

National Baseball Hall of Fame: An American Tradition in Cooperstown, New York

by Sue Kulick, PassPorter Featured Columnist

There's nothing more American than baseball. Boys and girls alike dream of glorious long summer days, playing baseball in green parks, on Little League fields, or on America's streets and alleys. As adults, we love watching our team play their hearts out on the fields of America. We cheer the good calls and curse the bad ones. We wait for the first spring day to bring an opening game, and hope that our team plays until deep in October.

Nowhere is that American tradition felt more than [The National Baseball Hall of Fame](#) in Cooperstown, New York. Opened in 1939, the Hall of Fame is not only a place to honor baseball's greatest players, but a museum and education center designed to glorify the greatest American pastime, baseball!

From the moment you walk in, you know you are in a special place. You begin your experience on the second floor with a little of the history of Cooperstown itself. From there, you view a short film called, "The Baseball Experience." This is a 13-minute documentary that brings back memories of hot summer nights rooting for your favorite team.

After viewing the film, the real experience begins. You start out with a tribute to baseball's humble origins in the 19th century. Names like The Polo Grounds bring you back, and a baseball from the very first paid admission game -- in 1858 -- has a very special place.

You follow the baseball timeline through baseball's early years and early stars, and then arrive at the 20th century. Here, you will see familiar names and teams, and the history that goes with them. Babe Ruth has his own special exhibit. Look for a display celebrating the Brooklyn Dodgers. The Yankees are dubbed, "The Team of the Century." And each team's triumphs are celebrated.

A very special area is the "Diamond Dreams" area. This section chronicles the history of women in baseball. Remember, "A League of Their Own?" It wasn't just a movie; it was based on facts, and it's all documented here. In addition to the history of the AAGPBL (the All American Girls Professional Baseball League), stories on female owners, announcers, and minor league players are chronicled.

"Viva Baseball!" chronicles the history of baseball in the Caribbean Basin countries, and was opened in 2009. "Pride and Passion," is a salute to African-American baseball players from baseball's earliest days until today.

The last exhibit on the second floor is called "Today's Game," and features a locker for each current team. The lockers contain some recent artifacts from baseball's greatest current players. Find your team and enjoy!

You head up to the third floor next, where you enter "Sacred Grounds." I think this was one of my favorite places. Here, you are transported to the playing fields of yesterday and today. Pictures and memorabilia of stadiums old and new make this a very special exhibit. It truly is like walking on sacred ground. You'll leave here with a renewed sense of awe for the game, and in a very fitting segue, you will exit into the Hank Aaron exhibit. This exhibit is a wonderful tribute to a great player and a great man, perhaps the greatest player of all time.

Meander down the hall to the "Records" room. I was pleasantly surprised to see how many of my favorite team players were highlighted here. I bet you'll find a few favorites, too! And right out of there is the "Autumn Glory" display, highlighting the boys of October, including memories from recent World Series games. This is a great display, even more so if your team was in a recent World Series!

You'll pass through the baseball card display. The Hall of Fame teases you with the statement, "This is just a sampling of our collection," and if that's a sampling, I can only imagine what the whole collection must look like. Baseball cards that every collector would love to have, all protected and in nearly pristine condition!

From there, you head back down to the first floor. Now comes the moment you've been waiting for, the actual Hall of Fame. You walk into a huge foyer, graced with marble, to find the (currently) 289 Hall of Fame plaques gracefully displayed on the walls. They are sorted by the year the honorees were inducted, but each plaque is the same in size and stature. If a player served his country in the military, an insignia with his branch of service is hung under his Hall of Fame award.

You walk through this area, reading the names of the players that made baseball great. Roy Campanella, Willie Mays, Joe DiMaggio; the list goes on and on. It's a very nicely appointed hall, well suited to the glory of the great individuals who are honored here.

Admission to the Hall of Fame is \$16.50, with an AAA discount of \$2

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available. Parking is available in nearby lots, and trolleys will take you back and forth to town if the in-town parking lots are full. The museum store has lots of great souvenirs, and we found them reasonably priced. Allow at least three hours to see everything.

The Baseball Hall of Fame is a must-do for baseball fans of all ages. Take a day to see it…you'll be glad you did!

About The Author: Sue Kulick is a resident of the Pocono Mountains and an avid Disney fan. She and her husband, Steve, live in a log home with their Golden Retrievers, Cody and Belle and their cat Tigger.

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