

# Touring the state with 'Family Guy' eyes

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The animated sitcom "Family Guy" has achieved success managing to make fun of American pop culture through random cutaways. Its most frequent references pay homage to the unique attractions of the Ocean State.

The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council has created an entertaining, self-guided tour in honor of the program; Danny Smith, executive producer and Rhode Island resident; and Seth McFarlane, creator and former Rhode Island School of Design student. There are 25 sites to be seen and although "Family Guy" may not always be appropriate for families, this tour has plenty of attractions for visitors of all ages. Here are several of the sites that play a prominent role in the show and in the culture of the country's smallest state.

**McCoy Stadium, Pawtucket**  
Nestled in a rugged residential area, the ballpark is home to the Pawtucket Red Sox. The show's main character, Peter Griffin, attempts to bond with his father-in-law by taking him to McCoy. The late Ben Mondor took over the flagging franchise in 1977 and built it into one of the most popular attractions in the region by focusing on developing quality players and creating a family-friendly atmosphere at a reasonable price.

Home of the longest professional baseball game, the park was immaculately restored in 1999 with modern amenities, wider concourses, and comfortable seats with unobstructed sightlines to the action. Two of the signature features are the grassy knoll behind the left field bullpen and the main seating bowl situated above the dugouts. This is where fans engage in the one-of-a-kind tradition of sending a ball, glove, or other object in a hollowed-out milk jug tied to a rope to players in the dugout for an autograph. The Pawsox have done an exceptional job preserving the historical feel of the park while introducing modern conveniences to the fans. *1 Columbus Ave., 401-724-7300, www.pawsox.com*

**Modern Diner, Pawtucket**  
This was the first diner to be accepted on the National Register of Historic Places. The front is designed in the shape of a Sterling Streamliner train. It is one of two Streamliner diners remaining in the United States. With friendly and fast service, engaging locals, home-cooked meals, and cartoons on the TV for the kids, the Modern is an



FOX BROADCASTING (BELOW LEFT); PAWTUCKET RED SOX (BELOW RIGHT)

Members of the Griffin family have made appearances at the Nifty Fifties Diner, a restaurant resembling the Modern Diner in Pawtucket, and at McCoy Stadium, home of the Pawtucket Red Sox. There are 25 sites on the self-guided tour.



authentic throwback experience. On the show, the Griffin family often eats at the Nifty Fifties Diner, which resembles the Modern. The signature dish here is the "Jimmie Gimmie" with two poached eggs on an English muffin with cheese, bacon, and sliced tomatoes. *364 East Ave., 401-726-8390*

**The Big Blue Bug, Providence**  
Visitors might view this landmark as tacky, but Nibbles Woodaway, the big blue termite, is as much a part of the culture of Rhode Island as hot wieners and WaterFire. In addition to "Family Guy," the Big Blue Bug has appeared in the

film "Dumb and Dumber" and on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," and represents the state at Denver International Airport.

It's hard to miss Nibbles alongside Interstate 95 in Providence, even though your eyes should be staring straight ahead as you approach a dangerous curve. Built in 1980 on the roof of New England Pest Control, the bug is 58 feet long, 9 feet tall, and weighs two tons. The only hurricane-proof giant bug in the world, Nibbles gets dressed up for holidays. *161 O'Connell St., 401-941-5700, www.bluebug.com*

**Providence Skyline and**

**Spoooner Street "Family Guy"** is set in the fictional city of Quahog, R.I. However, the skyline view and Spooner Street, where the Griffins live, are real. Behind the Griffin house is a view of One Financial Plaza, 50 Kennedy Plaza, and the 1927 Bank of America Tower. The tower is the tallest, a unique 26-story building with an Art Deco design similar to those of the Chrysler and Empire State buildings in New York. Residents often refer to it as the Superman building for its resemblance to the Daily Planet building in the film. The building will have a new tenant

soon, as Bank of America is leaving the facility.

**The Breakers, Newport**  
From the modest urban dwellings of Providence and Pawtucket, the tour moves to the massive mansions of Newport. Lois Griffin's ancestors, the Pewterschmidts, live in the fictional Cherrywood Manor in Newport near the Breakers. Commissioned by Cornelius Vanderbilt II in 1893, the Breakers was built as the summer home of the Vanderbilt family. This 138,300-square-foot palatial estate is filled with Baccarat crystal, marble, alabaster, gold, and other precious

materials from the Gilded Age. With 70 rooms, 20 bathrooms, 300 windows, and a 2½-story Great Hall, the Breakers was completed in two years, and every room, fixture, and furnishing was constructed with meticulous attention to detail. It opened to the public in 1948. *44 Ochre Point Ave., 401-847-1000, www.newportmansions.org/explore/the-breakers*

**Wright's Farm Restaurant, Burrillville**  
Griffin's biggest nemesis is Ernie the Giant Chicken. The fights between the two are memorable, and one of the places in Rhode Island where you will find a chicken of Ernie's size is Wright's, in the village of Harrisville in the town of Burrillville. Wright's Farm is a Rhode Island institution specializing in family-style chicken dinners. Purchased by the Galleshaw Family in 1972, the farm is in its 40th year serving family-style portions of farm-raised chicken. This vast facility seats over 1,000 diners, and there is also a gift shop. The big chicken is located in the back parking lot. *84 Inman Road, 401-769-2856, www.wrightsfarm.com*

**Del's Lemonade, Cumberland**  
Del's makes only a brief appearance in an episode of "Family Guy," but there's nothing that says summer in Rhode Island more than a Del's Frozen Lemonade. It was first sold at a little stand in Cranston in 1948, and the company is now run by the fourth generation of the Delucia family. Angelo Delucia worked at mass-producing the all-natural lemonade by using the recipe his father, Franco, brought over from Italy. There are 20 locations in Rhode Island, and this treat now appears in 36 states. The Mendon Road location is the one recommended for this tour. It looks like an old-fashioned summer hangout. *170 Mendon Road, 401-724-1708, www.dels.com*

This is just a sampling of destinations on this tour created by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. The Van Wickle Gates at Brown University, Rosecliff Mansion in Newport, Wes' Rib House in Providence, and the United Skates of America in Rumford are also popular attractions on the tour showcased in "Family Guy."

For more information, go to [www.tourblackstone.com/familyguyroadtrip.htm](http://www.tourblackstone.com/familyguyroadtrip.htm) or call 800-454-2882.

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## Glass, sand, stone, water mix to make Ben Tré's art public

►PROVIDENCE  
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I caught up with Ben Tré last month as he was preparing to ship a dozen or so translucent, ethereal glass pieces to a Traverse City, Mich., gallery for an upcoming show. In many ways, the youthful-looking 63-year-old is a lot like the objects he creates, a tough Brooklyn, N.Y.-born base that has not gotten brittle with a softened exterior that has seen success. His passion continues to burn brightly, especially when discussing his art or the city he cherishes.

He drove me to the first of three public art projects he has created in Providence. In 1998, BankBoston hired Ben Tré to redesign a large plaza in front of its building in the city's financial core, now called One Financial Plaza. At the heart of the space is the artist's signature vessel, a human-scale cast bronze and glass urn that emits a greenish glow, especially when lighted at night. The sculpture sits in the center of a circular fountain, surrounded by a granite and bronze inlaid sitting area. Two additional benches branch off from the fountain in a sinuous bend of concrete.

"I imagined the vessel to be like a stone thrown in a pond and the undulating concrete to be the rippling waves," says Ben Tré.

The artist took into account every square foot of the plaza, from the sconces on the far wall, also aglow at night, to the textural quality of the birch



WARREN JAGER

At One Financial Plaza, a bronze and glass urn by Howard Ben Tré emits a greenish glow when lighted at night.

trees that sit in the terraced garden above the benches. Street names were inscribed on granite on the curb, while gold medallions symbolizing the contribution of Rhode Island's workforce, from fishermen to jewelry makers, lead to the entrance of the building. Unfortunately, since the sale of BankBoston, the plaza has been poorly maintained. Grout is falling out of the granite floor and the planters, where once 6,000 bulbs were introduced, are now full of weeds.

"It's the downside of public art. Architects understand it better than artists do. You put

your heart into the work and have to move on," says a disappointed Ben Tré.

A few blocks away is a site-specific sculpture the artist created outside the Rhode Island Convention Center in 1996. Part of his Bearing Figure series, the cast glass and bronze object has a white exterior, which, when illuminated, allows viewers to peer in at the internal gold leaf. It's the artist's version of fertility, or as he notes, "the soul of the piece."

"We're surrounded by so much concrete from the building and the sidewalk that I wanted a more humanizing ef-

fect," says Ben Tré. "Kids come up and feel it and sit on it."

"We call it the French perfume bottle," adds a woman manning the visitors center inside the Convention Center, not realizing that the sculptor is standing in front of her. Ben Tré smiles, nods his head, and says, "I like that."

Our final stop is on the Brown campus, where the artist was hired to create a fountain and plaza as a testament to a student who died in 2000. The day was warming up as we passed magnolia trees in full bloom and descended stairs into an intimate courtyard where

three bronze orbs are connected by ribbons of cast green glass to form the tall centerpiece of the fountain. At night, fiber optics light the triple-bellied vessel from within.

"I wanted to show the vital life force of this student, not create a memorial," says Ben Tré.

Water hugs the shape of the sculpture, collecting at the bottom of the pool, where rocks lightly protrude from the surface. Having been hired to create fountains around the globe, Ben Tré has developed an interest in hydraulics. In fact, this son of a carpenter un-

### If you go...

**One Financial Plaza**  
401-831-5840  
[www.onefinancialplaza.com](http://www.onefinancialplaza.com)  
The plaza is always crowded with people during WaterFire ([www.waterfire.org](http://www.waterfire.org)).

**Rhode Island Convention Center**  
One Sabin Street  
401-458-6000  
[www.riconvention.com](http://www.riconvention.com)  
Ben Tré's sculpture is standing across from The Westin Providence, at the curve of the building.

**Brown University**  
38 George St.  
401-863-1000  
[brown.edu](http://brown.edu)  
At Faunce House Plaza at the entrance of Brown and Waterman streets.

derstands very well the pragmatic side of art, the ability to take his vision from paper and create a functional fountain. Before he ever took an art class, Ben Tré had been hammering alongside his dad for years, enrolling in machine shop and mechanical drawing courses. So using an industrial process to create his cast glass is not so foreign to him.

"I'm an artist where both sides of the brain works," he says.

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