27 Unbelievable Local Traditions - mental_floss on YouTube (Ep.214)

List Show
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Hi! I'm John Green. Welcome to my salon. This is mental_floss on YouTube.

1. And did you know that every year in Gloucestershire, England, thousands of people gather to chase a seven pound wheel of cheese down Cooper's Hill? Whoever catches it wins the cheese itself, but it's harder than it appears. The moving cheese can reach speeds of up to 70 miles per hour, enough to seriously injure people.

Anyway, that's the first of many unbelievable local traditions I'm gonna share with you today.

(Intro)

2. Every year in Lopburi, Thailand a Monkey Buffet Festival is held where an elaborate buffet is made and I know what you're thinking, but no, the food is not made of monkeys, it's made for monkeys! In fact up to 2,000 of them show up to eat delicious food and they even manage to drink out of soda cans. Apparently, in 2011 buying and preparing all this stuff cost $16,000!

3. Now I'm sure you've heard of the running of the bulls, which began in the 13th century- now it takes place all over the world- but the most popular one is in Pamplona, where thousands of people participate. Like, people run through the streets alongside actual bulls which originally was just a way of getting them from, like, the coral to the bullfighting ring. Now it's like sort of a way of having a party except kind of a deadly party?

4. Another unsafe local Spanish tradition is baby jumping in the village of Castrillo de Murcia for the Catholic feast of Corpus Christi which is not just a town in Texas, it's also a holiday celebrating the Eucharist. The Colacho, a man who represents the devil jumps over babies who are less than a year old. No one quite knows why this baby jumping started, but it's been going on since 1620.

5. Anyway, speaking of terrifying children, there's Japan's Namahage Festival. Men dressed in scary masks to look like Namahage, a sort of demon who knocks on doors and yells things like, "Any crying kids out there?" This is supposed to keep kids from being disobedient, you know, it's all in good fun.

6. OK, back to Spain, La Tomatina, or the tomato-throwing festival, takes place every August in Buñol. The day begins with people trying to get a ham off the top of a pole that's covered in soap. I imagine it like that scene in *Mulan* where she's trying to climb to the top of the pole except "I'll Make a Man Out of You" isn't playing in the background, and, you know, ham.

Ham? Better put a quarter in that staff pork chop party fund!

Anyway, eventually trucks arrive with thousands of tomatoes and people throw them at each other.

7. If mass tomato throwing sounds dangerous to you, you should probably avoid Ivrea, Italy because that's where the battle of the oranges takes place. The exact origins of this orange throwing war are unclear, but citizens are fairly certain that it symbolizes some kind of rebelling against noblemen. Anyway, unlike La Tomatina, orange throwers are divided into teams. Also apparently there are ways to watch the spectacle without actually getting, like, pelted by one of the million oranges that the town stocks for the event. A million oranges! You think they were like, "Huh, we have a million oranges, what should we do, I guess we could feed hundreds of thousands of people or we could throw them at each other."

8. Moving on to something a little less dangerous, in Austin, Texas there's an annual festival for Eeyore's birthday party. It started in the English department at the University of Texas in honor of a story in which Eeyore thinks that Winnie the Pooh and company have forgotten his birthday, but actually they throw him an awesome surprise party! The idea has spread and it's become like a city-wide party for charity. And Eeyore!

9. In 1945, Lloyd Olsen of Fruita, Colorado beheaded a rooster named Mike because it was dinner time. However, despite having been decapitated Mike the rooster went on to live for 18 more months. It turned out that Olsen's axe missed Mike's jugular vein. A blood clot kept him alive, Olsen fed him with a medicine dropper. Anyway, the town of Fruita now has an annual Mike the headless chicken festival, including a 5k run and a peep-eating contest. Peep-eating contest? That's a contest I could win.

10. Every October, to celebrate the anniversary of the New River Gorge Bridge in West Virginia, thousands of people gather there for a bridge day. It's actually the only day of the year that people are allowed to walk on the bridge and many BASE jumpers take this opportunity to jump 876 feet into the New River Gorge! BASE, of course, stands for Bravery Anyone Shouldn't Ettempt.

11. If you'd rather stay on the ground, you might want to consider the World Toe Wrestling Championships which have been going on in Ashbourne, Derbyshire since the 1970s. It's a lot like arm wrestling except the competitors interlock their big toes. Don't worry though, there is a hygiene check beforehand. That actually does very little to appease my worry, you might have found the one thing I want to do less than BASE jump.

12. Oaxaca, Mexico holds a sculpture competition known as The Night of the Radishes. Artists carve radishes into figures, usually people, and the vegetables are sometimes like six pounds and 20 inches tall.

13. What started as an attempt to show the citizens that the mineral-rich mud in South Korea was a good ingredient for cosmetic products resulted in the Boryeong Mud Festival. It started in 1998 and now over a million people attend the annual festival, which unsurprisingly revolves around things like mud slides and body painting. You know, it's like Woodstock '99. Meredith didn't get that joke, neither did the rest of our audience, but I enjoyed it!

14. Speaking of mud, you can find the World Bog Snorkeling Championships in Wales, in the town of- Mark, I'm not gonna try to say anything in Welsh just put the town name right there (Llanwrtyd Wells). That town. So there in (Llanwrtyd Wells) the person who crosses a 60-yard long bog first wins. But you can't actually swim or use traditional swimming moves so you just kinda gotta wade/doggy paddle- why would anyone do this?

15. Now, the Straw Bear has roots all over Europe, but I'm just gonna talk about the Straw Bear Festival in Whittlesey, England- I apologize to all of our German viewers. So in the 1800s a man dressed in straw would go around town and dance for money or food, which was outlawed in 1909, but then the tradition was brought back in 1980, and now he has his own festival.

16. All right, let's talk about wife carrying for a minute. Wife carrying is a sport all over the world, but you can actually find the world championships of it every year in Finland. Men carry a woman, she doesn't actually have to be anyone's wife, through an obstacle course/race, and the rumors are true, the winner's prize includes the wife's weight in beer.

17. Paul Bunyan Days in Fort Bragg, California celebrates the legendary lumberjack character with a huge celebration, though if I were you, I might steer clear of things like the 20-foot axe throw and chainsaw bucking.

18. In Jaipur, India there's an Elephant Festival with activities like elephant polo and an elephant beauty contest. This is an homage to the Ancient Indian royalty who used to ride on elephants painted gold or silver, but the festival has been canceled for the past two years because of animal rights concerns and it may not continue. Which might be okay. Admittedly, I'm not an elephant, but when I paint my naked body entirely in gold, it's just not fun for anyone.

19. A Kinetic Sculpture is a sculpture that can move on surfaces like mud or pavement, even water, so it only makes sense that Humboldt County, California holds a Kinetic Sculpture race that's considered the triathlon of the art world. It also makes sense, of course, because Humboldt County, California is the capital of marijuana production in the United States. Anyway, participants and their beautiful bikes cover 42 miles over the course of 3 days.

20. Another race is the Yorkshire Pudding Boat Race in Brawby, North Yorkshire, England. This was invented by a guy named Sam (*Simon) Thackray in the 90s. He was at a pub, say a waitress carrying Yorkshire pudding, and thought "It'd be awesome to float down a river in a Yorkshire pudding boat!" The boats are made of flour, water, eggs, and then some varnish for water-proofing and then children add oars to race them down a river. That sounds safe.

21. A fiesta has been going on in Santa Fe, New Mexico since 1712, but its best known tradition, burning a Zozobra, only started in 1924. Zozobra, which means anxiety in Spanish, is a 50 foot tall marionette that weighs 2,000 pounds. It represents all of last year's problems, so it's burned every year in front of approximately 32,000 people.

22. Pörtschach, Austria is home to the World Body painting festival, which has occurred in Austria since 1998. It's just what it sounds like - artists compete in different categories of body painting, including ones for face painting and UV effects. I'm sorry, do they actually paint themselves with ultraviolet radiation? That seems like a terrible idea.

23. The Ukulele Festival started in Oahu, Hawaii in 1971 and now 20,000 people gather every year for the five hour long festival. According to its website, performers include ukulele artists and celebrities, which is to say, YouTubers. And yes, we do have a ukulele-playing hula girl on the wall of magic- it has everything!

24. In 1950, Sapporo, Japan saw its first Snow Festival which consisted of six high school students making snow sculptures, but nowadays around 200 snow statues are made every year and 2 million people show up to admire them. Some of the statues reach up to 50 feet high!

25. I'm gonna finish by talking about some parades like the mermaid parade at Coney Island where over a thousand people dressed as mermaids participate. After Hurricane Sandy, the mermaid parade almost had to be canceled, but a Kickstarter raised over a 100,000 dollars so it could go on.

26. But if you're not interested in seeing a thousand mermaids, maybe you'd enjoy the Parade of a Thousand Clowns in Vincennes, Indiana. This is in honor of Red Skelton, who was born in Vincennes and was a clown before becoming a famous comedian.

27. And finally, I return to my salon to tell you that in Riga, Latvia there is a Go Blonde Parade. Why? Well according to Marika Ä¢ederte, the president of the Latvian Association of Blondes, "We have to cheer people up. We know there is an economic crisis, but small things like a playground or a blonde parade can cheer up the residents of Riga. Why not?"

It's true friends, it really is the small things, you know, playgrounds, blonde parades, etc. Anyway! 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 dfyobrian12 who asks "What language do a deaf person's thoughts speak in if they were born deaf and have never heard anyone speak?"

Well, the short answer is it depends, I mean on the most basic level instead of an inner voice that is heard, it's a visual or felt voice. Some people who are born deaf think in sign language, visualizing themselves signing and/or finger spelling and others think in written English like in typed or handwritten letters, still others think in muscle memory so essentially it varies from person to person.

If you have a mind-blowing question you'd like us to answer please leave it below in comments, thank you for watching, and as we say in my home town, don't forget to be awesome.