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BOSTON & BROOKLINE

BARGAINS

FLAVOR SAVOR:

TEN TABLES, *Jamaica Plain*

Ten Tables is the mouse that roars: a tiny, candlelit space and chef David Punch's elegant fixings: a menu created with local and/or house-made ingredients. Even better are the prices: We love the three-course prix-fixe dinner offered weekly for \$28. Entrées: from \$19. 597 Centre St. 617-524-8810; tentables.net

LUNCH MONEY:

MATT MURPHY'S PUB, *Brookline*

At night, this no-frills Irish pub bustles with patrons who come for the pints and the live music. But at lunchtime, this friendly place is peaceful. For a ten-spot, the "Farmhouse Plate" will leave you full-bellied, with a generous mix of pâtés, spiced beef with fennel and applesauce, thick-cut Irish bacon, and pickled cabbage. Entrées: from \$14. 14 Harvard St. 617-232-0188; mattmurphyspub.com

PRICE CUTS:

JAMES JOSEPH STUDIO, *Boston*

Every last hair stylist and staffer knows his or her stuff backwards and forwards, whether that's refined color, stylish-but-workable cuts, conditioning treatments, or updos that will knock the socks off any date night. 168 Newbury St. 617-266-6600; jamesjosephstudio.com

and revelry—is reason enough to drop in for a drink here. But our favorite reason is the cocktails: mostly homages to the 1920s, in the form of everything from highballs and fizzes to slings, punches, juleps, and sours. 528 Commonwealth Ave. 617-532-9100; easternstandardboston.com

BEST ROMANTIC RESTAURANT:

L'ESPALIER, *Boston*

Reopened in a new space in the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, couples are dining—and wooing—in this romantic favorite more than ever. Chef Frank McClelland's exquisite menu of modern French/New England cuisine is *très magnifique*. Prix fixe: \$82. 774 Boylston St. 617-262-3023; lespalier.com

LODGING

BEST BOUTIQUE VENUE:

THE LIBERTY HOTEL, *Boston*

A jail-turned-hotel, in which everything cheekily refers to its former life? Once you're inside, it all works: the balcony-crowned lobby wrapping around the elevator entrance; the brick-walled rooms looking out to the city from epic windows; and the spectacular service. Rates: from \$295. 215 Charles St. 617-224-4000; libertyhotel.com

BEST CITY VIEW:

SUITES AT NINE ZERO, *Boston*

There are the five-star-worthy amenities, but if your accommodations offer floor-to-ceiling

windows, the real show is the extraordinary view across downtown Boston, over the Common, and on into Cambridge. Call for current rates. 90 Tremont St. 617-772-5800; ninezero.com

ATTRACTIONS

BEST SHOPPING EXPERIENCE:

THE ACHILLES PROJECT, *Boston*

It's a question for this age of multitasking: Why just shop, drink, or eat when you can do all three at once—and with such aplomb? This boutique-cum-bar/restaurant brings together superb fashion for men and women and equally superb food by chef Michael Leviton at Persephone. 283 Summer St. 617-423-2257 (retail), 617-695-2257 (restaurant); achilles-project.com

BEST CHILDREN'S CLOTHING:

THE RED WAGON, *Boston*

Find well-made outfits in fun colors that won't break the bank or fall apart after washing. Accessories are functional and irresistible, plus there's a thoughtful selection of books and toys. 69 Charles St. 617-523-9402; theredwagon.com

BEST FURNISHINGS STORE:

BLISS HOME, *Boston*

Tastes may vary from century to century, but Bliss spans almost all of them, seamlessly. Classics like Bernardaud fine china and Graves Limited Edition kettles flank modern marvels such as bamboo rugs and Ferruccio Laviani table lamps. 225 Newbury St. 617-421-5544; blisshome.com

BEST DAY SPA: BELLA SANTÉ, *Boston*

Why do we adore Bella Santé? Maybe it's the cossetting body treatments, the meticulous manicures and pedicures, the massages that end with nothing left of you but a human puddle, or the amenities-stocked locker room and healthy snacks and tea. Most probably, it's all of the above. 38 Newbury St. 617-424-9930; bellasante.com

BEST THEATER:

BOSTON OPERA HOUSE, *Boston*

This ornate jewel box of a theater spotlights popular musicals, legendary acts (*Lord of the Dance* is coming in May), and hipster bands, as well as family attractions and local traditions (such as Boston Ballet's beloved *Nutcracker*). Terrific acoustics. 539 Washington St. 617-259-3400; bostonoperahouse.com

BEST ANTIQUES: DANISH COUNTRY, *Boston*

This small Beacon Hill shop is crammed with a thoughtful mix of European and Asian pieces, hand-picked in Denmark and Sweden. If you're out Natick way, stop by Danish Country's sister store, Civilization, at 810 Worcester St. (Route 9); 508-650-1804. 138 Charles St. 617-227-1804; danishcountry.net, europeanstyleantiques.com

BEST BOOKSTORE:

BROOKLINE BOOKSMITH, *Brookline*

With an epic selection of used and new books, this impressively organized shop is the best place to kill an afternoon—flipping through the staff's always-excellent suggestions, perusing the comprehensive fiction and nonfiction section, or listening to a major author read. 279 Harvard St. 617-566-6660; brooklinebooksmith.com



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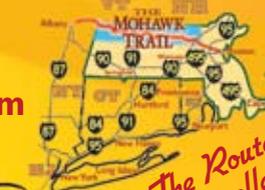
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