

**THE LIST**  
{8 great places for a laugh}

**WHERE  
COMEDY  
IS  
CENTRAL**





*Looking for a laugh?  
Head to Seattle,  
one of the funniest  
places around.*

# Laughter,

the legendary comedian Milton Berle once said, is an instant vacation. So ogling the oodles of amusements in *Seattle* should double the fun factor. Under a sobering blanket of clouds, this Pacific Northwest city, which some claim to be the birthplace of the smiley face, keeps its spirits up through the drizzle with a keen comical outlook. The irrepressible humor is pervasive in everyday activities from eating to shopping, with punny movie marquees, offbeat art, and madcap celebrations. Maybe it's all that water.

*By Roberta Cruger  
Photographs by Andy Reynolds*



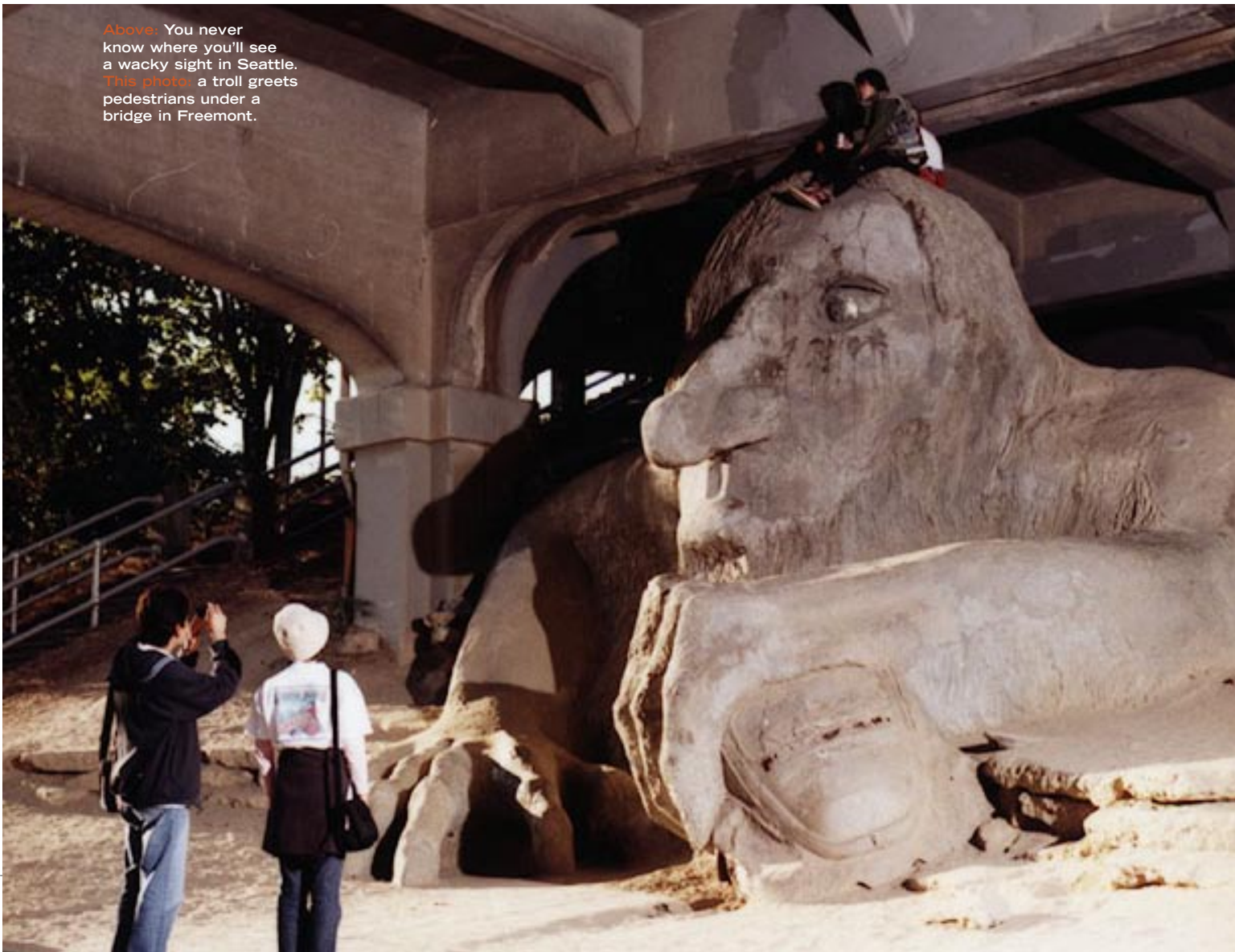
*This ain't no  
Candy Land —  
in the 1990s, patrons  
in line at Market  
Theater started  
covering an adjoining  
alley in chewed gum.  
The impromptu art  
display has stuck  
around ever since.*

**Whimsy abounds,** eliciting grins and snickers at gleeful bus stops, unnecessary sundials, and a 15-foot-long (and expanding) Wall of Gum. Amid picturesque evergreen landscapes, the city turns outlandish locations into recreational spots. Gasworks Park's lakefront setting is a former industrial site full of rusty tanks and decommissioned equipment that now sports a kite knoll. And in north Seattle, a forest of whirligigs created with dustpans, coffeepots, and Jell-O molds twirl next to a power plant.

In the funky Fremont neighborhood, you'll find a directional sign pointing to such destinations as Atlantis, Wall Drug, and the Milky Way. There's also some curious street art: a gigantic troll grips a VW bug under a bridge; a Cold War rocket extols its philosophy in Latin: "De Libertas Quirkas" (freedom to be peculiar); and a sculpture of commuters gets dressed by residents for occasions like the Summer Solstice Parade, with its wild floats and costumed (or in some cases nude) marchers.



Above: You never know where you'll see a wacky sight in Seattle. This photo: a troll greets pedestrians under a bridge in Fremont.





Clockwise from top left:  
Why is there a sculpture  
of a hammering man  
outside the Seattle Art  
Museum? Why not?  
some essential items on  
sale at Archie McPhee's



American Utility Kilts For Everyday Wear  
**UTILIKILTS**  
.com  
"We Sell Everything"

*In Shakespeare,  
there's nothing funnier  
than a man in a dress.*

*But in Seattle, the  
brains behind Utilikilts  
want men to go sans  
pants all the time —  
seriously.*

## On the city's waterfront,

Pike Place Fish Market offers an entertaining show as fishmongers clad in day-glo orange waders fling low-flying salmon and king crabs while exchanging playful banter with throngs of shoppers. Nearby, in downtown's grungy basements and former first floors, Bill Speidel's Underground Tour regales with tales of the early pioneers' septic system problems during high tide, among other stories. Hattie's Hat Restaurant features tacky bric-a-brac décor in Aunt Harriet's Room (aka the lounge). Meanwhile, the men's room at the 5 Point Cafe (which is next door to a Laundromat) features a periscope view of Seattle's iconic Space Needle.

Perhaps the quintessential example of Seattle's good humor is Archie McPhee's, an emporium of kitsch. Crammed with toys, novelties, and inexplicable items like a bobblehead Freud, a Casanova action figure, bacon strip bandages, sardonic 8-ball oracles, smoking monkeys, a corndog air-freshener, devil rubber duckies, and jars of assorted junk — to just scratch the surface — it's a destination for clowns of all ages.

# THE JOKE'S ON US

*Seven other places that tickle the funny bone*

**Seattle holds no monopoly on fun and games – humor is a universal language. So for a giggle, try a dose of hilarity at these destinations.**

**Key West:** An island of unconventional-ality, the “Conch Republic” swings with an outrageous sideshow at sunset on Mallory Square. Elsewhere, Jimmy Buffett-loving “parrotheads” carouse at the infamous Sloppy Joe’s – a onetime watering hole for Ernest Hemingway. The entire island is a laugh riot: couples wed underwater, roosters run amok at the Chicken Store, and an epitaph on the island’s cemetery reads, “I told you I was sick.” The nonstop nuttiness culminates at the annual Fantasy Fest, featuring the Headdress Ball and a flamboyant parade of costumes like the 20-foot Spaghetti-Spouting Spaceship.

**Edinburgh:** Spirited yet droll guides lead uproarious romps around Scotland’s capital every day, leading visitors through medieval castles with hysterical histories, kooky characters, and mad monks. Amidst more traditional attractions, there’s Holyroodhouse’s screwball architecture, Hogmanay’s New Year’s follies, and funny performances at the Fringe Festival, which launched comics from Dudley Moore to members of the Monty Python troupe. With foodstuffs like haggis, neeps, tatties, and deep-fried Mars bars, and its location on the Firth of Forth – the lyrical language alone provokes titters.

**Providence:** The smallest state in the U.S. is also the funniest, at least according to Hallmark’s “Humor Index.” Bizarre tales surround the secreted remains of city father Roger Williams, a rabble-rouser exiled from Salem, Mass., in 1636. Scalawag politicians aside, the epitome of quirky, a gargantuan blue termite, Nibbles Woodaway, perches on the rooftop of New England Pest Control, and a spectacle of musical blazing bonfires that float in the three rivers of downtown Providence several weekend

evenings from March to October. Only in Rhody, as they say.

**Mexico City:** Face it, guys wearing tights, capes, and masks is funny; Jack Black proved as much in *Nacho Libre*. But the real deal is Lucha Libre (literally, “freestyle fighting”), a zany south-of-the-border pro wrestling league. The histrionic display of good guys vs. nasty *rudos* pits wrestlers like Tarzan Boy and Virus against each other in surreal and campy cartoonlike matches. Postshow festivities take place at former *luchador* Super Astro’s eatery, El Cuadrilatero, which serves up the humongous Gladiator sandwich. If you can gobble it down in 15 minutes, it’s free.

**Manila:** According to a 2005 global survey, Filipinos – with their carefree *que sera sera* (“bahala na”) attitude and lack of words for depression or boredom – are the happiest people in Asia. Shiny Jeepney taxis ride to scores of street parties throughout the city and outskirts for endless revelry, raucous dancing, and crazy costumes. Festivals center around water fights, a parade of enormous lanterns and suckling pigs sitting in chairs, houses dripping in fruits and veggies, water buffalo races, and the best-dressed tuna. Other attractions include the sublime Banaue rice terraces, and the unofficial national pastime – karaoke.

**St. Maarten:** Divided up between the Dutch and the French, this island has a split personality. As the story goes, early settlers marched from either end of the isle, met in the middle, and established the border. Legend has it

the Dutch half is smaller because their measurer sampled some of the local hooch, a rum-based guava berry liqueur reportedly responsible for making revelers see strange “green flashes” at sunset – or maybe they just got too much sun. St. Maarten hosts the Caribbean Comedy Festival over Memorial Day weekend. It’s certainly an unlikely place for such an event, but then again some of the best jokes are often surprises.



**Houston:** Countless roadside attractions litter the Texas terrain, but this maverick municipality is the center of eccentric environments. Strange sites include the Beer Can House, the former home of John Milkovich, a lifelong six-pack-a-day drinker who festooned his abode with thousands of cans as well as curtains of cascading aluminum pull

tabs. The Flower Man’s abode is adorned with plastic flowers, dolls, and doodads. The Art Car Museum gives new meaning to the term “funny cars.” And the ultimate oddity, the Orange Show, is an offbeat tribute to the citrus fruit, decorated with wagon wheels, tractor seats, flags, and found objects.

*Why did writer Roberta Cruger cross the road? To get to the other side.*

**Getting There:** All the destinations featured in “The List” can be reached by flying Continental Airlines. To book your vacation to these and other destinations, visit [Continental Airlines Vacations at covacations.com](http://ContinentalAirlinesVacations.com).