

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



## HERE

**VERMONT CELEBRATES ART**  
Hungry for some art? Savor a smorgasbord of concerts, festivals, and exhibitions during Vermont Arts 2015, a celebration of all-things-creative taking place across the Green Mountain State. Marking the Vermont Arts Council's 50th anniversary, and the Legislature's designation of 2015 as "The Year of the Arts," the year-long festivities offer visitors a way to engage in arts and activities in traditional as well as unconventional locales. An easy-to-navigate website lists upcoming events and locations, including links to participating organizations and ticket prices. 802-828-3291, [www.vermontarts2015.com](http://www.vermontarts2015.com)

## BREAKFAST FOR DINNER IN ALLSTON

The Breakfast Club, Allston's retro-hip, lipstick red, stainless steel and glass diner (pictured above), is launching a once-a-month dinner series this spring. Four-course menus will feature seasonally themed comfort food with whimsical twists such as tropical banana-cocunut-pineapple hummingbird pancakes, carrot cake pancakes, egg-white omelets with grilled chicken, and marshmallow peep milkshakes. By reservation only. April 6 (Easter theme); May 4 (springtime theme), 6-9 p.m. \$35 per person includes tax and gratuity. Mimosas made with fresh squeezed orange juice and Naragansett Autocrat Coffee Milk Stout will be available for purchase. 270 Western Ave., Allston. 617-783-1212, [www.eventbrite.com/e/breakfast-for-dinner-series-tickets-15498852485](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/breakfast-for-dinner-series-tickets-15498852485)

## THERE

### REFRIGER-NATION VACATIONS

If winter's relentless snowstorms have chilled you to the bone, thaw out with one of the "Refriger-nation Vacation" deals offered by Starwood Caribbean Hotels & Resorts in Puerto Rico and St. John. For example, indulge yourself in sophisticated style at the tropical

W Retreat & Spa on Vieques Island and go kayaking on a bioluminescent bay atop water that literally sparkles. Book three nights and get the fourth night free, plus \$100 resort

credit. Rates from \$322/night. Through Aug. 2. Call 866-837-4216 and refer to "Sunsational Savings"; [www.vviquees.com/sensational](http://www.vviquees.com/sensational). For deals at other resort properties with rates as low as \$175 per night. 866-716-8147, [www.caribbean.starwoodoffers.com/refriger-nation-vacation](http://www.caribbean.starwoodoffers.com/refriger-nation-vacation)

### NYC TRIUMPH HOTELS DEBUT FREE TOURS

Triumph Hotels are partnering with walking tour company Streetwise to offer complimentary daily New York tours to their guests. Starting from one

of their six boutique properties each morning of the week, the tours explore hidden gems and historical sites that showcase the distinct character of each neighborhood. Hotels include the Hotel Belleclaire (Upper West Side); Edison Hotel (Times Square); Washington Jefferson Hotel (Hell's Kitchen); Cosmopolitan Hotel (TriBeCa); The Evelyn (No-Mad); and Hotel Chandler (Flatiron). Reservations required. 855-787-4867, [www.triumphhotels.com/walking-tours-rfp](http://www.triumphhotels.com/walking-tours-rfp). Hotel Belleclaire, a turn-of-the-century American

landmark hotel, features 240 freshly renovated guest rooms. Rates from \$239. 212-362-7700, [www.hotelbelleclaire.com](http://www.hotelbelleclaire.com)

### REMBRANDT AND VAN GOGH WITH MUNCH

Amsterdam touts its artistic heritage this year with two significant exhibitions at two of its world-class museums. At the



Rijksmuseum, "Late Rembrandt" is the first major retrospective of the later work of Rembrandt van Rijn, featuring more than 100 works from leading museums and private collections from around the world. (Through May 17, [www.rijksmuseum.nl/en](http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en)). The Van Gogh Museum is celebrating its own 19th-century genius (self-portrait at left) — who died 125 years ago — with a new exhibition design, a new entrance building, and a blockbuster exhibition, "Munch: Van Gogh," that pairs van Gogh's work with another great northern painter of desperation, Edvard Munch. (Sept. 25-Jan. 17, [www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en](http://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en)).

## EVERYWHERE

### GLOBAL ADVENTURES FOR CURIOUS KIDS

Inspire your tyke to learn about the world with Early Explorers, a new product for preschool-aged children (ages 3-5) from the monthly service Little Passports. The first month's Traveler's Kit arrives in a bright orange suitcase (pictured above), and contains everything a young explorer needs, including an activity book introducing characters Max, Mia, and their dog, Toby, a wall-sized world map, stickers, wall decal, and luggage tag. Ongoing theme kits add new adventures every month. Older children enjoy the World Edition (ages 5-12), and the USA Edition (ages 7-12). One-, six-, and 12-month packages available. \$11.95-\$15.95/month. [www.littlepassports.com](http://www.littlepassports.com)

### TRAVEL-SIZE SODA MAKER COMPLETE WITH CO2

Make your own sparkling water and flavored sodas when traveling with ISODA Mini, a compact soda maker that is easy to pack and store. With one simple twist of its top, this handheld model produces sparkling water you can savor on its own or flavor with any variety of fresh juices. Perfect for road trips, camping, boating, picnics at the beach, or tailgating parties at sporting events. Each kit includes one soda maker; one liter bottle with cap; and a six-pack of 8g CO2 chargers. \$39.99. 844-812-6241, [goisoda.com/product/isoda-mini](http://goisoda.com/product/isoda-mini)

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KEN RIVARD (TOP LEFT), VAN GOGH MUSEUM (ABOVE)

## BUMP IN THE ROAD

# When someone gets the shaft, your trip is done

By Thomas Farragher  
GLOBE STAFF

There were four of us. Two young men. Two young women. And one Winnebago.

Like this winter, the winter we'd endured that year was long, cold, and miserable. A road trip to Florida seemed like an idea of pure genius. Debbie's dad had this motor home. We all had a week off. Just like that we were driving south.

Let me make this clear up front: The people in this story are still my friends. And we have since shared more than a few laughs at what happened in that Winnebago back when Ronald Reagan was president. No one was laughing back then.

It did not begin well. We decided to drive straight through, a 24-hour trip, so that meant taking shifts. I drove first with Debbie as my copilot. Brendan and Brigid rode in back, eventually napping, ready to trade places in eight hours or so.

As we approached New Jersey, I wondered aloud about the difference between the Garden State Parkway and the New Jersey Turnpike. Debbie, my navigator, consulted the map and concluded it made no difference. Mistake number one. We were in Cape

May before we realized we had made a multi-hour error — a depressing prospect at 2 a.m. with 1,000 miles to go.

Fine. We figured we'd just experienced our trip's requisite disaster. Shake it off and move on. We made a course correction, found our way back to Interstate 95 and soon the signs for the South of the Border tourist trap whizzed by.

It's important here to note that there was no romantic connection between the couples. Brigid, Brendan, and I have been close friends since first grade. Debbie and Brigid, then young nurses, were roommates. So no hanky-panky. Which, in retrospect, probably would have helped.

There's something about spending that amount of time in such a confined space with members of the opposite sex that can induce tension. Throw in lack of sleep, a costly detour, and an endless highway and, by the time the sun was out and the weather was warm, we were ready for a break. From each other.

The Red Sox had begun spring training in Winter Haven. Brendan and I saw a Grapefruit League game as the perfect excuse to watch some baseball, drink some beer, and let the women go shopping. It would do us all some good.

We were crestfallen when, after

consulting the schedule, we discovered the Sox were not playing at home that day. We kept that to ourselves and asked the women to drop us off at the ballpark.

"I don't think they're playing here today," Brigid said as we pulled into an empty parking lot. "We're just early," I assured her. They drove off. Brendan and I spent the next two blessed hours sitting in the stands, sipping Budweiser, and watching the grounds crew expertly and slowly cut the grass. Best game I've ever seen.

We didn't tell Brigid and Debbie about that phantom game. And we didn't disclose the minor accident we had backing the Winnebago out of its parking space at SeaWorld a couple days later. Brendan drove. I directed him from outside the motor home. He cut the wheels too sharply and we hit an adjacent car. When Debbie discovered the dent a few hours later, we feigned surprise and blamed those damn irresponsible Florida drivers.

Now before I embrace this voyage-of-the-damned theme too tightly, I should mention we managed to have fun. We visited Disney World. We enjoyed great food. We never missed a happy hour. We sat too long in the sun. And, before we knew it, it was time to drive home.

Brendan was at the wheel when the

drive shaft fell out at 1 in the morning just outside Latta, S.C., population 1,400. It was like guiding a rudderless ship down one of our nation's biggest highways. The two of us walked a mile back down I-95 to pick up the broken piece of our Winnebago.

And by the next morning, we were at a local repair shop, whose only job that day was to find a similar shaft in one of the nearby junk yards and then weld it back into shape and get us back on the road. We rode with the mechanics during this scavenger hunt. My enduring memory is the series of bullet holes we saw in roadside signs and Coke machines.

Somehow, magically, it worked. As we stood in the grimy office of that gas station straight out of Mayberry, a grinning mechanic totaled the bill.

"Now it's cryin' time," he told us, handing us a bill for something north of \$200.

"Divide that by four," Brendan told him.

The astonished mechanic looked up: "You ain't gonna make your girlfriends pay, are you?"

Brendan nodded, his smile at long last widening. "You bet your ass," he said. "They're not our girlfriends."

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