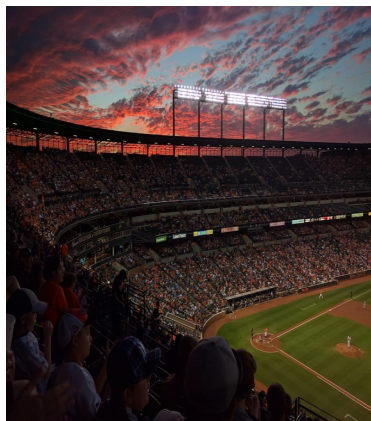


Baltimore's Best By Alex Laubach



Oriole Park Skyline.

“Oriole Park at Camden Yards makes for a truly breathtaking fieldtrip that is an absolute must for every Loyola student.”



Keith Allison,
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/keithallison/8918202788>

Regardless of where you're from, what sports you love, and how much spare change you have randomly sprawled in your coat pockets and bookbags, Oriole Park at Camden Yards makes for a truly breathtaking fieldtrip that is an absolute must for every Loyola student. Just a mere five miles south from Loyola's quiet Evergreen Campus, you will find yourself sitting comfortably in the spacious olive-green seats at the ballpark after a simple twenty-minute drive downtown towards the Inner Harbor. Oriole Park, built over a former railroad center by the name of Camden Yards, was completed in 1992 with the revolutionary goal of combining an old-school baseball-stadium feel, such as Wrigley Field in Chicago and Fenway Park in Boston, with several modern-day amenities that lure even the meekest fans of the sport in for an evening (Schmuck). With all 46,000 seats providing picturesque

views, there isn't one spot in the incongruously shaped stadium that you could find that wouldn't portray the maroon-brown color of the refurbished brick warehouse in right field, or the diminishing orange-and-red Baltimore sunset fading slowly over the park's left field side. Complimenting this is the solid red lettering of the Hilton hotel sign paired with the colossal charcoal grey building it gives identity to, evoking an astonishingly satisfying view when looking straight past the ivy-covered center field batter's eye. Some would say it makes the space feel enclosed, complete, even cozy: like home. But there is much more to Oriole Park at Camden Yards than just a great view.

If sightseeing isn't your thing, Camden Yards already has a different kind of allure – the same one that brings thousands of youth and adults alike to the venue every year. On

her way to downtown Baltimore with her family, fifteen-year-old Maryland resident Ava Laubach is prepared for the heat. Shorts and a t-shirt with an Orioles ballcap sum up the attire on a ninety-degree day in midsummer Maryland for a fan who might not know more than three players on her so called “favorite” team. But the sport of baseball isn't what allows her to tolerate her family's annual trips to the park every year. She asserts without guilt, “My favorite part of the game is the minute maid.” This item, commonly known as frozen Minute Made lemonade, is reminiscent of a regular or strawberry lemonade-flavored drink that is served frozen solid in a cup and accompanied by a plastic spoon – perfect for a day or evening plagued by blistering heat. Vendors transport it through the crowds, followed in similar suit with delicacies like pink and blue cotton candy,

buttered popcorn, salted peanuts, and ice-cold sodas and beer. Inside the stadium, however, sits a whole new, unique realm of ballpark food. Crab mac-and-cheese hot dogs, All-American cheeseburgers, Motor City chili dogs, Crab dip-smothered waffle fries, hand rolled "O"-shaped soft pretzels, and bacon on a stick highlight a marathon's length of soul food that makes you forget your need to trudge back to your car after the game concludes. With hundreds of vendors throughout the three levels of the concourse, it may be a challenge to find your match. Boog's Barbeque, named after an Oriole's hall of famer, is located on Eutaw Street just beyond the right field flag court while sitting directly beneath the glimmering red warehouse. It provides a one stop shop for pit beef, barbeque, and smoked pork sandwiches ("Ballpark"). The Chipper is another hot spot, selling freshly cooked kettle chips loaded with options like crab meat, scallions and Old Bay seasoning (a Baltimore favorite), or a heaping portion of buffalo chicken topped with blue cheese (K, Courtney). And for those just looking for the consistent, recognizable meals, chicken tenders with fries and plain hot dogs are always in abundance. Dippin' Dots and soft serve ice cream finish the Camden Yards experience of a five-course meal and will perfectly wrap up a memory-filled day or night with your friends or family.

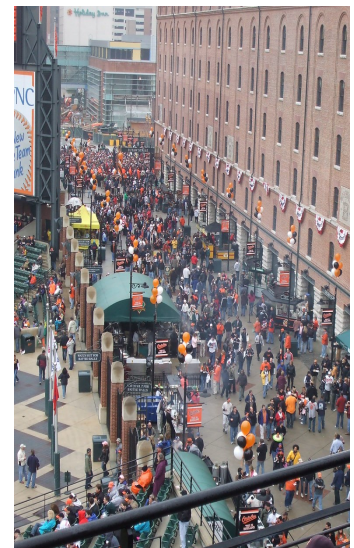
Earlier, I mentioned the fact that you could head to Camden Yards with a little spare change. Whereas I wish this was a legitimate case, a

single twenty-dollar bill, in all reality, will guarantee you at least one, if not two, tickets on any given weekday night. And on Fridays, present your student ID to the ticket booth, and you can receive an upper deck ticket in left field for just ten bucks (Loyola may offer an even cheaper price – be sure to check). Go on a Friday, and in addition to a livelier crowd, you will see post-game fireworks shot sky-high from the center field batter's eye. All for ten dollars! And if you are still fretting over money (what college students aren't on a budget?), you can bring cheap snacks and drinks right into the stadium, as the park has one of the most fan friendly food and drink policies in Major League Baseball.

But amazing pictures, mouth-watering food, and dirt-cheap tickets still aren't all that Camden Yards has to offer. Eutaw Street, the lengthy pathway stretching from the end of the warehouse beyond center field all the way to the right field foul pole, is a Camden Yards specialty. Stroll down it once and you will see The Babe Ruth Museum, commemorating sports legends of Baltimore, along with numerous souvenir shops packed with thousands of vivid orange and white shirts plastered with last names and cartoon birds. Also included are restaurants like Dempsey's Pub, which totes a bright orange sign connected to the warehouse overhead that can be seen from either end of the brick and stone paved street. As you continue your stroll, looking beneath you will reveal hundreds off flattened bronze, baseball-sized plaques



Crab mac-and-cheese hot dog, Oriole Park at Camden Yards.



Eutaw Street at Camden Yards. Gavin St. Ours, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/gavinmusic/2435610967>



Clancy the beer man.
Austin Kirk,
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/aukirk/8041597653>

"From 'Fancy' Clancy the beer man, a thirty-year stadium vendor who entertains fans with fancy beer pouring techniques and decline pushups on the stairs, to the endless entertainment, beauty, and culture Camden Yards has to offer, it is no surprise that the park has been ranked the best experience in baseball for three straight years."



The Oriole Bird dances with a fan. Keith Allison,
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/keithhallison/5714546359>

that recognize every homerun from any player ever hit at Camden Yards that wound up landing on Eutaw. And when you enter or leave the park through this street, make sure to catch a glimpse of the life-sized number statues that memorialize Oriole legends and their corresponding bronze statues standing elegantly in the center field picnic area.

With all these attractions, it may be easy for casual fans to forget the game itself. Even if you don't watch much baseball, the center field video board constantly involves fans with playful activities in between innings such as the crab shuffle, kiss cam, and an animated hot dog race highlighting a trip around Baltimore with competitive fans placing verbal bets on the winner between ketchup, mustard, and relish. The seventh inning stretch, a baseball tradition, is laden with the organ version of "take me out to the ballgame" followed by the John Denver song, "Thank God I'm a Country Boy" that

prompts the Oriole mascot, a cartoon oriole bird with a massive head and hat, to dance folk style with a female fan on top of the Oriole's dugout. Simply put, a day or night at Camden Yards will result in a trip of never-ending fun and relaxed enjoyment that will simultaneously enhance your knowledge of the culture here in Baltimore, and it is absolutely worth it.

From "Fancy" Clancy the beer man, a thirty-year stadium vendor who entertains fans with fancy beer pouring techniques and decline pushups on the stairs, to the endless entertainment, beauty, and culture Camden Yards has to offer, it is no surprise that the park has been ranked the best experience in baseball for three straight years (Meoli). Sarah Fitzhenry, a local college student, proclaimed "It's always fun, and an added bonus if you're a fan of the sport. They have good food and the stadium itself is just beautiful. It's probably one of the best things about it." Ava Lau-

bach, the passionate frozen lemonade lover but with little of the same feeling towards baseball, even offered up her most memorable moment at Camden Yards: "We sat behind a few Yankee fans who were generous enough to give me a foul ball, since I was pretty young at the time. It was from an Orioles player, one of my brother's favorites. He stole it from me and never gave it back." As her brother, I can confirm this is true. And, realistically I suppose, not all trips to the yard can be happy endings for everyone. But it's never short of amazing for me.



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