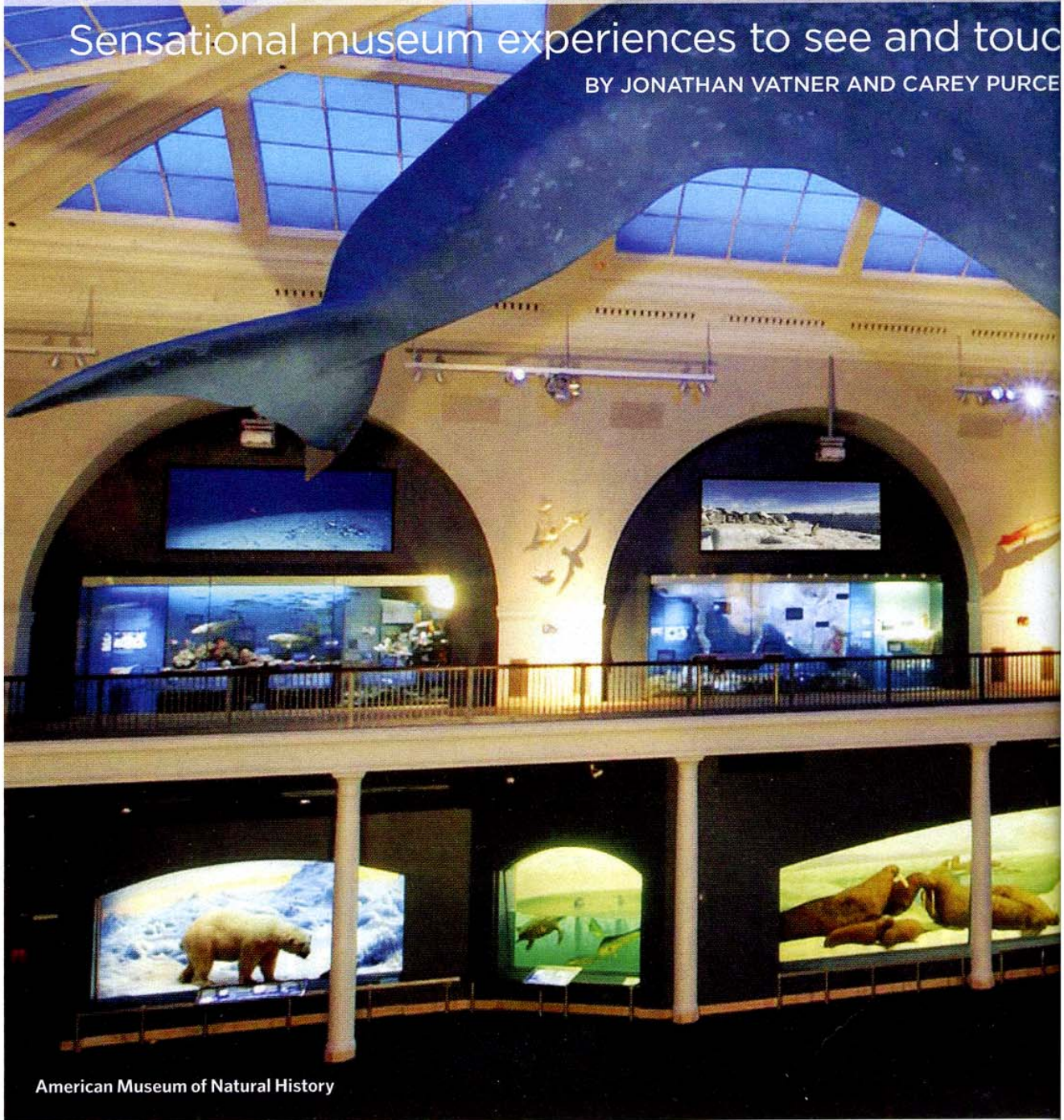


Essential

Sensational museum experiences to see and touch

BY JONATHAN VATNER AND CAREY PURCE



American Museum of Natural History

Exhibits

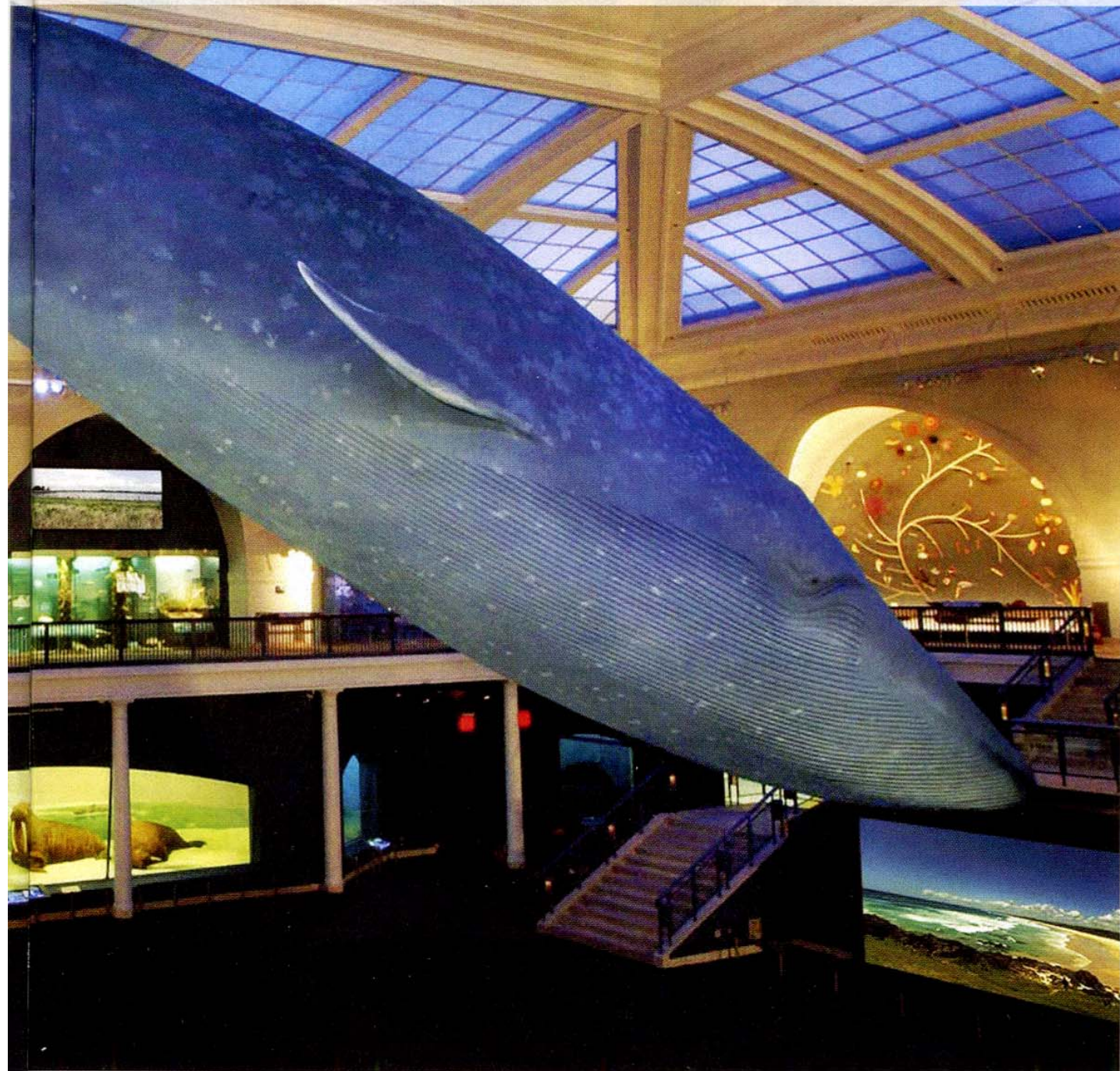


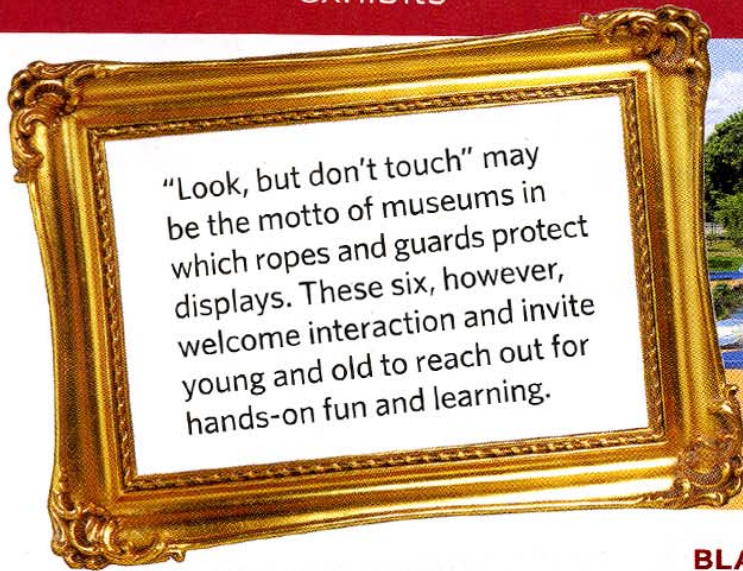
PHOTO: AMNH/D. FINNIN

www.wheretraveler.com

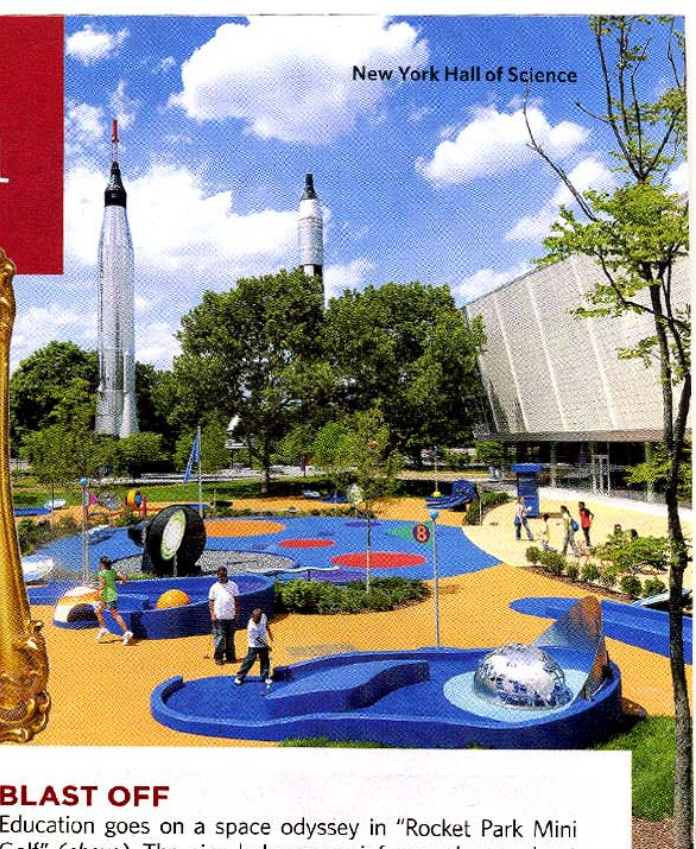
17

Must-Touch

exhibits



"Look, but don't touch" may be the motto of museums in which ropes and guards protect displays. These six, however, welcome interaction and invite young and old to reach out for hands-on fun and learning.



New York Hall of Science

GO BEHIND BARS

Playing Cops and Robbers takes on a new meaning at this museum, where visitors can pose for mug shots in a lineup and test out police-car sirens. After standing behind authentic jail-cell bars and viewing Al Capone's tommy gun and bank robber Willie Sutton's lock-picking kit, a very inspired game might ensue. **New York City Police Museum**, 100 Old Slip, btw Water & South sts., 1.212.480.3100

ROCK THE BOAT

It's all hands on deck aboard the USS *Intrepid*, a Navy aircraft carrier that saw 24 years of active service before becoming a floating museum. Guests can "Take the Helm" and pretend to command the ship using the original equipment, climb a cargo net, enter the cockpit of a fighter plane and more. **Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum**, Pier 86, 12th Ave., at W. 46th St., 1.212.245.0072

BLAST OFF

Education goes on a space odyssey in "Rocket Park Mini Golf" (above). The nine-hole course informs players about the science behind launching a rocket, and each hole mimics a different stage of intergalactic travel, from liftoff to splash-down. Afterward, participants can visit the "Search for Life Beyond Earth" exhibit and compare conditions on Earth and Mars by touching models that replicate the temperatures of both planets. **New York Hall of Science**, 47-01 111th St., Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens, 1.718.699.0005

DRIVE A BUS

Ever wonder what it would be like to sit behind the wheel of a Big Apple bus? In the "On the Streets" gallery, passengers move up to the driver's seat on two full-size city buses. In another gallery, they can board vintage subway cars dating from 1907 through the 1960s. Everyone exits through old-fashioned turnstiles. **New York Transit Museum**, Boerum Pl. & Schermerhorn St., Brooklyn, 1.718.694.1600

TRACE THE FAMILY TREE

The database of the American Family Immigration History Center contains ancestral records for more than 40 percent of Americans. Visitors can access the database and research their forefathers' arrival in the New World. Elsewhere in the museum, they can test their knowledge of American history by answering questions from the U.S. citizenship test. **Ellis Island Immigration Museum**, Ellis Island, New York Harbor, 1.877.523.9849



Children's Museum of Manhattan

FEED A DRAGON

Deciding where to start in the "PlayWorks" exhibit is difficult. Here children learn about reading and writing by feeding letters to Alphie, the talking dragon (left), build a block fortress or help paint a mural on an art wall. The "Adventures With Dora and Diego" display exercises young problem-solving skills. **Children's Museum of Manhattan**, 212 W. 83rd St., btw Amsterdam Ave. & Broadway, 1.212.721.1223