

## A virtual visit to Providence sets the scene for future fun



By **MOIRA MCCARTHY** |  
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With travel peeking at us like a tiny slit of sunrise on the horizon, those who love to get away are feeling more confident, dreaming of future adventures. What city do you dream of exploring? Perhaps Paris? Maybe Madrid? Alas, it might be a wee bit longer before we can spend time in those locales.

But there is good news: Those who love diving into the culture, food, people and just plain vibe of a new city can do just that, all within easy driving distance from Boston. Because when it comes to a fascinating culture, lovely setting and a menu of “to do” experiences that will mean more than one visit, nearby Providence may just have it all — a world-class wanderlust-quenching adventure just an I-95 jaunt away.

We tend to take it for granted, Providence. We zip by on our way to NYC, making sure to wave at the giant blue bug en route. We do the trip to Providence Place for holiday or prom dress shopping, but see little more. But there’s a whole world to discover there. Like any thriving city, it’s all about variety; lots of colorful yarns to make a great tapestry. There are art galleries and theaters, old-time restaurants and new-wave food choices. You’ll find street art and fine arts, zoo life and neighborhood life. And now is the time to get familiar.

Online peeks at cities and destinations are not uncommon now. But Providence has added some oomph to it. You can, from your home, tour art galleries, visit amazing street art (and learn all about it at the same time), take in some theater, visit the zoo animals and even — get this — go to a drag brunch, all online. Here's a way to "experience Providence" now so you're ready to zip right down there and truly know how to experience the great city in person, the moment that's a good idea.



MAY 21, 2020 – Rhode Island favorite Del's Lemonade. Photo courtesy Del's Lemonade

**Stock up on the right beverage:** Del's Lemonade ([dels.com](https://dels.com)) is the quintessential quench-your-thirst choice when anywhere in Rhode Island, and Providence is no exception. You can order a tub of their make-at-home mix (with some cool recipes on the container) and sip it as you explore. For more of a jolt, order online from Dave's Coffee, another local institution (you can visit Dave's shop when you go). Order beans and make some coffee, or go full Ocean State and get some coffee syrup and make classic coffee milk. Either way, you'll get a taste of Providence while you explore.

**Street art fun:** In person, Providence's street art is masterful. Giant murals transform bland building sides to masterpieces. Artwork dots the roadside and walking routes. This should be no surprise, given Providence is home to the Rhode Island School of Design (the place that gave us the Talking Heads — thank you!), Brown University and more.





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MAY 21, 2020 - "Still Here," one of Providence's many pieces of street art. Photo courtesy Go Providence/N. Millard



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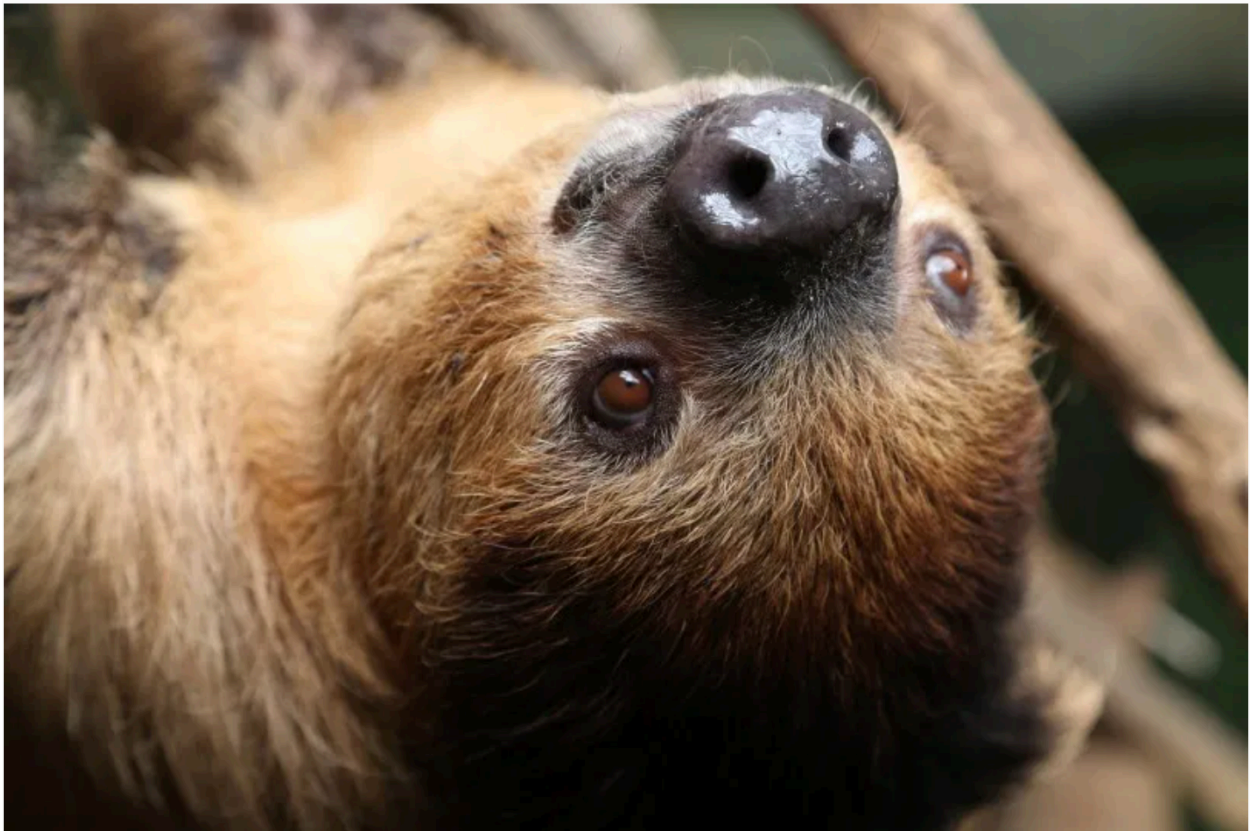
MAY 21,, 2020 - The Somnium mural in Providence, RI. Photo courtesy Go Providence/N. Millard



The street art is breathtaking online too, with the added bonus of being able to research and learn about each installation, making that future day you see them in person even better. Viewers can learn about various murals and art installations throughout Providence on The Avenue Concept's website ([theavenueconcept.org](http://theavenueconcept.org)) while looking at them firsthand with the help of Google Earth. Guests can randomly wander the city in search of "The revolution starts in the earth with the self" or plan a 'walk' past "Still Here" and "Somnium," and more. You'll be wowed and inspired to see it all in person one day.

**Performing arts, Providence style:** Rhode Island's Tony Award-winning theater Trinity Rep is generating digital content and creating virtual events and classes, so that "the show goes on." You can click onto clips from past productions such as "Ragtime," "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "The Mountaintop." But you can also get an intimate feel for the programs and casts in a way you may not when you see a show there in person. Online, you can check out members of the resident acting company reciting Shakespearean sonnets, read their blog posts and revisit episodes of Trinity Rep Radio Theater from 2009.

And you can learn a few things. Online classes are offered for students in grades K-5 and a class for adults and older teens provides an opportunity to read and discuss plays with artistic director Curt Columbus. (There is a small fee for classes.) Free events include a monthly virtual knitting circle and other creative classes. Content is being delivered through Trinity Rep's social media channels and is aggregated on their website, [trinityrep.com/theshowgoeson](http://trinityrep.com/theshowgoeson).



MAY 21, 2020 – Riley the Sloth hams it up at the Roger Williams Park Zoo. Photo courtesy GoProvidence/N. Millard

**Zoo time:** Jealous of those penguins who got to meander through a museum with all the space in the world? You can flip the script with the Roger Williams Park Zoo virtual visit program. Fans can visit “Zoo School” live on Facebook every Tuesday and Thursday at 2 p.m. Whether you prefer educational and behind-the-scenes access to Stanley the Skunk or step-by-step instructions on how to make a pinecone bird feeder, you can dive into zoo fun now.

**Drag brunch:** Adults only! What’s better than stumbling upon something unexpected and cool when you’re exploring a city? Here’s your chance to do that virtually in Providence. Every Sunday from 2 to 3:30 p.m., the “ladies” of “The View” — Haley Star, Jennie Talia, Ladia Jonz and Jacqueline Dimera — discuss the week’s hot topics live on Facebook. Grab your Dave or Del’s, amp them up for your brunch cocktail and take in the campy fun. You can even tip them online.

**Neighborhoods:** Providence is a city of neighborhoods, each with its own feel. Learning about them ahead of time makes a visit all the better. Check them out at [goprovidence.com/neighborhoods/](https://goprovidence.com/neighborhoods/) and then decide which you want to visit first.

Theatre and arts. Streetscapes. Zoo experiences. And yes, a big blue bug to wave at. A virtual visit to Providence is a great choice now. Soon, we can visit in real life. And we will be ready. You can see even more options at [goprovidence.com](https://goprovidence.com).