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DESTINATIONS

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PLAY BALL

Visit baseball
Hall of Fame

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SEASON'S BEST



HALL OF FAME

PLAY BALL

BASEBALL FANS CAN ALWAYS GET THEIR FILL IN COOPERSTOWN

By **JOHN SUCICH**
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EVERY YEAR IN LATE JULY, COOPERSTOWN IS THE CENTER OF THE BASEBALL WORLD. EVERY OTHER DAY OF THE YEAR, AS HOME TO THE NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM, BASEBALL IS THE CENTER OF COOPERSTOWN'S WORLD.

You see it all along Main Street of this picturesque town on the south shore of Otsego Lake. From the plentiful souvenir shops to places with names like the Baseball Town Motel or Shoeless Joe's to the multiple bat stores, baseball is a central theme. And then there is historic Doubleday Field and the Hall of Fame itself.

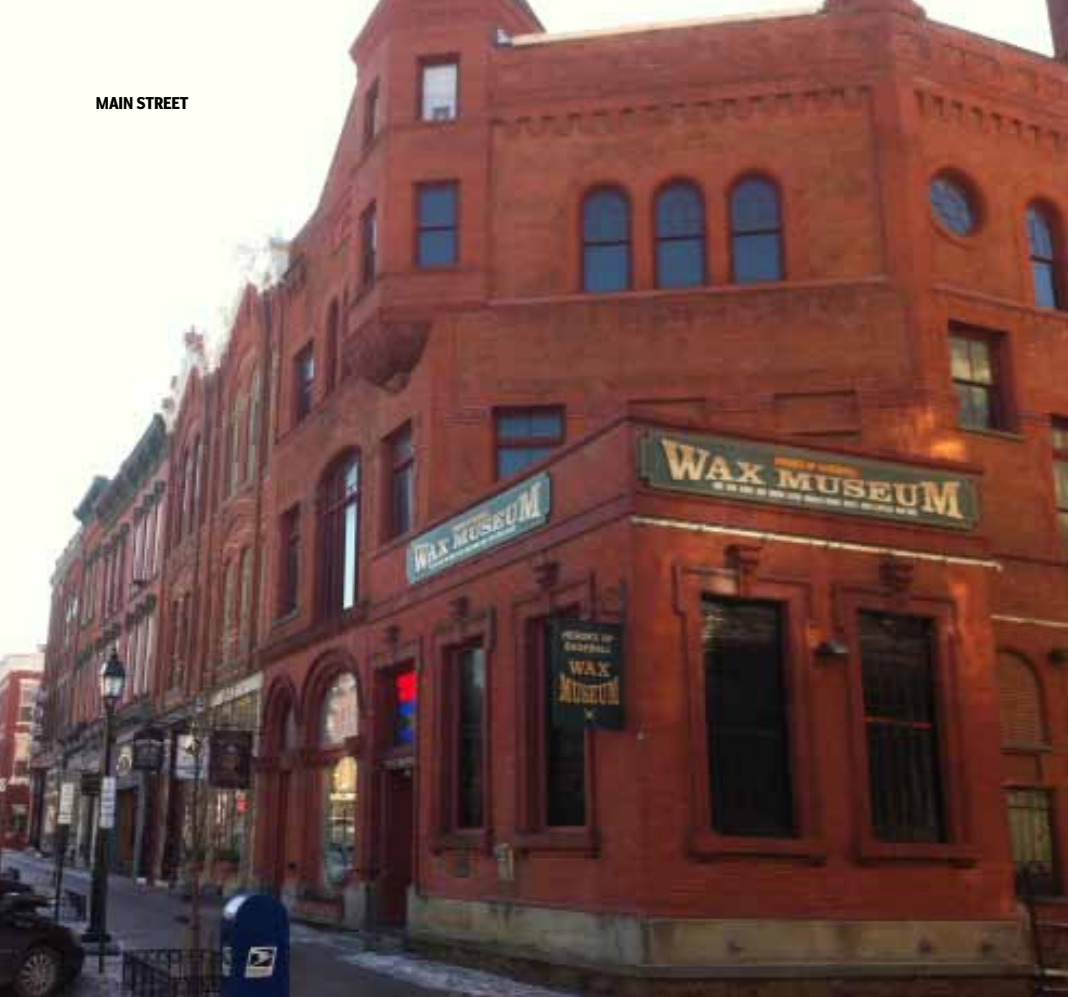
The Hall of Fame can be seen in a day, but some baseball fans might feel like they need more time to take everything in. If a weekend trip is more your style there are plenty of hotel options nearby, from The Inn at Cooperstown, a Victorian inn right down the street from the museum, to chain hotels a quick 4-mile car ride away.

Museum guides suggest you begin your tour of the museum on the second floor.

(Tours are self-guided, though group tours of certain exhibits are available depending on the daily schedule.) In one area of the second floor visitors get a glimpse of the modern game, walking through a room with lockers from each of the 30 current Major League teams. Each locker includes a team uniform and other fun artifacts from notable players, as well as mementoes from significant moments in the team's recent history.

The other area of the second floor is devoted to the history of the game of baseball, featuring exhibits on the Negro Leagues, women in baseball and baseball in Latin America. It is hard not to feel the history come to life as you stand in front of original lockers that belonged to the likes of





Lou Gehrig or Stan Musial, or as you look at a bat used by Honus Wagner, or the original prototypes of catcher's masks and the earliest mitts used. History and trivia even some die-hard fans might not know about is scattered throughout the second floor, where display cases and videos feature a trip through the decades right up to the game as we know it today.

By the time you've finished with the second floor, lunch might provide a break for the kids. The museum allows re-entry (don't forget to get your hand stamped!) and there are almost as many eating options along Main Street as there are baseball shops. Diners, pizzerias, family restaurants, cafés and taverns are all within walking distance and provide a chance for everyone to recharge their batteries.

Back at the museum, the third floor highlights baseball's record-holders and milestones, as well as a tribute to one of the game's all-time greats, Hank Aaron, featuring artifacts from his playing days as well as his early life. There is also an exhibit devoted to the ballparks of yesteryear, including some fun interactive features for the kids.

The first floor's biggest draw is the Hall of Fame plaques, but there is something for everyone. The Sandlot Kids' Clubhouse is a spot tucked away for the youngest visitors to take another break. Baseball glove chairs and benches with bases on top provide seating, while an audio/visual panel offers nine baseball-themed options for entertainment. There are baseball-themed knickknacks on display throughout the small room.

There's media for the adults as well: Not only are the broadcasting and writing members of the Hall of Fame recognized in this area, but there is an exhibit devoted to baseball in the movies. The gift shop, also on the first floor, is every baseball fan's dream come true, featuring Cooperstown and Hall of Fame souvenirs as well as paraphernalia from every major league team.

Last but not least, the Hall of Fame Gallery features the plaques. The rotunda, featuring the more recent inductees as well as the original class from 1936, is lit naturally by a skylight, and the rest of the plaques lead the way to the rotunda, organized chronologically in groups of 20. In July, Ken Griffey Jr. and Mike Piazza will be celebrated at their Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

If you made the trip to Cooperstown just for the plaques it would be worth it. Luckily there's a whole museum's worth of exhibits to enjoy



HALL OF FAME GALLERY



COOPERSTOWN SIGN



IF YOU GO

Admission

Admission is \$23 for 13 and older, \$12 for ages 7 to 12. Senior and military discounts as well as memberships are available.

Hours

The museum is open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Summer hours (May 29 until Sept. 4) are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Transportation

Parking along Main Street is limited to two hours, but lots where you can park for the day are nearby. Trolleys are available in peak season to shuttle fans to and from the Hall of Fame from farther away.

Website

Find out more at <http://baseballhall.org>.