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By: Phillip Ramati

## **Macon provides magical musical tour for Allman fans**

For fans of the Allman Brothers Band, the big day has arrived. Not only is tonight's sold-out concert drawing near, but the grand opening of The Big House Museum comes this afternoon.

With enthusiasts coming in from Britain, Germany, Mexico, Japan and Canada, among other locales, Brian Cavanaugh said Thursday that his trip to Macon from Amherst, Mass., might seem like nothing more than a jaunt. Still, the trip is important to him, since he has finally made it to Macon for the first time after being a fan of the band for more than 20 years.

"You have people coming from all over the world," he said. "It shows the diversity of their fans and just how powerful their music is."

Paul Fallert came to Macon from South Lyon, Mich. He has spent several days volunteering at The Big House to get it ready for today's big event.

He visited Macon for the first time last year during the same weekend that GABBA — the Georgia Allman Brothers Band Association — was having its annual get-together, so he got to see many of the sights associated with the band around town.

Cavanaugh has already taken in a few of those sights, and he plans to hit most of them by the time the weekend is over.

"The first thing I did, I had to go to H&H" Restaurant, Cavanaugh said of the famed soul-food eatery where band members often ate during the group's early years. "I'm going to Grant's Lounge for the after-show party" tonight.

Fallert said his favorite band-related sight — besides the museum — was visiting the graves of founding members Duane Allman and Berry Oakley at Rose Hill Cemetery.

“That was pretty moving for me,” he said.

So, that begs the question, especially for Allman Brothers fans who are visiting Macon for the first time: What stops around town will round out your ABB experience? Here are some suggestions:

— Rose Hill Cemetery, 1091 Riverside Drive: Besides the side-by-side graves of Berry Oakley and Duane Allman, fans can also visit the gravesite of the woman who inspired the song “In Memory of Elizabeth Reed.” The band members spent many days and nights in the cemetery, which inspired several of their early songs.

— H&H Restaurant, 807 Forsyth St.: Louise Hudson, better known as “Mama Louise,” often fed the band members back in the days when they had little money to spend. The restaurant itself, a fine example of traditional Southern soul food, also contains photos and posters from many of the icons of Southern rock.

— Capricorn Records, 536 MLK Jr. Blvd. (formerly Broadway) and 535 D.T. Walton Sr. Way (formerly Cotton Avenue): The MLK address is the old recording studio where the Allman Brothers cut many of their albums. The studio, recently listed as one of the state’s most endangered historical sites, also hosted other Southern rock icons, such as the Marshall Tucker Band. The wall on the side of the building was where the Allman Brothers shot the cover for the “Live at Fillmore East” album. The Walton Way Avenue address was the offices for Capricorn Records, out of which founders Phil Walden and Frank Fenter worked.

— The Georgia Music Hall of Fame, 200 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.: The band was inducted into the museum in 1998, and individually, Duane Allman was inducted posthumously in 1982 while his brother Gregg was inducted in 2006. Former keyboardist Chuck Leavell is a 2004 inductee. The museum contains memorabilia from the band and from other icons of Southern rock. For more information, visit [www.georgiamusic.org](http://www.georgiamusic.org).

— Central City Park: One of the ways the band first established itself was playing free weekend concerts in Central City Park, which contains a walking path, picnic areas and softball fields.

— Other homes: Though it's boarded up now, 309 College St. was the band's first home. Band members and crew lived in a tiny, two-bedroom apartment when they first arrived in Macon in 1970. Other former residences in town include Duane Allman's apartment at 1125 Bond St.; a residence shared by Oakley and drummer Butch Trucks at 586 Orange Terrace; and Gregg Allman's residences at 847 Orange Terrace and 839-A Orange Terrace.

— Grant's Lounge, 576 Poplar St.: Fans' best bet could be to attend tonight's after-show party, where the likes of the Lefty Collins Band, Paul Hornsby, Chris Hicks, Tommy Talton and Caroline Aiken will be performing. Tickets are \$20. Back in its heyday, Grant's was home to impromptu jam sessions featuring the members of the Allman Brothers Band, Lynyrd Skynyrd, the Charlie Daniels Band and other Southern rock acts.

— And last but not least is The Big House itself, 2321 Vineville Ave.: The large, Tudor-style home was first discovered by "Big Linda" Oakley in a newspaper ad, and it served as the residence for the families of Berry Oakley and Duane Allman. The house was later bought by Kirk and Kirsten West, who eventually came up with the idea to convert it to a museum, which opened last year. Today, it holds thousands of pieces of memorabilia, ranging from posters from all of the band's shows to various pieces of musical equipment that band members used. Fans can look at the window seat where Dickey Betts composed "Blue Sky" and a re-creation of Duane Allman's bedroom, re-created by Big Linda.

Today's ribbon-cutting, featuring members of the band, is scheduled for 2 p.m. at the museum.

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