

History's new home

New Stadium mixes classic touches, modern luxury

By BRIAN COSTELLO

ON your first journey to the new Yankee Stadium, make sure you don't stumble. It would be easy to lose your balance as you walk with head raised and jaw dropped, gazing at the team's new palace like a tourist in Times Square.

The \$1.5 billion stadium feels equal parts, museum, luxury resort and home to the most successful franchise in North American professional sports.

It has the opulence of a 21st-century arena, but also enough touches of nostalgia to bring you back to your first trip to the ballpark in The Bronx whether that was in 1958, 1978 or 1998.

"We tried to rebuild Yankee Stadium in the modern era," said Lonnie Trost, the Yankees' chief operating officer, who grew

up with the pre-remodeled Yankee Stadium. "I wanted to marry the two — the old and the new. In the '70s, they rebuilt it, but they didn't rebuild Yankee Stadium. It was critical to put back the frieze, to put back the auxiliary scoreboard, yet open the concourses, create the amenities the fans wanted."

Everything about the new Stadium feels bigger and better than its predecessor still standing across 161st Street. In part, that's because it is larger — 63-percent larger. The tunnel that stretches underneath the stands goes a full mile around.

The Stadium has reminders of the old place such as a cutout in right field to see the elevated train rumbling by. It also has reminders of the way the Stadium originally looked, most notably the frieze that rings the grandstand. When your eyes shift lower, you're reminded it's 2009, not 1939, by the high-definition ribbon

scoreboard that rings the middle deck.

There are hidden treasures around every corner of the Stadium and it will take hours to explore it. The Yankees are opening the gates three hours before first pitch this season. Our advice is to get there early.

Things to look for

Yankees fans should hope for some 10-run leads so they can explore the Stadium.

The place to start is the Great Hall. Located between Gate 4 and Gate 6, this is a wide-open space through which most fans will enter. Two-sided banners hang from the outer wall, with players from the first part of the 20th century on one side and legends of a more recent vintage on the other.

No visit to Yankee Stadium is complete without a trip to Monument Park, and the Yankees moved it back to its rightful place in center field. The plaques and monuments look right at home between the two bullpens.

Monument Park isn't the only place for Yankees history anymore. The team museum is located in right field. The displays will change periodically, but a few features will stay. The coolest is in the center of the room — a signature wall that stretches between bronze statues of Don Larsen and Yogi Berra. The wall has signatures from Yankees new and old — even Joe Torre. On the other side of the wall are more than 700 baseballs autographed by nearly everyone who ever wore a Yankee uniform (one row has Mickey Mantle on top of Morgan Ensberg). A computer will help you find the player you're looking for.

The museum is also the new

home of Thurman Munson's locker, preserved after the catcher's death in 1979.

There are classic photos of Yankees throughout the Stadium, but two worth seeking out are one of Berra near Gate 8 that shows some of his famous quotes on a video board over it, and one of Lou Gehrig near Gate 4 delivering his famous speech, a recording of which plays repeatedly from the display.

Between the lines

For those who thought Yankee Stadium should not be messed with, the good news is while the team tinkered with everything else, it left the field alone for the most part.

The only dimension that changed is the distance from home plate to the backstop,

Suites

If you're looking for luxury and your wallet can handle it, you've come to the right place.

The new Stadium features 61 luxury and party suites. The luxury suites cost between \$600,000-\$850,000, and you get indoor and outdoor seating, a private bathroom, access to the Suite Lounge, a private entrance, preferred parking and food and beverages.

The Yankees also have a ton of premium-priced tickets located in the 25 sections closest to the field known as the Legends Suite. These seats range between \$375-\$2,625 and you get in-seat food and beverage service plus access to the bi-level Legends Suite Club behind home plate, which has chefs making made-to-order meals, bars and even TVs in the bathroom mirrors. There are two smaller lounges located in left and right field, too.

Or if you want to get some which was shortened from 72 feet to 49 feet.

As you walk into the seating bowl from Gate 4, the Stadium feels the same as the old one. The short porch is still in right field while a center-field home run is still a blast.

The Yankees brought back auxiliary scoreboards in left and right field, a touch of the original building.

Monument Park is back in center field,

although it's behind the wall (too much nostalgia is not a good thing). Since it is directly in center field, shades will lower during the game to cover the plaques and prevent reflections that could distract the batter.

Above it all in center field is a high-definition scoreboard more than twice the size of the old one.

Fan experience

Trost calls Yankee Stadium a "living museum." Think of it as the Louvre of baseball.

While the old Stadium had its history and its charm, many things about it were outdated. The move across the street was like a journey through time. Now fans can enjoy wireless access at their seats, they can roam around wide concourses and never miss any of the action.

Or they can watch the game on one of the 1,400 TVs scattered throughout the building. The Yankees have made moving around the building simpler with six escalators, 16 elevators and 81 staircases. The entry gates are wider and, aesthetically, the Yankees tried to cover every exposed pipe or beam.

Seats

While there are plenty of premium seats located near the field, the best seats in the house are in center field. The Bleachers Café Seats are located above the batter's eye and in front of the Bleachers Café. They sit in dead center field and give a unique view of the action for \$125 a ticket.

One thing noticeably different from the old stadium is the absence of the "black seats." There is no more room for unused real estate. The new batter's eye is a sports bar.

The bleachers are pushed back a little bit but have more amenities. You can access the entire stadium

from the bleachers now and the Bleacher Café is a nice touch. Seats in the bleachers are \$5-\$14 with the \$5 tickets coming with an obstructed view.

The upper deck has been renamed the grandstand and seats up there are affordable (\$20-\$30) and have good views.

The non-premium tickets range from \$5-\$325 with 80 percent below \$100, Trost said.

Food

The philosophy for the Yankees when

it came to food was simple — they wanted to offer fans more options in more places. The result is a bevy of choices and the hope of short lines.

The new Stadium has 25 permanent concessions stands and 125 portable locations, offering everything from old favorites such as Cracker Jack to newcomers such as garlic fries.

There are two food courts and even a butcher shop in left field where fans can watch the Lobel's of New York butchers preparing steaks, or buy a steak sandwich from a cart nearby.

There are bars to hit like the martini bar near home plate and the sports bar in the center field batter's eye (accessible to field-level seat ticketholders or by purchasing a membership). There is the Bleachers Café above that, so the creatures don't have to starve.

If you feel like a sit-down meal, there are Hard Rock Café in right field and NYY Steak, both of which will stay open year-round. The NYY Steak has the signatures of retired Yankees adorning the walls and a view of the Great Hall.

NY Y STEAK

Surf and turf (petite filet mignon, roasted lobster tail)

Bone in veal filet

Porterhouse (28 oz.)

New York strip (20 oz.)

HARD ROCK CAFE

Hard Rock's Legendary

Certified Angus beef

10 oz. burger \$10.50 and up

Nachos Starting at \$8.50

Hickory smoked

pulled-pork sandwich... \$9.50

Hickory smoked

BBQ ribs..... \$18.00

Hurricane (cocktail, includes

souvenir glass) \$14.00

AROUND THE BALLPARK

Regular hot dog \$5

Pretzel \$4.50

Soda (12 oz.) \$3

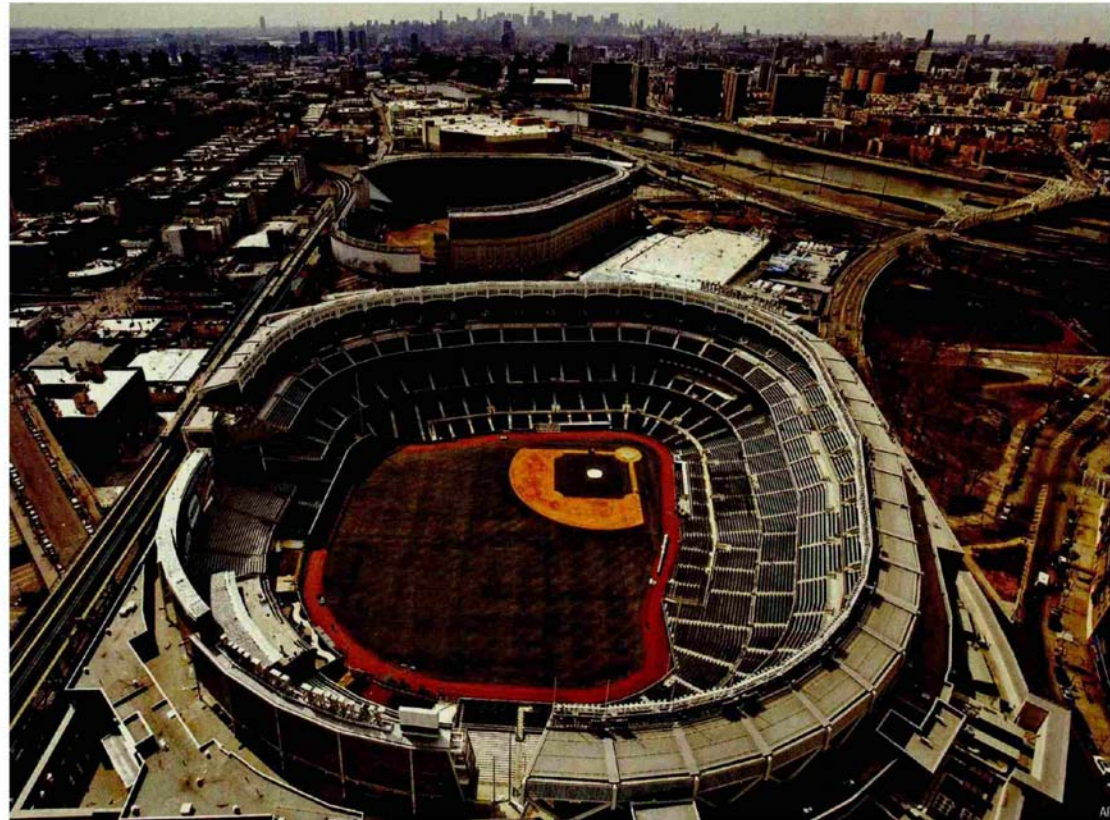
Beer (12 oz.) \$6

Regular hot dog & 12 oz.

soda combo \$6

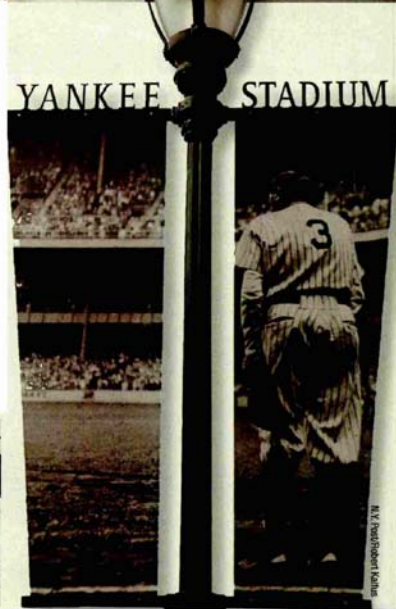
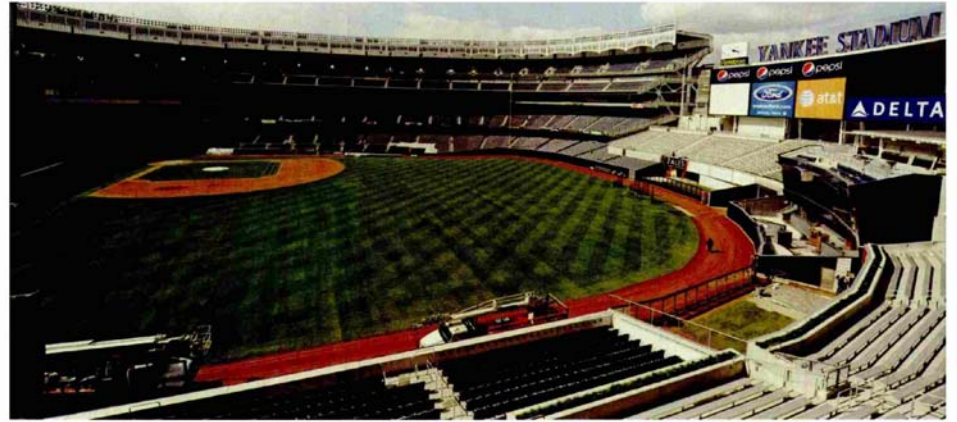
Regular hot dog & 12 oz.

beer combo \$9





View of the Great Hall from NYY Steak restaurant



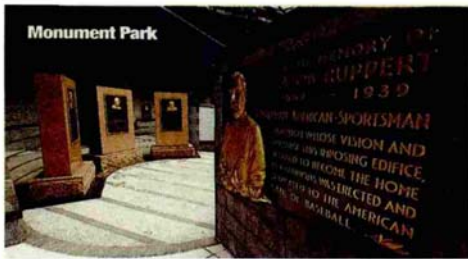
Bronze Don Larsen statue in museum.



Photos by Charles Wenzelberg, N.Y. Post

business done before the game, the Yankees built a conference center with state-of-the-art technology in right field with party suites adjacent to it.

Seats outside a luxury suite



Yankees clubhouse

The fans were not the only ones the Yankees had in mind when laying out the new Stadium. To call the new clubhouse colossal is like calling a hurricane a light breeze.

Every comfort a player could want has been thought of and built here.

"We can't hit the ball for them," Trost said. "We can only give players everything they need to improve."

The clubhouse stretches from home plate to right field and features things such as storage lockers for their bats, a massage room, a room for the mental-conditioning coach, a private dressing area hidden from the press, a large weight room, a dining room with chefs operating out of a restaurant-sized kitchen, meeting rooms and a lounge area.

Spanning slightly less than 30,000 square feet, the clubhouse also has a huge training room and hot tubs, cold tubs and an X-ray room. The team trainers can walk below the floor to watch through a window as players run on an underwater treadmill.

Joe Girardi's office has a private area for him to meet with the media and a tiny locker built for his son.

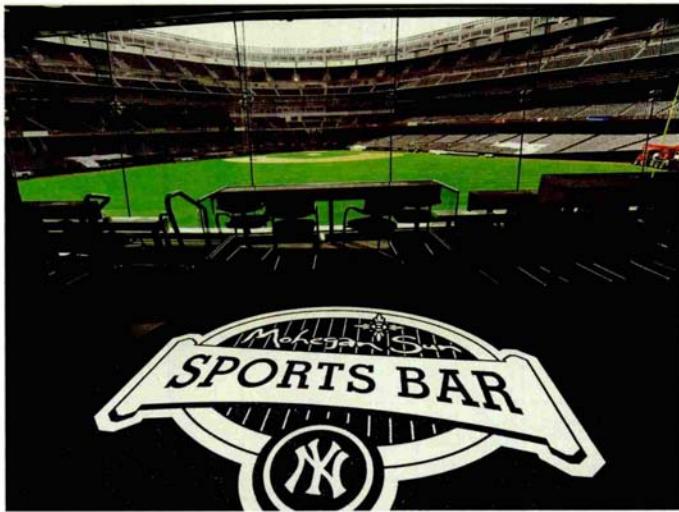
The actual locker room area is a huge oval with leather furniture and large wooden lockers which will include computers that give players access to team information. Derek Jeter's is already picked out in the corner farthest from the entrance.

The dugout has heat and air conditioning and batting cages, a swing area and a video room are just behind it.





Padded seats in the Legends Suite.



At the plate

Here's a look at some of the food fans will be eating at the new Yankee Stadium this season:

NY Y STEAK

- Surf and turf (petite filet mignon, roasted lobster tail) \$54.75
- Bone in veal filet \$44.50
- Porterhouse (28 oz.) \$54.75
- New York strip (20 oz.) \$52.75



HARD ROCK CAFE

- Hard Rock's Legendary Certified Angus beef 10 oz. burger \$10.50 and up
- Nachos Starting at \$8.50

- Hickory smoked pulled-pork sandwich ... \$9.50
- Hickory smoked BBQ ribs \$18.00
- Hurricane (cocktail, includes souvenir glass) \$14.00



AROUND THE BALLPARK

- Regular hot dog \$5
- Pretzel \$4.50
- Soda (12 oz.) \$3
- Beer (12 oz.) \$6
- Regular hot dog & 12 oz. soda combo \$6
- Regular hot dog & 12 oz. beer combo \$9



Legends Suite Club



Ketel One Lounge under right-field stands

