



The Graduate Madison's Lobby
PHOTO COURTESY THE GRADUATE HOTELS

You Won't Believe the Theme of This Insanely Cool Hotel Chain

7 ways the Graduate Hotels will school you in football, chemistry, and more.

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There's a reason Americans are so obsessed with football. They love the drama. Football provides great characters (Joe Namath), scandals (Deflategate), suspense (Bowl Games and Heisman winners), and loads of history. When AJ Capital Partners launched [Graduate Hotels](#) last year, they didn't set out to launch football-themed hotels, but rather launch a collection of hotels intended to celebrate the stories of local colleges towns and their football legacies.

"We noticed many of these college markets lacked creative, design-driven hotels," says AJ Capital Partners chief executive Ben Weprin. "The hotel is a vessel for communicating stories—past and present—about each of these college towns." The hotels offer a more grown-up atmosphere on game day. For example, the [Graduate Athens](#) has created a Tailgate Village this year with a bbq smoker, picnic tables, and a huge screen to watch the game, plus food and drink specials. But the hotel isn't just about football.

"We didn't want to push football down guests' throats, but there are sudden references to sports and culture. Each stay reveals a layer of a story. It's like peeling back an onion," says Weprin. Graduate currently has four hotels in the U.S. A fifth will open at the end of the month and three more are in the pipeline. Here are seven lessons you can learn from a stay.



A seating area at the Graduate Tempe
PHOTO COURTESY THE GRADUATE HOTELS

1. There's a 3rd Manning

Opening later this month on the Town Square about one mile from Ole Miss, the [Graduate Oxford](#) named its rooftop terrace The Coop after Cooper Manning. Referred to as the "lost Manning" because his two brothers, Eli and Payton, went on to NFL stardom; Cooper is often forgotten, but Weprin believed he should be remembered for his days playing at Ole Miss. "Cooper is part of the Manning football dynasty. Archie, his dad, is an Ole Miss legend and Coop played until he was sidelined by an injury. He's a wonderful guy and was a big part of the fabric of this community."

2. Uga and Munson are Both Sports Legends

It's fitting that the Graduate Athens has a bulldog for a mascot, considering Uga, the University of Georgia's bulldog, has become more famous than some of the school's athletes. The Graduate's GM named the dog Munson as a nod to the late sports announcer Larry Munson who was beloved for his play-by-plays of Bulldog football games.



The Graduate Charlottesville
PHOTO COURTESY THE GRADUATE HOTELS

3. Wisconsin Makes Crazy Good Beer & Cheese

Madison Blind, the rooftop bar of the recently opened [Graduate Madison](#), gives guests a lesson in two Wisconsin staples: beer and cheese. Cheeses are sourced exclusively from Wisconsin and include La Claire Farms Evalon and Upland Cheese Pleasant Ridge reserve. On tap you'll find hyper local Madison breweries include Ale Asylum Balistic IPA and Wisconsin Brewing Co.'s Inaugural Red Lager.

4. Emilio Pucci was a Farmer at Heart

Guests may find it bizarre to find photos of the late fashion designer Emilio Pucci hanging on the walls of their bedrooms at the Graduate Athens. Few know that the cult Italian designer studied agriculture at the University of Georgia in 1935.



Playful room décor at the Graduate Charlottesville

5. The Unofficial Mascot of the University of Virginia is a Wahoo

A giant wahoo fish is mounted above every bed in the rooms of the Graduate Charlottesville. "Many guests ask 'why the heck is there a big fish above my bed?' and then they learn the story," says Weprin. The official team mascot of the University of Virginia is a Cavalier. The odd décor is a reference to the nickname of University of Virginia students. Some believe the name came about when a rival team called University of Virginia players a bunch of "rowdy wahoos." Others believe it's a reference to an article that described University of Virginia players as being able to drink like fish and a wahoo fish can drink twice its weight.

6. Jerry Maguire References are Always Appropriate

The Normal Diner at the [Graduate Tempe](#) in Arizona serves a 4.4-shot espresso drink called the #85. The name, #85, is a reference to the number on character Rod Tidwell's Arizona Cardinal's jersey in the film Jerry Maguire. The 4.4 eludes to the 4.4 seconds Tidwell ran the 40-yard dash in the movie.

7. Sweet Tea is Basic Chemistry

The science department at the University of Georgia helped break down the chemical equation of one of the South's signature drinks: sweet tea. The formula is written on chalkboards hung throughout the Graduate Athens.