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opening extract from

Why You Need a Passport When You're Going to Puke

written by

Mitchell Symons

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please print off and read at your leisure.



Why you need a passport when you're going to

PUKE

Fascinating facts from
around the world!



MITCHELL
SYMONS

DOUBLEDAY

Introduction

Regular readers will have got the drill by now. Tons of amazing random facts, all put together in a colourful-looking book with a very naughty title. Thanks to Barry O'Donovan and James McCann for coming up with this title! Because that's what this book is: a geography book with all the boring bits taken out written by a man who failed every geography exam he ever took (yes, even the multiple-choice ones where you can usually guess your way to 20 per cent) because he was so bored by it all. You can read it from cover to cover (and I'm grateful to anyone who does just that) or else, like most people, you can dip into it for a few minutes at a time. Hopefully, most times you'll find something to justify the investment of your time.

In that sense, it's no different from *How to Avoid a Wombat's Bum*, *How Much Poo Does an Elephant Do?* and *Why Does Ear Wax Taste So Gross?:* loads of fascinating facts and lists – with the difference that they're all geographically themed.

If only I'd known what fun geography could be, perhaps I'd have become a geographer or even an explorer (albeit the sort who stays in nice hotels).

Now for some important acknowledgements. The first person I want to thank is my son Charlie: without his invaluable groundwork, I really don't know how I'd have even started the book. Other really REALLY important people to mention: (in alphabetical order): my brilliant editor Lauren Buckland, Annie Eaton, Nikalas Catlow and Penny Symons. In addition, I'd also like to thank the following people for their help, contributions and/or support: Gilly Adams, Luigi Bonomi, Paul Donnelley, Jonathan Fingerhut, Jenny Garrison, Bryn Musson, Nicholas Ridge, Mari Roberts, Jack Symons, Louise Symons, Martin Townsend and Rob Woolley.

If I've missed anyone out, then please know that – as with any mistakes in the book – it is, as ever, entirely down to my own stupidity.

Mitchell Symons
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in 2006, declared that those who read *Ruhnama, the Book of the Soul* (his book of moral and spiritual guidance) three times a day would automatically go to heaven.

Saparmurat Niyazov was better known as President Turkmenbashi. He changed the calendar so the name of January became Turkmenbashi. And he had a melon named after him. That's right, a melon.

La Marseillaise, France's national anthem, was composed in Strasbourg (in 1792) and not, as you might think, in Marseilles.

The Indus River, from which India derived its name, is now entirely in the territory of Pakistan.

There is a street in Italy that is less than half a metre wide.

In Qatar, the weekend is Thursday and Friday rather than Saturday and Sunday.

A Belgian student couldn't afford a party to celebrate his 20th birthday so he had the





bright idea of offering his friends' foreheads for hire to advertisers on an internet auction site. A company paid them all to have its logo painted on their foreheads for the night of the party.

There is a house in Massachusetts US, which is made entirely from newspapers. The floors, walls, even the furniture is made from newspaper.



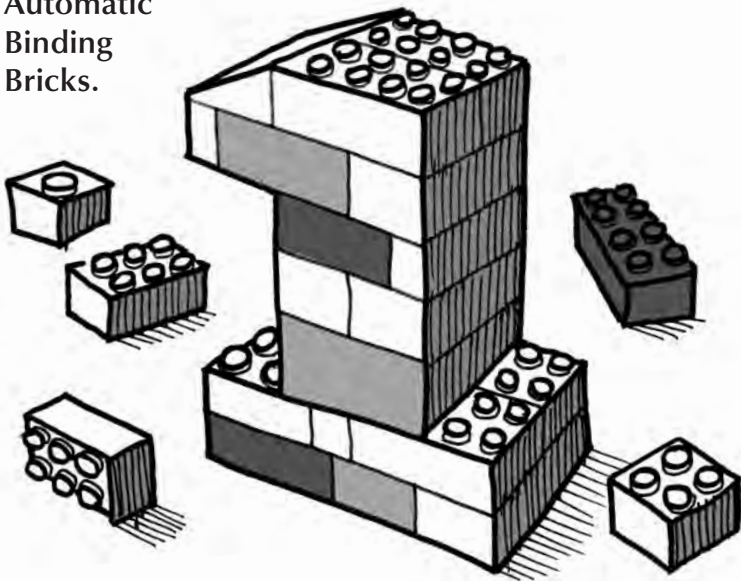


Firsts

In 301, AD Armenia became the first country to make Christianity the state religion.

In 1869 Austria became the first country to use postcards. In 1937 Austria issued the world's first Christmas stamp.

Lego was invented in Demark in 1949. The pieces were originally called Automatic Binding Bricks.



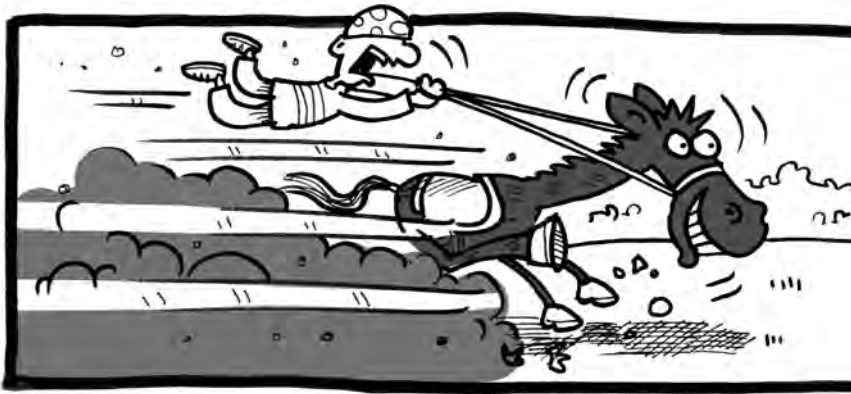
Gulf in which oil was discovered. It was originally discovered in 1902, although it was not fully exploited until the 1930s.

Yoga was first practised in India some 5,000 years ago.

The Egyptians created the first calendar and based it on the flowing of the Nile.

The Egyptians built the first sailing boats.

The first steeplechase for horses was run in County Cork in Ireland in 1752. It derived its name from the fact that riders rode towards a distant landmark like a steeple, jumping over hedges, ditches, banks and walls on the way.



In 1986 Japan became the first country in the world to ban lead in petrol.

Mexico was the first country to produce chocolate on a large scale.

Namibia was the first country to make it a political priority to protect the environment.

The Dutch were the first Europeans to discover Australia and New Zealand.

The Norwegians were the first to reach the South Pole.

Oman was the first Arabic country to allow women police officers.

In 1922 Pitcairn Airlines became the first airline to provide sick bags.

You probably know that the Russians were the first to send a man into space (Yuri Gagarin in 1961), but they also sent the first dog into space. In 1957 Laika, a stray, was launched into space on *Sputnik 2*. Alas, she died a few hours after launch from

In 2001 Singapore hosted the first ever World Summit on Toilets.

In 2010 South Africa will become the first African nation to host the FIFA World Cup.

The system of longitude was first discovered by charting the distance between Portsmouth, England, and Bridgetown, Barbados, using the position of the sun in relation to both locations.

Dr Christiaan Barnard performed the world's first heart transplant operation in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1967.

The world's first coffee house was opened in Damascus, Syria, in 1530.



The world's first church was built in Turkey.

In 1930 Uruguay became the first country to host the FIFA World Cup. They also won it.

Fascinating facts!

There's a river in Nicaragua called the Pis Pis River.

There was once an internet rumour that Belgium doesn't exist. That's right, that Belgium – as in the country – doesn't exist. I'll believe it if you do!

The first astronauts to go to the Moon trained in Iceland because the terrain there was reckoned to be similar to the Moon's surface.

Mozambique has all five vowels in it.

If you buy a map of South America in Peru, it'll differ from one sold in Ecuador. This is because there's a big row between the two countries as to who owns the area around the Amazon headwater.

There is no known case of a vegetarian dying from a snake bite in America.

Liechtenstein used to have the world's smallest army. There was one soldier. He served his country faithfully until his death at the age of 95. Then Liechtenstein went from having the world's smallest army to no army at all.

Waikikamukau – pronounced 'Why kick a moo cow?' – is the expression New Zealanders use for a particularly remote rural town. Sadly, there's no actual place with that name!

Girls and women aren't allowed to walk on Mount Athos in Macedonia. In fact, even female animals are not allowed there.

There are people who claim that it's illegal to dress up as Batman in Australia. This is because of an obscure law which prohibits the wearing of dark clothes all over the body for fear that someone will look like a cat burglar. Given that the Batman costume is pretty much all black, some people insist that it is covered by this law and that therefore it must be illegal to dress up as Batman.

In Tibet, some women have special metal instruments they use for picking their noses.



Countries found in England

America, Cambridgeshire
Canada, Hampshire
Egypt, Buckinghamshire
Gibraltar, Buckinghamshire
Greenland, South Yorkshire
Holland, Surrey
Ireland, Bedfordshire
New Zealand, Buckinghamshire
Scotland, Lincolnshire

Foreign places in the UK

California, Buckinghamshire
Dresden, Staffordshire
Jerusalem, Lincolnshire
Maryland, Gwent
Moscow, Scotland
New York, Tyne and Wear
Normandy, Surrey
Pennsylvania, Gloucestershire
Quebec, County Durham
Toronto, County Durham

Martinique was called 'Madinina' (the Island of Flowers) by the Caribs.

Yemen was known to the Romans as 'Arabia Felix' (Happy Arabia) because of the riches it provided for them.

Before the last Ice Age, the islands of Trinidad and Tobago were joined on to the continent of South America.

There's evidence to suggest that some 600,000 years ago, humans inhabited the desolate Sahara of northern Niger.

Moscow's Kremlin was originally a wooden fortress, built in 1156. Over the centuries it was enlarged and is now an enormous complex of government buildings.



The roman names for countries and regions

Latin Name	Current Name
Aegyptus	Egypt
Armorica	Brittany
Belgica	Belgium and the Netherlands
Britannia	Britain
Caledonia	Scotland
Cambria	Wales
Cornubia	Cornwall
Dania	Denmark
Finnia	Finland
Gallia	France
Germania	Germany
Helvetia	Switzerland
Hibernia	Ireland
Hispania	Spain
Islandia	Iceland
Judaea	Israel
Lusitania	Portugal
Norvegia	Norway
Tingitania	Morocco
Tripolitana	Libya

