coast, one of the largest temperate coastal rainforests in the world and home to the indigenous First Nations people. Ryan Reynolds narrates the film, which is presented by the Canadian company Seaspan and Destination British Columbia, and takes viewers on a visual journey into a world with grizzlies, coastal wolves, sea otters, and humpback whales. Tickets: \$10 adults, \$6 ages

3-11; \$9 for 60 and older. 617-723-2500, www.mos.org.

THERE

AN ARCTIC ADVENTURE TO FAMOUS SHIPWRECK

Hop aboard the 198-passenger Ocean Endeavour and you may become one of the first members of the general public to see the HMS Erebus wreck in Canada’s Nunavut province. Here, during British captain Sir John Franklin’s 1845 expedition, two ships with 129 crew members disappeared, the

story of which is still being uncovered through Inuit stories and research on both wrecks. Adventure Canada’s Into the Northwest Passage cruise takes passengers on a journey to this Arctic archeological site (weather permitting), Aug. 17-Sept. 2. The trip starts in Kangerlussuaq, Greenland, and makes it way to Baffin Island, Devon Island (the largest uninhabited island on Earth), and Beechy Island before making its way to Kugluktuk, Nunavut. A second cruise to the site, Out of the Northwest Passage, runs Sept. 2-18 and does the trip roughly in reverse. Rates start at \$9,995, not including airfare. 800-363-7566, www.adventurecanada.com.

JAMAICA’S WEEKLONG REGGAE FEST

Did you know UNESCO recently designated reggae as an intangible cultural heritage? Celebrate this momentous milestone and also the smooth sounds of reggae during Jamaica’s iconic music festival in Montego Bay, July 14-20. Reggae Sumfest brings local musicians and well-known legends together, including global sensation Buju Banton, dancehall veterans Beenie Man and Bounty Killer, Chronixx, Spice, Jah9, and Elephant Man. The festival, now in its 27th year, includes the Mornin’ Medz Brunch Party July 14, Street Dance Party July 15, and Global Sound Clash July 18. Tickets: free-\$90, per event; \$225 for entire week. www.reggae.sumfest.com; www.visitjamaica.com.



EVERYWHERE

ENSURE CLEAN WATER ON YOUR TRAVELS

Whether you’re traveling overseas or into the backcountry, use Sawyer’s Micro Squeeze Water Filtration System to remove harmful bacteria and protozoa from your drinking water. The 2-ounce filter can be screwed on to the mouth of your water bottle (with a standard 28mm thread) or the hose of your hydration pouch, attached to the included 32-ounce Squeeze Pouch, or used with the plastic straw. The Micro Squeeze can filter up to 100,000 gallons of water, as long as you regularly flush out the filter using the included plunger. According to Sawyer, the filter removes 99.99999 percent of salmonella, cholera, and E.coli and 99.9999 percent of cryptosporidium and giardia, without requiring batteries, chemicals, or replaceable filters. The filter easily tucks into your suitcase or backpack. \$28.99. www.sawyer.com.

KARI BODNARCHUK