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MEN'S BOOK

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE
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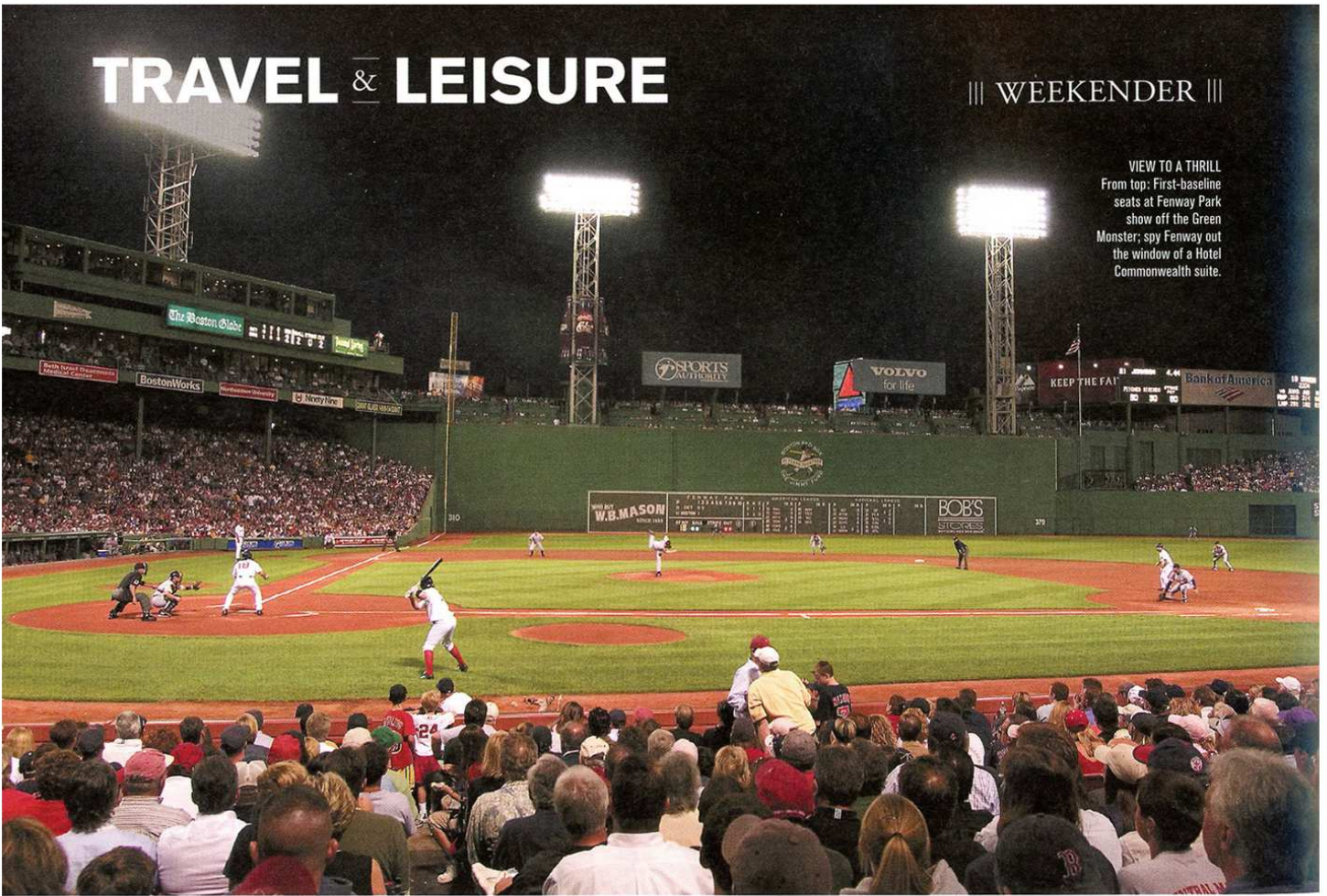
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VIEW TO A THRILL
From top: First-baseline
seats at Fenway Park
show off the Green
Monster; spy Fenway out
the window of a Hotel
Commonwealth suite.



Boston Proper

Journey to the heart of Red Sox country and the church of baseball—where the game is gospel.

| By *Tim Smith* |

“Getcha program hea!” Thick Boston accents fill the air, as we’re surrounded by throngs of baseball fans in red and blue making their way to the ballpark. But, not just any ballpark. One of *the* ballparks. Besides Wrigley Field, Fenway Park is the only other major league baseball venue built in that era that still hosts games.

Few things in life live up to their expectations. Movies, restaurants, first dates, concerts... we set the bar high and then are left feeling a little deflated when our standards are not met. Seeing a



game at Fenway is not one of these things. Turns out, it’s everything you think it will be—and more.

This past spring, my wife surprised me with flights and tickets to see the Chicago Cubs versus the Boston Red Sox. As a

fan of the Cubs, and baseball in general, going to see my hometown team in the historic ballpark has always been a dream of mine.

Fenway’s not just a stadium; it’s a monument deserving of national pride. **CONTINUED...**

A reservation for the Baseball Suite at the Hotel Commonwealth (hotelcommonwealth.com) further confirms that marrying my spouse was a good idea. The room has awe-inspiring views of the stadium's gorgeous green walls and is also the official hotel of the Boston Red Sox. Filled with classic baseball memorabilia—including a 1967 World Series program and a collection of vintage trading cards featuring Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Ted Williams, Johnny Pesky and Jackie Robinson—the two-room luxury suite has played host to the likes of Carlton Fisk, Nomar Garciaparra, Jason Varitek and other sports celebrities, all of whom have slept here and signed the room's guest book. The hotel has an Ultimate Bucket List package that includes overnight accommodations for two in the suite, two front-row tickets to a Sox game (facing the visitor's on-deck circle, no less), VIP on-field access to batting practice, a personal photo with the 2013 World Championship trophy, plus a gargantuan welcome basket and valet parking (packages start at \$2,495). Take the deal. It's worth it.

The Hotel Commonwealth is a stone's throw from Fenway. As soon as the bellhop opens the gilded front door, you step out into the middle of the game-day action. You can feel the pulse in the city. We hopped right into the deluge and made our way to the game. That's how you get there: You walk. That



LIGHT FANTASTIC
Night views of
Boston's Back Bay

in itself is amazing to me because walking to a Braves game in Atlanta would probably take a week—that's if you survived the interstate.

The closer you get, the more fervent the crowd. Bars and restaurants surround Fenway, all busting at the seams with baseball devotees. There are fans grilling food and tailgating on Yawkey Way, and music blasting from the bars.

Fenway harkens back to the early days of baseball, when legends like Bobby Doerr, "Smoky Joe" Wood and Cy Young graced the field. Once inside the ballpark, we wind our way through open-air corridors and search for our seat section on old-timey, hand-painted signs that look like they were held over from the Titanic era.

Finally, we emerge from a cavernous tunnel into the church

of baseball. Just seeing the Green Monster (the storied 37-foot left-field wall) for the first time gave me goose bumps. I hear a vendor a few aisles away yell, "Chowdah hea!" And can it be true? Do they really sell clam chowder? Even in the spring?

Within moments, I already know what my favorite aspect of Fenway is—its simplicity. You go there to enjoy a baseball game. Nothing else. In the day and age of frills-and-thrills-style ballparks, this ballpark almost seems like a Minor League stadium. At 37,499 seats, it's one of the smallest capacity stadiums in the country. There isn't a swimming pool in left field or a high-end suite section where businessmen schmooze. (There isn't even much netting between the field and the seats, so you have to

pay attention to the game in order not to fall victim to a foul ball.) No. You go to Fenway Park to watch a ballgame, and it's perfect.

After the Braves lost, we drowned our sorrows at Bleacher Bar (bleacherbarboston.com), the pub built into the bottom of the wall in right field. A huge fenced-off opening looks out onto right field, and you're so close that during games you can heckle outfielders without even going hoarse. From a bar stool, we watched as the stadium emptied and the lights turned off one by one. A soft glow came over Fenway, and a haze settled on the field. In the mist, you could almost picture the ghosts of Babe Ruth, Ted Williams and Johnny Pesky stepping up to the plate. Almost. ■

WHERE TO EAT | Hit up these three classics, a hot spot and one newbie in Beantown.



B&G Oysters

In warm weather, outdoor dining at this South End oyster bar is the way to go. Indulge in the Lobster BLTs, a highly curated oyster list and a beer lineup that rocks. It's perfect for a boozy vacation lunch.

MUST TRY Smoked shrimp beignets with tomato sauce
550 Tremont St.,
bandgoysters.com



Scampo

Legendary chef Lydia Shire set up shop with a creative menu at the swank Liberty Hotel (a former prison with loads of ambience) near Beacon Hill.

MUST TRY Shire's handmade pastas like delverde pappardelle tossed in artichoke sauce
215 Charles St.,
scampoboston.com



BrasserieJO

A classic Back Bay Parisian bistro that's a perfect date night, brunch and power-lunch spot all in one. World-renowned French chef Jean Joho brings his A-game to this beloved eatery.

MUST TRY French ham crepe gratin
120 Huntington Ave.,
brasseriejoboston.com



Eastern Standard

This Kenmore Square bistro is teeming wall-to-wall with Boston's attractive foodie crowd. Grab a craft cocktail before and after a Red Sox game (within walking distance).

MUST TRY Smoked pork porterhouse with pancetta, Swiss chard and polenta
528 Commonwealth Ave.,
easternstandardboston.com



Precinct Kitchen + Bar

A new offering on the Back Bay scene—the bar is packed with the see-and-be-seen set every night. Kitsch factor? It's the basement of the former city precinct.

MUST TRY Clam bake with Wellfleet clams, PEI mussels, lobster and local kielbasa
154 Berkeley St.,
precinctkitchenandbar.com

B&G OYSTERS PHOTO BY SUSIE CUSHNER; BOSTON CITY SKYLINE PHOTO BY LOU JONES/ZUMA WIRE/ZUMA PRESS.COM