



BOSTON BRAINIACS

See the city's Top 10 cerebral hot spots – no baseball included

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INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS

Flirt with a robot, explore museums devoted to science or check out the acts at a geek comedy night: Boston knows how to appeal to your inner nerd **PAGE 4**

THE CITY

Why brainiacs love Boston

Check out these Top 10 geeky hot spots to soak in the city's remarkable scientific and technological achievements

JUDITH RITTER BOSTON

Without a doubt, Boston is an incredible place to catch a World Series game or an Original Six NHL matchup. But the Hub, as locals call it, isn't just for sports fans.

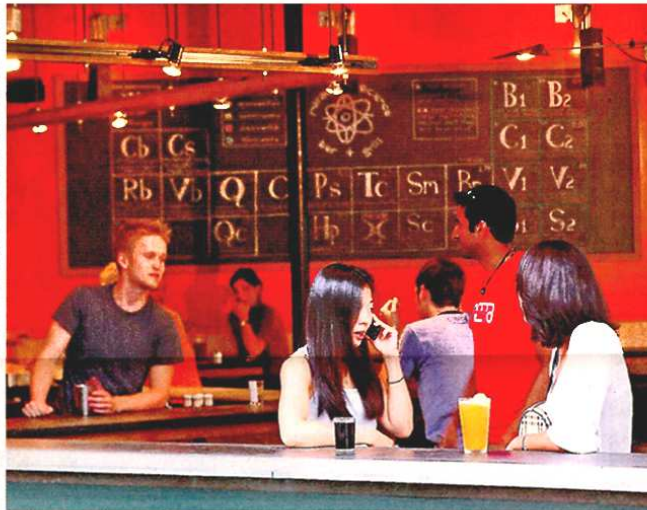
The city is also an ideal holiday spot for left-brain cerebrals. For centuries, Bostonians have been busy measuring time, mapping the solar system and researching reflexes. Technicolor, PET scans, video games, e-mail and even Facebook all owe something to this place.

Here are 10 geeky sights to appeal to the nerd in all of us.

HISTORY MAKERS

The Putnam Gallery in Harvard's Science Center houses the fascinating **Harvard Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments**. Each display of scientific apparatus and instruments offers a glimpse of the ingenuity and technology behind innovations from physics to psychology. Check out the 18th-century brass-and-wood instruments used to study the solar system, and precision clocks that measure minutes so precisely that, according to museum director Jean-François Gauvin, Boston "time" was sought after by railways and ports. 1 Oxford St., Cambridge; 617-495-2779

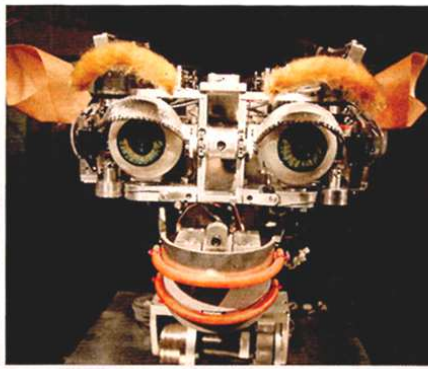
The year-old Massachusetts General Hospital's **Russell Museum of Medical History and Innovation** celebrates Boston's medical trailblazing. The copper-clad building, with slate stairs and glass walls, is breathtaking. Exhibits include a model of a Boston-invented artificial hip and a showcase of work by Canadian-American Jack Szostak, a Mass General doctor who won the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. The highlight is the adjacent Ether Dome, a 19th-century operating amphitheatre where ether (a popular party drug of the day) was first used in a public surgery. 2 North Grove St.; massgeneral.org/museum



IF YOU GO

To keep with the brainy theme, stay at the **Eliot Hotel**. It was originally built as housing for Harvard professors by the family of Charles Eliot, the university's president from 1869 to 1909. The luxe hotel also has one of Boston's most well-known restaurants, Clio, which is famous for – what else? – molecular gastronomy. Located by the Harvard Alumni Club, it's walking distance from all Boston sights. Rates start at \$300 (U.S.) 370 Commonwealth Ave., 617-267-1607, eliothotel.com.

At the **Miracle of Science** restaurant, left, diners order from a **Periodic Table of Elements** menu. Below, the MIT Museum is home to the retired robot **Kismet**. PHOTOS: LEFT, JUDITH RITTER; BELOW: BILL GREENE/THE BOSTON GLOBE



STARRY SKIES

While there is an active chapter of **Geeks Who Drink** (a popular pub trivia night; geeksworldrink.com), an alternative evening activity is a stop at the **Coit Observatory** to spot some globular clusters. Of course, you can come for the views any time of day. Not everyone wants an astronomy lesson, observatory curator Quinn Sykes says. "A few have come just to look at the moon, and there was one marriage proposal." 725 Commonwealth Ave.; 617-353-2630

ROBOTS

At the **MIT Museum**, the **Robots and Beyond** gallery is dedicated to artificial intelligence. Visitors can meet several retired robots, including the swimming **RoboTuna**; the social **Kismet**, with a strangely precise humanoid facial expression; **Slinky-playing Cog**; and insect-like **Attila**, after which the **Mars Rover Sojourner** was patterned. 265 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge; web.mit.edu/museum

DNA

The ultramodern **Broad Institute** is a hub of genome sequencing, chemical biology and genetic analysis with a humble goal of understanding life at a molecular level (well, that's the lay version). The first-floor lobby, the **DNATrium**, has interactive videos of researchers who chat with visitors about genotypes and single nucleotides. Most fun is the display of machines that do the work of genomic research. 7 Cambridge Center, Cambridge; broadinstitute.org

CLUBHOUSE

On the waterfront, **District Hall** is touted as "the world's first freestanding public innovation centre." Conceived as a social hub for the innovation economy's talent, the hall hosts day and night demonstrations of new technologies and start-up showcases (schedules on the website). District Hall's restaurant, the **Gather**, overlooks the harbour and is open 20 hours a day to fuel all-night brainstorming sessions. 75 Northem Ave., districthallboston.org

COMPUTERS

The **Digital Den**, an archive of hardware and software from the personal computing era, is a must-see for devoted digital lovers. Soon to be a museum, the Den pays homage to vintage computing with a comprehensive collection of PC and Mac personal computers, including their operating systems and software. You'll find extensive examples of hypertext and game

software. 134 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge; 617-547-8180, visit by appointment; digital-den.org

FOOD

Robots don't eat, but the people who make them do, so you'll find myriad places to refuel and strike up awkward conversations that just might lead to a multi-million dollar start-up. One place where Samba isn't a dance and Java isn't coffee is **Miracle of Science**, walking distance from MIT. The blackboard menu is laid out like the periodic table (Hb is hamburger, Cb is cheeseburger). Photos of Einstein and Polaroid co-founder Edwin Land adorn the walls. 321 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, miracleofscience.us

NIGHTLIFE

The official **Nerd Nite** is the last Monday of each month at **Middlesex Lounge**. With the catchy marketing phrase, "Be there and be square," Nerd Nite attracts a host of scientists, engineers and math types to think and drink. Talks cover topics from cephalopod intelligence to comics. It's "a good place to bring a date," organizer Tim Sullivan says. Brainy lounge lizards might like to dress to the 9.99999s because on other nights Middlesex is a sexy space with excellent deejays. 315 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge; bostonnerdnite.com

SHOWS

Bi-monthly **Geek Comedy Nights** (geekcomedy.com) have algorithm crunchers, physicists and programmers rolling in the aisles at jokes about infinity, robotics and punctuation. "In a city like this, where things are always being discovered, topics like these are hilarious," says event organizer Kevin Harrington, who works in a stem-cell and regenerative biology lab. **ImprovBoston** (improvboston.com) serves the same demographic with parodies of cult games such as **Dorks** and **Dungeons** and **Magic: The Gathering**.

GAMES

At the **Compleat Strategist**, self-described nerds such as Christian Dely – whose day-job is researching high-throughput DNA sequencing at Harvard – blows off steam playing board games such as **Agricola** (a supposedly fun time that involves "worker placement" and "resource management"). The cramped clubhouse is always busy, manager Mike Horne says. "You have some of the smartest people in America in Boston. It's that simple." 657 Commonwealth Ave., thecompletestrategist.com

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