

## The Best Weekend Getaways in the United States



### Providence, Rhode Island

Providence’s public art program encourages locals to get outside—and ask questions about the city’s past and present.

Walk the streets of [Providence](#), Rhode Island, and you might stumble across Sam O. White’s “Party Shark,” a mural of a pixelated hot-pink, purple, and white shark adorning the historic Providence National Bank. You might also spot “Wild Horses,” an abstract sculpture by

Rhode Island–based artist Peruko Ccopacatty, whose works are inspired by the indigenous Aymara culture of his native Peru. Then there’s Polish artist Natalia Rak’s “Adventure Time,” a mural of a young girl opening a door to a psychedelic world. All these pieces are part of the [Avenue Concept](#), the city’s first privately administered public art program. Founded in 2012, it has installed more than 150 works of art, encouraging locals and travelers alike to get out and explore the city. (A map plotting every artwork is viewable at the Avenue Concept’s [website](#).)

“I founded the Avenue Concept to bridge the gap between the creative sector in Providence and the municipal side,” says executive director Yarrow Thorne. “A lot of artists and designers didn’t have a way to connect with developers and the larger entities in the city.” The Avenue Concept celebrates the city’s diversity by making it visible. “There are 15 wards that make up Providence, and most have their own languages, foods, and culture,” Thorne says. “What would the walls say if they could talk?”

One recent answer to that question is a mural by the Baltimore-based artist Gaia. Close to Weybosset Street—which shares its name with an indigenous footpath and a trading post that later became one of the first customhouses in America—the mural’s site is also its muse.

The Avenue Concept partnered with the [Tomaquag Museum](#) in nearby Exeter to research the mural location’s past. Lynsea Montanari, a Narragansett tribal member and an educator at the museum, collaborated with Gaia and is featured in the mural holding a picture of Princess Red Wing, an elder from her tribe who founded the Tomaquag Museum 61 years ago.

“It was really fascinating to learn about our indigenous population and how a lot of that community is very active within Rhode Island,” Thorne says. “Rarely do you see Native Americans depicted in the everyday clothing they wear when they go to work or live their lives. The mural of Lynsea wearing her normal clothes was an interesting perspective that has opened up a conversation on many levels.” —CELIA SHATZMAN