

Nick and Choose {NICK ALTSCHULLER}

SUSPENDED DISBELIEF

Boston, from a bird's-eye view



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IN 1986, MY FAMILY WENT ON vacation to Hawaii. Thumbing through the photo album, it's clear we had adventures, but I remember little beyond the helicopter ride. It had everything a seven-year-old could ask for: classical music pumped into ill-fitting headphones, exciting views blocked by my father's towering frame, a nauseated sister turning green in the adjacent seat. It's not my fondest memory, but the adrenalized atmosphere did make an impression. Now whenever I hear Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries," obstructed snapshots of majestic waterfalls and volcanoes hover in my mind.

Brothers Christian and Matthew Nowosiadly have brought that experience to Boston. The two software businessmen happen to be aviation geeks (the back of Matthew's SUV is crammed with RC airplanes), and it's their belief that a helicopter tour is what's needed to propel our city into the stratosphere of the elites, joining such heavenly destinations as Indianapolis, Des Moines and that arbiter of class, Branson, Mo.

Currently, the Nowosiadlys' infrastructure is humbler than their sky-high ambition. Stationed between a tool shop and a dog kennel in Revere, the helipad for Now City Tours, Inc., is a sun-cracked patch of asphalt left over from an abandoned oil rig project. Inside a square of chain-link sits their office, which consists of a folding table under a small collapsible canopy tent (the kind used for bake sales and industrious tailgates). Outside the fence stands a smattering of dry-docked boats, including a shabby Grady-White named "Master Baiter." Matthew jokingly refers to the motif as "rustic New England."

The swampland and gaping gray quarry of Revere look pretty rustic from the air, too, but what you're reminded of when the helicopter begins to levitate is that your perspective on a subject always depends on your angle.

Now City Tours offers three different routes: Skyline, North Shore and South Shore (\$99–\$124.50). Routes are set but flexible, the paths bending to the whims of the Federal Aviation Administration. I had hoped to get a bird's-eye view of my

apartment, but an ocean tanker in Boston Harbor nullified a flyover of the North End. "We can't get over there unless we want some F16s coming after us," said Matthew. Down the barrel of a Gatling cannon was not the angle I was aiming for.

The beauty of the helicopter tour is that it provides you with the real-life views you could previously only imagine. It's akin to dreaming about flying like Superman, at the cost of relinquishing his control, agility and ability to buzz the Zakim Bridge without having to check in with the control tower.

In reality, the copter's glass bubble becomes the world's best window seat. As the Robinson R44 curves around Fenway at 120 mph, you see the park as a sky-diver floating in for the first pitch. Snaking along the Charles at 500 feet you're a bird, and the rowers beneath are water-skimming snacks. Every day thousands of pedestrians see their reflection in the Hancock Tower windows, but waving to your image mirrored on the 50th floor is a singular experience.

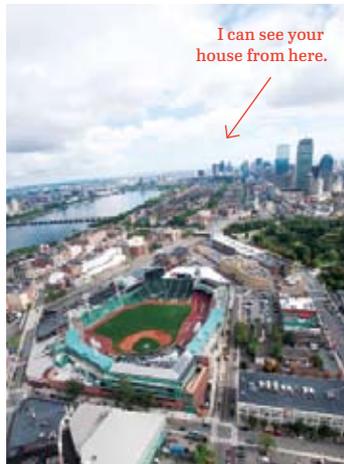
Like a superhero dream, the ride is cut off too quick. Even with a swing up the South Shore, the trip lasts just over 30 minutes. Is it a tour worth taking? Absolutely. Is it worth \$3–\$4 per minute? That's trickier to answer.

A city tour implies some educational element, but the descriptions are basic. Native Bostonians aren't going to learn much beyond what the tops of certain landmarks look like. Vacationers are the key (which is why Now City Tours has wisely established a relationship with the Lenox Hotel).

If a friend from out of town has some scratch and an itch to take a tour that doesn't require quacking, Now City Tours would be a viable choice. There are other operations, but the airfields are farther away, and the prices are higher. Maybe your friend will spot you the cost of a seat in exchange for your expertise.

Now City is convenient, just down the road from the Wonderland, and the ability to make Lynn look like an affluent seaside hamlet is a kind of magic. It's a different city seen from the sky. We're much smaller than we sometimes like to admit, but a new altitude can reshape your attitude. ***

Send your stories and suggestions to nick@improper.com.



Impersonals

SHY SUCCESS

TO EVERYONE WHO TOLD ME TO KEEP THE FAITH: Thank you! I finally worked up the nerve to forward my name and number, and he called. We went out for a beautiful dinner and conversation. We both took a chance, and I'm happy to say that it went very well. Thanks to everyone who gave Bill the heads up to my letters.

Shy gal on the commuter train

EDITOR'S NOTE: This sweet story has everybody in our office (and around the city) talking. The Improper would love to do something special for you and Bill. Please contact kyle@improper.com so we can make it happen!

To anyone with poor taste in weather-appropriate footwear: I don't

understand why women wear flip-flops in the rain. Hello! Dirty feet equals bacteria. Why bother wearing anything on your feet at all if you're just going to strut around in dirty water anyway? Guess what? Rain runs through the dirty streets, and that water touches your feet. Duh!

Toeing around the issue

To the MBTA: Like any relationship, we've had our ups and downs, but we've really hit a new low. I took the last train home and found myself locked inside the station. What would've happened if my cell phone were dead? Or if someone with rough intentions had followed me? We're so over.

Got this on lock

Unrequited crush? Bad hair? Need to vent? Send your e-mails of love and spleen to impersonals@improper.com, or visit improper.com/impersonals.