

FENWAY

DIAMOND in the Rough

By Margit Feury Photographs by Heath Robbins

More than just a legendary baseball park, the Fenway is worth a detour for its international flavor and some of the best nightlife in town.

ASK SOMEONE IN BOSTON WHERE THE Fenway is, and chances are, you will be given directions to one of the oldest ball fields in the country. Opened in 1912, Fenway Park (home of the Boston Red Sox) is certainly more widely known than the neighborhood of the same name. But there's plenty of action on the other side of the turnstiles.

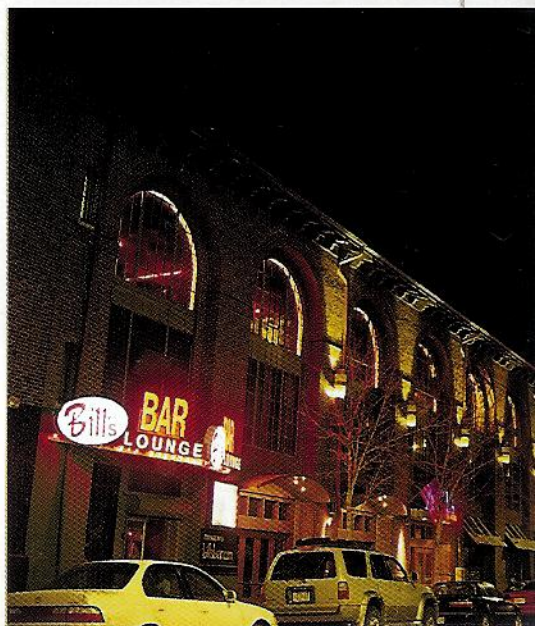
In fact, directly behind the dugouts on Lansdowne Street, you'll find some of Boston's truly happening nightlife. With a dozen clubs to choose from, the street offers a sound to fit almost every mood. Avalon is a favorite for dancing to music played by well-known DJs, as well as catching a concert by some of the biggest names in rock. Just up the block, Bill's Bar and Lounge features live bands five nights a week, with everything from hip-hop to reggae, funk and groove.

If sports bars are more your speed, Jillian's Billiard Club, at the far end of Lansdowne Street, has floor upon floor of pool, pinball, air hockey and a full

arcade. Across the street from Fenway Park, you can grab a local brew at the Boston Beer Works.

While the Red Sox's home field may seem to be the epicenter of this neighborhood, it actually all began about a half-mile south of right field.

In the late 1800s, wealthy Bostonians living in the nearby Back Bay complained about the smelly marsh behind their neighborhood. Immigrants living in



Keys to Nightlife

Avalon

15 Lansdowne St.,
617-262-2424

The regulars swear it's worth the wait in line to hear hip live music or the guest DJs.

Bill's Bar and Lounge

5 1/2 Lansdowne St.,
617-421-9678

Live music and theme nights maintain Bill's reputation for being "hip-hot."

Boston Beer Works

61 Brookline Ave.,
617-536-BEER

The Blueberry Ale is the biggest seller, but try one of the other 14 ales, lagers and stouts.

Jake Ivory's

9 Lansdowne St.,
617-247-1222

Sing-alongs and 22-ounce beers make this place more than a little lively.

Jillian's Billiard Club

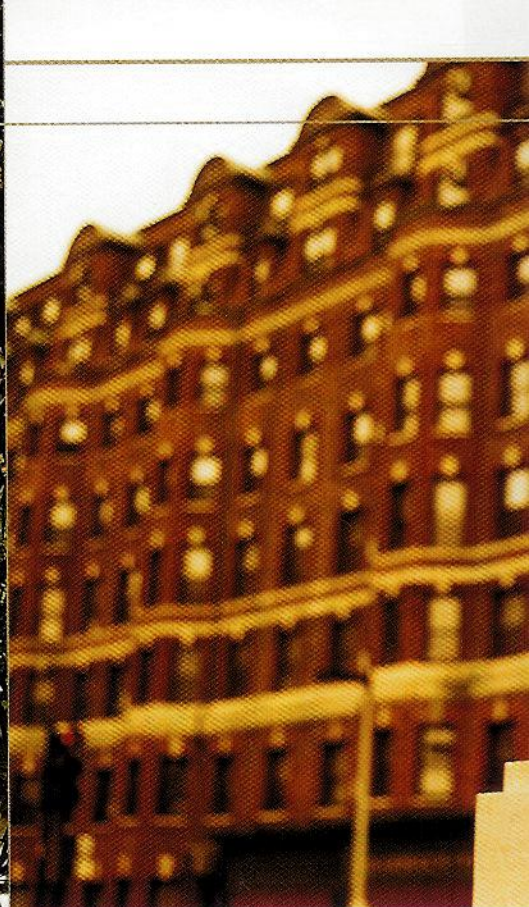
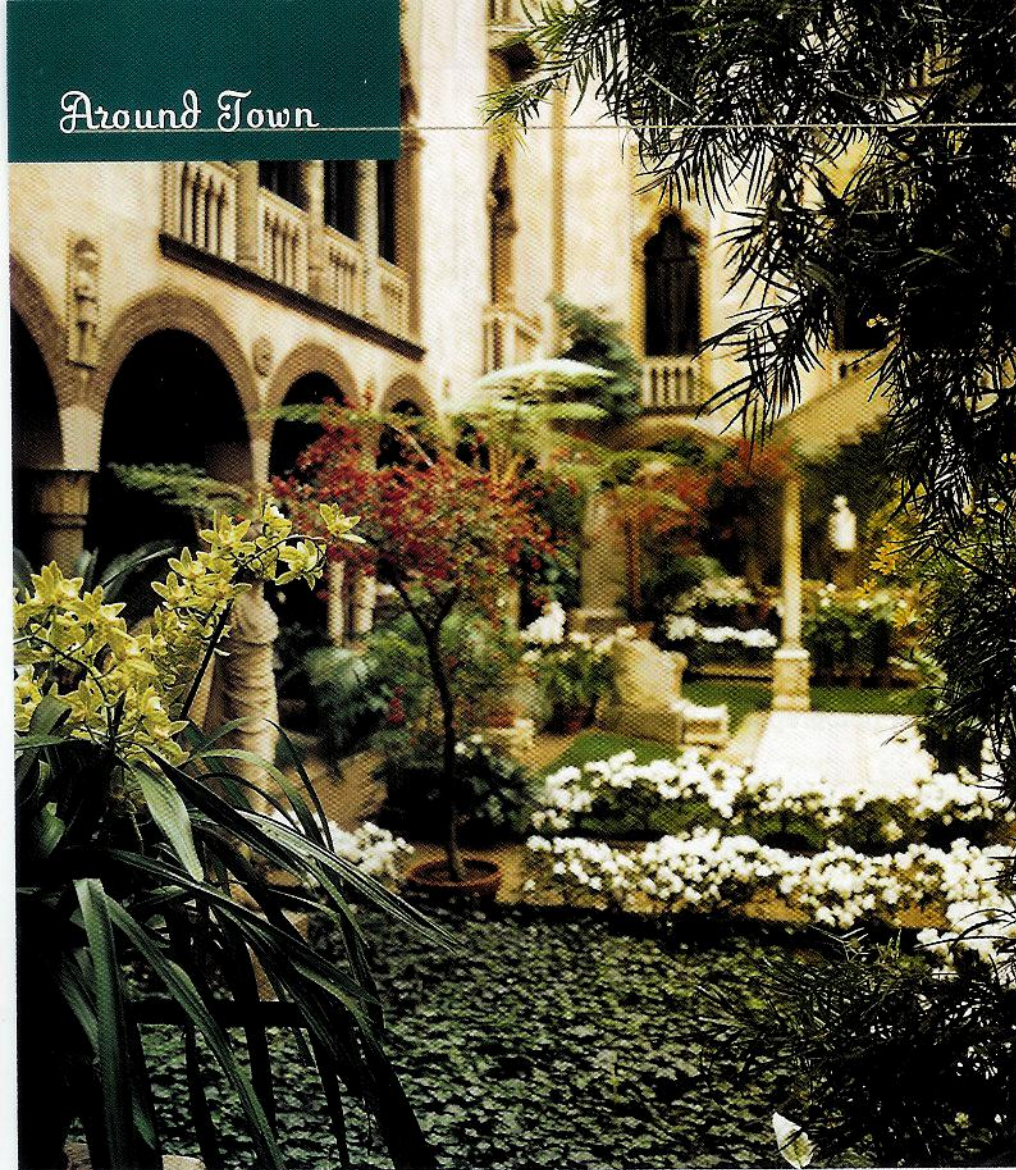
145 Ipswich St.,
617-437-0300

It's the arcade of your dreams: pool, pinball, skee ball, air hockey and snowboarding.

Sophia's

1270 Boylston St.,
617-351-7001

Latin music fills this four-story club, along with the authentic sangria.



FEN FAVORITES: Take a stroll through the courtyard at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, TOP LEFT; then look for other neighborhood landmarks such as the Westland Avenue Gate, ABOVE, and Fenway Park, BELOW LEFT.

Don't Miss

Fenway Park

4 Yawkey Way, 617-236-6666

Tours: 9 a.m.-1 p.m. weekdays from May-September (hourly on game days and 9 a.m.-2 p.m. on non-game days). Highlights include a visit to the dugouts, the warning track, a private suite and the inside of the scoreboard. For game tickets, call 617-482-4769 or visit www.redsox.com.

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

280 The Fenway, 617-566-1401;

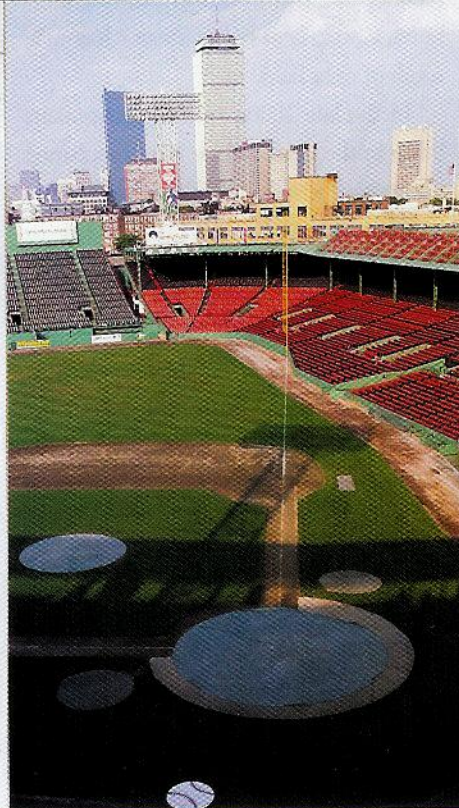
www.gardnermuseum.org

Modeled after a 15th-century Venetian palace, the museum houses 2,500 paintings, sculptures, tapestries and other works of art, as well as an indoor garden and cafe.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

465 Huntington Ave., 617-267-9300; www.mfa.org

In addition to special exhibits, the MFA contains everything from Egyptian sculpture to European paintings, with collections of Impressionist and Colonial artists and Colonial-era furniture.



tenements on the banks of the swamp suffered from many diseases, including typhoid. The city hired Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of New York City's Central Park, to freshen up this area between Commonwealth and Huntington avenues. Olmsted spent more than a decade constructing a tidal gate, as well as a series of rivers and ponds to hold rain overflow, and he disguised it all as a park. He appropriately named it after the marshlands, or "fens," of England.

When the park finally opened, those who had snubbed their noses at the area now spent leisure time on the many paths—strolling, riding in carriages and on horseback. The Fens is still full of its original dogwood trees, along with lindens, hawthorns, red oaks and a blooming rose garden. Today, basketball courts and pub-



a hip, diverse neighborhood with a variety of ethnic restaurants. The Brown Sugar Café was awarded Best Thai Restaurant by *Boston Magazine* in 2000 and 2001. Across the street is the oldest Brazilian joint in town, Buteco. And around the corner are other ethnic eateries, including El Pelón Taqueria, serving authentic Mexican, as well as the Linwood Grill and BBQ for Southern comfort food.

For a little Latin flavor, Sophia's offers bump-and-grind in the basement, a pitcher of sangria on the main floor, salsa on the third floor and a great view from the rooftop deck.

"The Fenway is a fascinating neighborhood not just because of its world-class attractions like the MFA and Fenway Park," says Carl Koechlin, executive director of the Fenway Community Development Corporation. "It's also fascinating because all these terrific institutions co-exist with a wonderfully diverse and vibrant residential community."

lic garden plots bustle with activity in spring and summer. The Fens is a small but beautiful portion of the Emerald Necklace (see the Insider's Guide on page 112), which comprises more than six miles of land winding through Boston.

After Olmsted's renovation, one proper Back Bay Bostonian of the time actually left upscale Beacon Street to move to the Fenway. Isabella Stewart Gardner settled into her mansion, which was built to resemble an Italian palace, and filled it with her eclectic art collection. She opened her front door to the public in 1903, and today, it remains exactly as she left it, including a beautiful year-round indoor garden with a glass roof. The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, also bordering on the Fens, opened shortly after in 1909.

On the route from Fenway Park to the Fens are the former tenements, with their surprisingly attractive facades, now part of

SUGAR AND SPICE: The Brown Sugar Café offers guests an exotic array of tantalizing Thai food on its extensive menu.

Where to Dine

Brown Sugar Café

129 Jersey St., 617-266-2928

With a cozy and relaxed ambiance, a menu that could take all night to read, and Thai noodle, meat and seafood dishes bursting with flavor, you will not be disappointed.

Buteco

130 Jersey St., 617-247-9508

This simple little place claims to be the oldest Brazilian restaurant in town. It's nothing fancy, but the food, especially the plantain chips, can't be beat.

El Pelón Taqueria

92 Peterborough St., 617-262-9090;
www.elpelon.com

This tiny, authentic and affordable Mexican eatery lets you try tortas made with chicken, pork or steak, and calabasitas made with squash, onions, garlic, tomatoes and cheese, and then wash it all down with a homemade cinnamon Horchata drink.

Linwood Grill and BBQ

81 Kilmarnock St., 617-247-8099

You'll think you've gone South when you taste the crawfish, fried pickles and andouille sausage.

