

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

FLORIDA'S FENWAY

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There's a Fenway hotel that's not in Boston? Yep. Named after the geographic definition of the name ("fen" = marshland), the Fenway Hotel opened in November in Dunedin, Fla. Although there is baseball nearby, there is absolutely no connection to Fenway Park — in fact, the city of Dunedin is the home of the Toronto Blue Jays' spring training camp. The Tampa Bay Rays are based a few miles away in St. Pete.

The sign out front looks suspiciously like a baseball pennant — but no. It's meant to resemble a megaphone. You'll hear music as you enter the bay-facing hotel; in our case, it was "Lollipop" by the Chordettes. "We're trying to re-create the music and the feel of the 1920s, with a twist of modern hospitality," says general manager Shawn Routten. This isn't a fake theme: The circa 1927 stucco building once served as the region's first radio station. (It has also been a school and a hotel, but music is a more fun concept.) They broadcast their own play list, "Live from the Fenway." You may hear live music in the lobby as you enter this 83-room property and sip your welcome drink (a Kir Royale); the Fenway hosts local acts seven days a week, in the evenings and during brunch on weekends. You'll notice beach bikes, free for guests' use, and the sleek Parlor Bar.

It's hard to believe that this jazzy, 10,000-square-foot modern hotel was boarded up, covered in graffiti, and in foreclosure just a couple of years ago. That's always sad, but it was especially hard to fathom here, since the rolling lawn faces the Gulf of Mexico, with lovely views of nearby islands, the Clearwater skyline, and a historic pier favored by pelicans. Developers wanted to demolish it and build condominiums.

In 2016, Mainsail Lodging & Development partnered with the Taoist Tai Chi Society of the USA, and brought the property back to life. Some \$11 million later, the "new" Fenway hotel sits on the footprint of the old building. They added a rooftop bar, Hi-Fi, that has quickly become a primo place to watch the sun set over the Gulf in a comfy banquette. That sprawling lawn will become the site of croquet and badminton games and Taoist Tai Chi lessons. The hotel will also work with the Society to offer health and wellness packages.

Just a few weeks after its grand opening, the Fenway is a welcoming space. While the hotel has a contemporary feel, designers worked with the Dunedin History Museum, hanging old photos of the property on the walls and retaining the 1920s speakeasy located below the main floor. (It is closed off, but it's there.) "You can have the hospitality, but without a story and a purpose, it doesn't amount to much," Routten notes. "We're trying to bring the vibe back," he adds.

A story and a purpose are well and good, but a



PHOTOS BY DIANE BAIR FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

There are lovely views from the hotel's rolling lawn, which faces the Gulf of Mexico.

decent restaurant never hurt. Happily, they've got that covered with HEW Parlor & Chophouse. Open for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and weekend brunch, HEW feels like a steakhouse. Popular dinner items include a hangar steak, rack of lamb, and a pork porterhouse, with side dishes ordered a la carte. Some dishes will change with the season, as will the fish. We tried sea scallops with pork belly and a medley of sides to share and were quite happy; the crispy Brussels sprouts were a favorite at the table. Dunedin locals are showing up to check it out, angling for a table facing the open kitchen (a benefit: sampling special treats proffered by the chefs.) "People come and make a night of it, having dinner here and a drink at the rooftop bar," a server told us.

Guests who spend the night will be comfortably ensconced in rooms with one king or two queen beds that face flat-screen TVs and ocean views (some), done up in white and gray with blue accents. Bathrooms offer lots of countertop space — a rarity even in new hotels, but much appreciated. A fun feature: Each room has an Amazon Alexa, pre-loaded with commands. If you'd like, say, a pot of fresh coffee or a toothbrush delivered to your room, just ask Alexa. She's also handy for wakeup calls.

Hop on one of those Fenway-emblazoned beach cruisers to tour Dunedin's downtown. No worries about traffic, since you can ride a segment of the 47-mile Pinellas Trail, a converted rail trail. Main Street is just a couple of blocks away. This city of 35,000 has a Celtic feel; its name comes from Dun Eideann, the Gaelic name for Edinburgh. The Highland Games in April and the Celtic Festival in November are major events, and children have the option of learning to play bagpipes in school. Fun places to check out include the Dunedin Brewery (www.dunedinbrewery.com), Florida's oldest craft

brewery, Olde Bay Fish Camp (www.oldebaycafe.com), a fish shack-slash-fish market on the dock with tasty seafood and a friendly vibe, and the Restorative (www.restorativerestaurant.com), a tiny eatery located in a strip mall owned by a husband-wife team who create tasty, creative cuisine. (Order the spaghetti in black garlic puree if it's on the ever-changing menu when you visit. It is messy but amazing.)

So — there are lots of reasons to come to the Fenway Hotel, but none of them is baseball. That is, unless you happen to be a Toronto Blue Jays fan.

FENWAY HOTEL, 453 Edgewater Drive, Dunedin, Fla. Rooms from \$199. 727-683-5999; www.fenwayhotel.com

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A rooftop bar was part of an \$11 million renovation.



The Fenway Hotel in Dunedin, Fla.

HERE

TRAIN RIDE WITH SANTA

Ride the rails with Santa when you and the family hop aboard the Conway Scenic Railway's Santa Holiday Express. The 11-mile, 55-minute round-trip excursion departs from the 1874 station in the middle of North Conway Village. Along the route, passing the Moat Mountain Range and crossing rivers on the way to Conway, enjoy hot chocolate and cookies provided by Santa's spritely elves. Keep your cameras handy for photo-ops with your favorite North Pole denizens. Trains run at 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. daily from Dec. 15-23. Rates from \$18 adults; \$12.50 ages 4-12, 800-232-5251, www.conwayscenic.com

SCULPTURES DEBUT IN SEAPORT

The animal kingdom meets the human world in "Air Sea Land," seven newly commissioned large-scale sculptures designed specifically for the sweeping cityscape in Boston's Seaport district. Contemporary Spanish artist Okuda San Miguel's 8- to 12-foot sculptures can be found at each pedestrian crossing on the Seaport Boulevard landscaped medians, creating a half-mile-long public art corridor. Those who want to know more about each sculpture — with titles such as "Creation Light," "Mythological Being," and "Diversity Wild" — will be happy to learn that Seaport has partnered with two Boston-based organizations to create and launch a mobile tour of "Air Sea Land." The tour is run on the Cuseum digital platform, tapping technology from this neighboring Fort Point business.



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NEW YORK HOTEL DEALS

Plan a post-holiday trip to the Big Apple and get huge savings during the eighth-annual Hotel Week NYC 2019 (Jan. 4-14). Check out your favorite neighborhoods throughout the city — from Midtown East to the Bowery to Williamsburg and more — for fixed rate prices of \$100, \$200, \$300, or \$400 per night. On the easy-to-navigate website, users can filter properties by price and neighborhood; read detailed descriptions; and view image galleries of guest rooms, public spaces, and hotel amenities including spa and dining options. This year's participants include Hotel Giraffe; Hotel 50 Bowery; Freehand New York; the William Vale; the High Line Hotel; Wolcott Hotel; and more, with additional hotels being added daily. www.hotelweeknyc.com

TWO HISTORIC BUILDINGS DEBUT AS ONE CHIC HOTEL

Those looking for a place to stay in the



PROVENANCE HOTELS

"other" Portland — ahem, in Oregon — might want to check out Woodlark, the city's newest accommodations destination. Opening this weekend, the 150-room property unites two iconic buildings, the Cornelius Hotel, circa 1908, and the adjacent Woodlark Building, circa 1912, once home to Woodard, Clarke & Co., the city's first pharmacy. Woodlark's top-to-bottom renovations are bright, open, and minimalist, and its design reflects its surroundings in the form of lush, mossy velvets, natural wood tones, and pops of oceanic blue. In each guest room, a mix of textiles, glass, marble, lacquer, and brass creates a serene retreat in the heart of downtown. In addition, the hotel exhibits the work of Imogen Cunningham, the celebrated American photographer born in Portland in 1883. Introductory opening rate, \$125. 833-624-2188, woodlarkhotel.com

EVERYWHERE

A GIANT OF A BEACH TOWEL

"The More the Merrier" could be the motto of the Monster Towel. Measuring 10 feet by 10 feet — larger than a king-size bed — this super-size towel is large enough to accommodate your family, friends, and pet iguana at the beach, a picnic, or on a camping trip. Made of super soft and absorbent suede microfiber material, the towel rolls up to a compact size (15-by-15 inches) and is easy to transport with included carry strap. Corner pockets can be filled with sand to weight down the towel. A hidden, zippered pocket keeps valuables safe. Available in seven snazzy colors. Sale through Jan. 2,



\$69.95. Use code BOSTON for additional \$10 savings. monstertowel.com

SERUM FOR WEARY TRAVEL SKIN

Dry aircraft air, changing climates, and the stress of travel can take a toll on delicate facial skin. The Tumerica skincare line aims to enhance and protect all skin types. As the name suggests, each product is crafted with turmeric, a powerful Indian anti-inflammatory, as well as other natural ingredients free of harmful chemicals. The newest product to the line, Booster, is promoted as a super food blend for your skin. Available in two versions: Moringa & Turmeric is loaded with nutrients like calcium, vitamins A, B, C, D, E, and minerals like copper, iron, zinc, magnesium, silica, and manganese, to keep skin super moisturized and nourished; Raspberry & Turmeric, loaded with vitamin E, is designed to brighten dull skin, repair damaged skin, prevent oxidative damage, and reduce water loss. The convenient 1-ounce size easily passes through airport security in your carry-on bag. \$6.99. 561-331-5800, www.tumericanow.com

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