50 Interesting Facts About The 50 State Capitals - mental_floss on YouTube (Ep.47)

List Show
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Hi, I'm John Green, welcome to my salon, hey there fake fireplace. This is mental_floss on YouTube.

1. Did you know that Montgomery, Alabama has a minor league baseball team named the Montgomery Biscuits? And their mascot is a biscuit, his name is Monty. That's the first of 50 facts about the 50 state capitals in the United States that I'm gonna share with you today.

(Intro music)

2. At 3,255 square miles Juneau, Alaska is the largest capital city. It's larger than the entire state of Delaware. It's also, the second largest city in the United States, second only to Sitka, Alaska.

3. Arizona's capital, Phoenix, was originally named "Pumpkinville" in the late 1800s. And there weren't even any pumpkin growers there, just melons that kind of looked like pumpkins.

4. Helena, Montana also considered the name Pumpkinville as well as "Squashtown". That's right! Two state capitals were almost named Pumpkinville.

5. Little Rock, Arkansas is home to the largest bridge in North America build exclusively for pedestrians. Before it was built in 2006 a local county judge said "We're going to build that dam bridge". Apparently referring to the dam that the bridge goes over, not the offensive word. Anyway, the bridge is now most commonly known as "The Big Dam Bridge".

6. Before he became famous Mark Twain worked for a California newspaper, the Sacramento Union. In 1866 he traveled to Hawai'i and sent the newspaper letters to publish.

7. The US city that brews the most beer? Denver, Colorado.

8. In 1902 Teddy Roosevelt became the first president to publicly ride in an automobile when he was driven through Hartford, Connecticut.

9. Dover, Delaware was founded by William Penn, also known as not the guy on your Quaker Oats box. He named Dover after a city in England, you known like they did with all the early American cities.

10. In the 1500s the first North American Christmas celebration took place in Desoto, which today, is known as Tallahassee, Florida.

11. According to the New York Times, Atlanta, Georgia is hip-hop's center of gravity. Many artists got their start there including Ludacris, who once deejayed for a local radio station under the stage name "Chris Luvaluva".

12. The only royal palace in the United States can be found in Honolulu, Hawaii. It was used by Hawai'ian monarchs from 1879 until the over throw of the monarchy occurred in 1893.

13. There's a two scale replica of the Liberty Bell in front of the Boise, Idaho capitol building. The only difference? The one in Boise doesn't have a crack. Because crack is wack. Meredith, you're better than that.

14. In 1921 the Maidrite Sandwich Shop in Springfield, Illinois opened the first ever drive-thru in America.

15. The Indianapolis Motor Speedway, home to my beloved Indy 500, takes up 253 acres. That means that Churchill Downs, Yankee Stadium, The Rose Bowl, The Roman Coliseum, and Vatican City could all fit inside of it.

16. Des Moines, the capital of Iowa is french for "of the monks". In what I'm sure is one of America's greatest regrets, Des Moines was almost named "Fort Raccoon".

17. In 2010 the mayor of Topeka, Kansas wanted Google to install their Fiberoptic broadband internet in the city and to get the company's attention mayor Bill Bunten announced the city would unofficially change it's name to "Google" for a month. Google responded on April Fool's Day responding they would change their name to Topeka.

18. Edgar Allen Poe's only play, Politain, was inspired by a real life murder and even though the play takes place during the 16th century in Rome, the actual murder it's based on occurred in 1825 in Frankfort, Kentucky. Here I made a list of the things Frankfort, Kentucky and Rome have in common.

19. In 1988 Baton Rouge, Louisiana saw the infamous "Earthquake Game" at Louisiana State University's football stadium. A last second touchdown caused the crowd to cheer so loudly that it registered as an earthquake on a local seismograph.

20. America's oldest wooden fort can be found in Augusta, Maine. Old Fort Western was built in 1754 and was later used by Benedict Arnold before his invasion of Canada. This was back in the old days when Central Maine was the west.

21. Annapolis isn't just a James Franco movie no one saw, it's also the capital of Maryland and home to the largest crab feast in the world. Each year people eat over 300 bushels of crabs and over 3,000 ears of corn at the Annapolis Rotary Crab Feast.

22. In 1919 Boston, Massachusetts flooded, with molasses. A fifty foot tall tank of molasses and around 2.3 million destroyed surrounding streets. 21 people died.

23. Lansing only became the capital of Michigan because so many other cities wanted to be capital. The Michigan House of Representatives was forced to choose Lansing to end the political turmoil that determining a capital had become. The decision was shocking because Lansing was much less populated than the other cities that wanted to be capital like Ann Arbor and Marshall and Jackson.

24. In the 1800s, Saint Paul, Minnesota was called "Pig's Eye Landing" named after a local tavern owner. Wait Pig's Eye Landing! Pigs?! Time to put a quarter in the staff pork chop party fund. Cha-Ching!

25. It's believed that the song Jackson popularized by Johnny Cash and June Carter is about the capital of Mississippi. In the 1960s that area of the state was known for wild partying and illegal gambling.

26. The Missouri state capital building in Jefferson city has had some tough luck. In 1837 the first one burned down about ten years after it was built. Then the second one was struck by lightning in 1911 and burned to the ground. That's bad news for Jefferson City but it's great news for Marty McFly and Doc Brown.

27. What do Dick Cheney, Hillary Swank, and Johnny Carson all have in common? Very little, except that they all lived in Lincoln, Nebraska at some point or another. On the other hand Abraham Lincoln, for whom the city was named, never lived there.

28. If you never want to visit Carson City, Nevada just watch the films that were partially shot there. Like "Misery", "An Innocent Man", or, John Wayne's last movie, "The Shootist". On the other hand 0% of the 1952 western, "Carson City" was filmed there.

29. In 2011 Michelle Bachman made a speech in New Hampshire in which she said "You're the state where the shot heard round the world at Lexington and Concord." She didn't realize that the capital of New Hampshire, Concord, was not the Massachusetts city where the Revolutionary War started.

30. When William Taft was elected president a company in Trenton, New Jersey was commissioned to custom make a large bathtub for him. It held 50 gallons and weighed 600 pounds. Of course, Taft would later get stuck in a White House bathtub but there's no record that it was that bathtub.

31. Mission San Miguel is the oldest church in the United States and it was built in Santa Fe, New Mexico in the 1600s.

32. Meanwhile Albany, New York's great claim to fame is that perforated toilet paper was invented there.

33. At Pullen Park in Raleigh, North Carolina there's a bronze statue of Andy and Opie from "The Andy Griffith Show". You know, it was like this one, except bigger and it didn't feature Rob Swanson. Anyway, in 2004 the plaque was stolen. It read "The Andy Griffith Show. A simpler time, a sweeter place, a lesson, a laugh, a father and a son".

34. In 2007 almost 9,000 people gathered in Bismarck, North Dakota to set the world record for most snow angels in one place.

35. In 1964 Jerry Mock became to first woman to fly around the world alone. The trip started and ended in Columbus, Ohio. It took her 29 days.

36. There's a pre World War II banjo living in the American Banjo museum in Oklahoma City, that is worth over $175,000. More like banj-wow. Meredith, I expect better.

37. Waldo Park, one of the smallest parks in the world can be found in Salem, Oregon. Finally we have answered the question "Where's Waldo...Park? It's in Oregon, it's 12 feet by 20 feet and contains a single tree, which was planted in 1872.

38. In 1906 Teddy Roosevelt visited the capitol building in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and said "It's the handsomest building I ever saw."

39. The world's largest termite is a statue in Providence, Rhode Island at 58 feet long it's 920 times larger than a real termite.

40. "Hootie and the Blowfish" was formed at the University of South Carolina in it's capital city of Columbia. In a scene straight out of Pitch Perfect Mark Bryan over heard Darius Rucker singing in the dorm showers and the rest is history.

41. Pierre, South Dakota is named after fur trader Pierre Chouteau Jr. who's family was responsible for goods that early Americans couldn't live without, like beaver hats.

42. Both Trisha Yearwood and Kathy Mattea worked as tour guides at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville, Tennessee before they became famous country singers themselves.

43. The unofficial slogan of Austin, Texas is "Keep Austin Weird". They have to keep it unofficial because if that were an official slogan it wouldn't be weird enough. The phrase was invented by a local community college librarian who resented "Austin's decent into rampant commercialism". Now a bunch of businesses capitalize on the idea by selling products featuring the motto.

44. In 2007 Forbes named Salt Lake City America's vainest city. Claiming that they have 6 plastic surgeons to every 100 people and spend millions more on beauty products than citizens of similarly sized cities. That was a lot of szzzzs.

45. Every Valentine's Day an unknown Valentine phantom decorates Montpelier, Vermont with huge red hearts. Everywhere from stores, to schools, to the capitol building are surprised with these red hearts. And when same sex marriage was legalized in September of 2009, the bandit struck again. This time with rainbow hearts.

46. Patrick Henry made his famous "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" Speech at a church in Richmond, Virginia. And they gave him death.

47. Olympia, Washington used to be home of Olympia Beer, but now it's owned by Pabst Brewing Company because, you know, everything's a sell out.

48. Every Valentine's Day the Grumble Run is hosted in Charleston, West Virginia. It's a 5K race that usually lasts a long time because participants stop often to eat, to smoke, and just in general to grumble.

49. A local Madison, Wisconsin rock band, "The Gomers" is so popular that 2 mayors have turned February 1st into "Gomer Day". Mayor Susan Bowman's proclamation mentions multiple compelling reasons including that "The Gomers are really good recyclers".

50. And finally I return to my salon to tell you that the world's largest outdoor rodeo is Cheyenne Frontier Days, in Wyoming.

Thanks for watching mental_floss here on YouTube which is made with the help of all of these nice people. Every week we endeavor to answer one of your mind blowing questions, this week's question comes from Colt S. who asks "How many seconds are in a year?" The answer, Colt, is 31,536,000 seconds, although leap years have 31,622,400 seconds. Thank you again for watching.