

TRAVEL + LEISURE

March 2004

Mass Appeal

Just over the Charles River from Boston is the most vibrant small town—or the most intimate city—in America: Cambridge, transformed. BY PETER JON LINDBERG



SHOPPING At the well-curated design boutique **Abodeon** (1731 Mass. Ave.; 617/497-0137), handwritten labels explain the provenance of each piece: furniture and tabletop items from Design House Stockholm, Iittala, and Georg Jensen; bright orange vintage Krenit bowls from Denmark; serving trays fashioned out of salvaged highway signs. • A collection of outlandish bicycles is a highlight of **Absolutely Fabulous** (1309 Cambridge St.; 617/864-0656), a great new antiques shop in Inman Square. Owner Mara Loeber seeks out chic vintage clothing, classic European prints, and furniture and glassware from almost every era, selling them at a minimal markup. • Another Inman gem, **J. Austin Antiques** (1361 Cambridge St.; 617/234-4444) specializes in Arts and Crafts and Stickley furniture, with handsomely restored pieces such as a Mission drop-front desk for \$400. • **Reside** (266 Concord Ave.; 617/547-2929) stocks Mid-Century Modern furnishings that you won't find reproduced in the Design Within Reach catalogue: beautiful George Nakashima chairs and mint-condition pieces by Alvar Aalto.

Only in Cambridge 5 Things Not to Miss

The breathtaking sculptures of Arthur Ganson are reason enough to visit the **MIT Museum** (265 Mass. Ave.; 617/253-4444). Another: the hilarious photos of student pranks. • Harvard's **Fogg Art Museum** (32 Quincy St.; 617/495-9400), which surrounds a lovely courtyard, is strong on Renaissance and Impressionist works and on Sargent and Whistler. • **Charles River Canoe & Kayak** (617/965-5110; www.paddleboston.com), across the river in Allston, provides rentals and tours along the Charles. • Founded in 1831, the **Mount Auburn Cemetery** (580 Mount Auburn St.; 617/547-7105), with 175 acres of ponds, hills, and gardens, is more park than graveyard, though 93,000 people are buried here. • The **Brattle Theater** (40 Brattle St.; 617/876-6837) remains the model for repertory houses, screening cult classics, foreign films, and current indies.



The headquarters of the notorious Harvard Lampoon, above. Left: Danish delights at Abodeon.

NIGHTLIFE A crop of new bars has sprouted in the burgeoning, yet-to-be-named area between Porter and Harvard Squares. (HarPort? PoHaSqua?) Yuppies and students reared on *Sex and the City* congregate at the **West Side Lounge** (1680 Mass. Ave.; 617/441-5566) or the larger **Temple Bar** (1688 Mass. Ave.; 617/547-5055), both sleeker and sexier than your average Cambridge nightspot.

• There are two incentives to cram into the candlelit bar at nearby **Chez Henri** (1 Shepard St.; 617/354-8980; dinner for two \$100):

FAST FACT
#1
Rank of
Cambridge
among
U.S. cities in
concentration
of homes worth
more than
\$1 million

one is the deftly mixed mojito, the other is the Cuban sandwich. Both have achieved mythical status. • Funky down-market bars are going the way of \$700-a-month studios here, which is what makes the **B-Side Lounge** (92

Hampshire St.; 617/354-0766) such a find. The faux-dive interior may be as self-conscious as the cans of Schlitz at the bar, but the clientele is too cool to care.

• On any given night at the **Middle East** (472-480 Mass. Ave.; 617/864-3278), in grungy Central Square, a trance DJ, a belly dancer, an indie-rock band, and an Afrobeat collective might all perform in separate rooms. • A multi-ethnic crowd slinks into the Moroccan-themed **Enormous Room** (567 Mass. Ave.; 617/491-5550) in Central Square to recline on silk pillows and dance to moody electronica. It's the sultry, sophisticated lounge this city never had, never expected. Welcome to Cambridge, version 2004. +

Herman Miller, Dunbar, and Knoll. • And, of course, this town has a few bookshops. Seamus Heaney and Robert Pinsky are among the regulars at the musty, dusty **Grolier Poetry Book Shop** (6 Plympton St.; 617/547-4648), the oldest continuous poetry bookstore in America. • At the 72-year-old **Harvard Book Store** (1256 Mass. Ave.; 617/661-1515), the employee picks are actually compelling and the window displays worth looking at.



Vintage paperbacks at the Harvard Book Store.