

LEVELED Book • O

Roadside Oddities



Written by Torran Anderson

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Billboards for The Thing make some travelers curious.

What Is The Thing?

Driving between Texas and Arizona, you can't miss the signs for The Thing. Giant **billboards** at the side of the road ask, "The Thing? What is it?" They call it the "Mystery of the Desert."

Whatever else it is, The Thing is one of thousands of roadside **attractions** around the world. Roadside attractions are weird and wonderful. They invite people to stop and check them out.

World's Largest Baseball Bat

The world's largest baseball bat towers over a five-story building in Louisville, Kentucky. You couldn't use this bat in a baseball game—it's 120 feet (37 m) tall and weighs more than 68,000 pounds (30,844 kg). It's a huge **replica** of the bat used by the famous baseball player Babe Ruth. After you see the largest baseball bat, you can go on a tour of the Louisville Slugger **Museum** and Factory. The tour shows how the regular-sized bats are made.



Do giants play baseball?

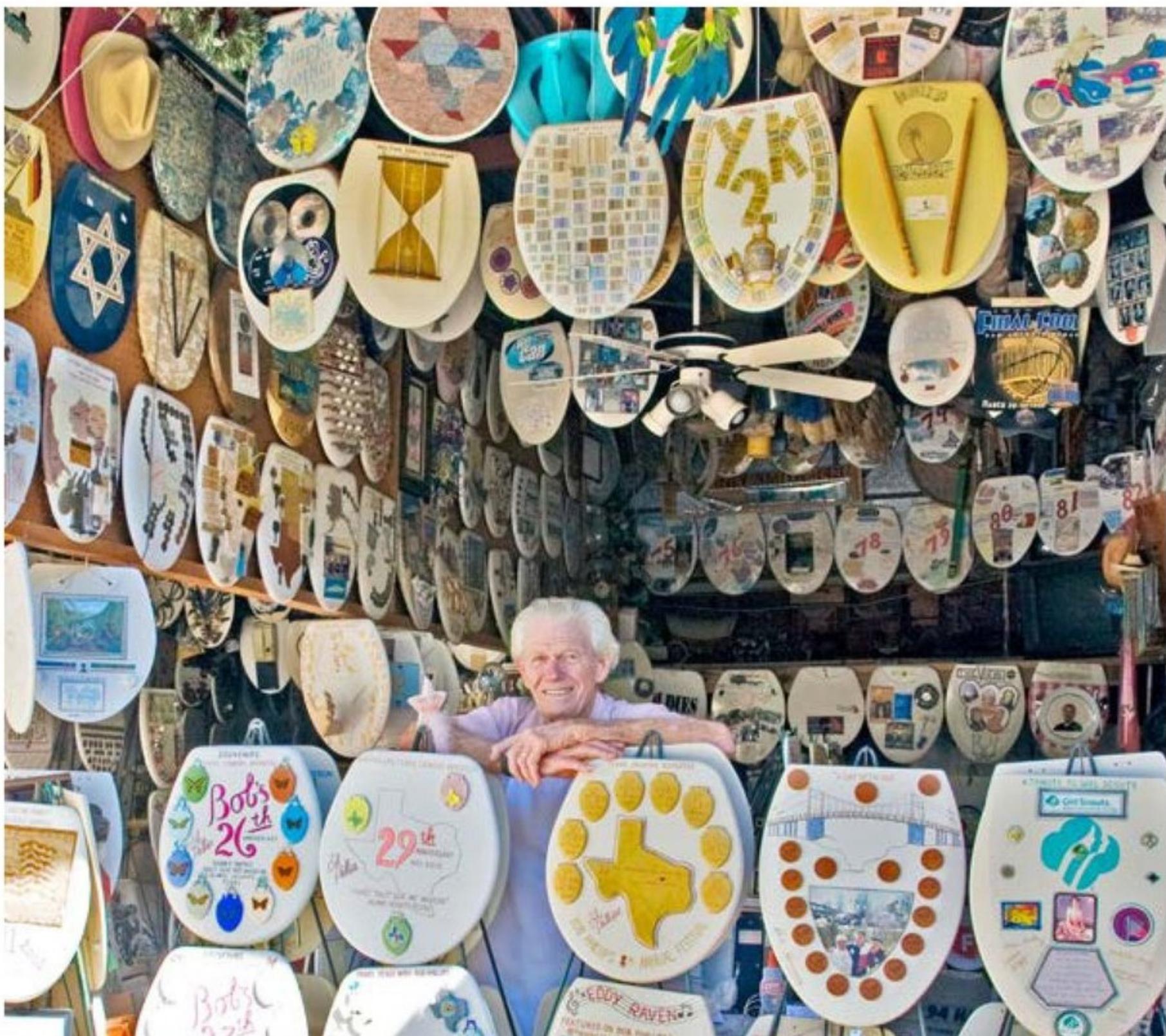


Ears of corn make a mural that's good enough to eat.

The Corn Palace

At the Corn Palace in Mitchell, South Dakota, they create art out of corn. Every year, the outside of the building is decorated with art made out of local grains and grasses. The Corn Palace is also the world's largest bird feeder. When winter begins, the birds and squirrels eat the murals!





Barney Smith stands in his one-of-a-kind museum (also his garage).

Barney Smith's Toilet Seat Art Museum

Do you have a spare toilet seat lying around the house? If so, you can bring it to Barney Smith's Toilet Seat Art Museum, open since 1992 in San Antonio, Texas. Barney Smith turns toilet seats into something wonderful. Born in 1921, he has made more than one thousand toilet seat works of art. They tell stories about his life.



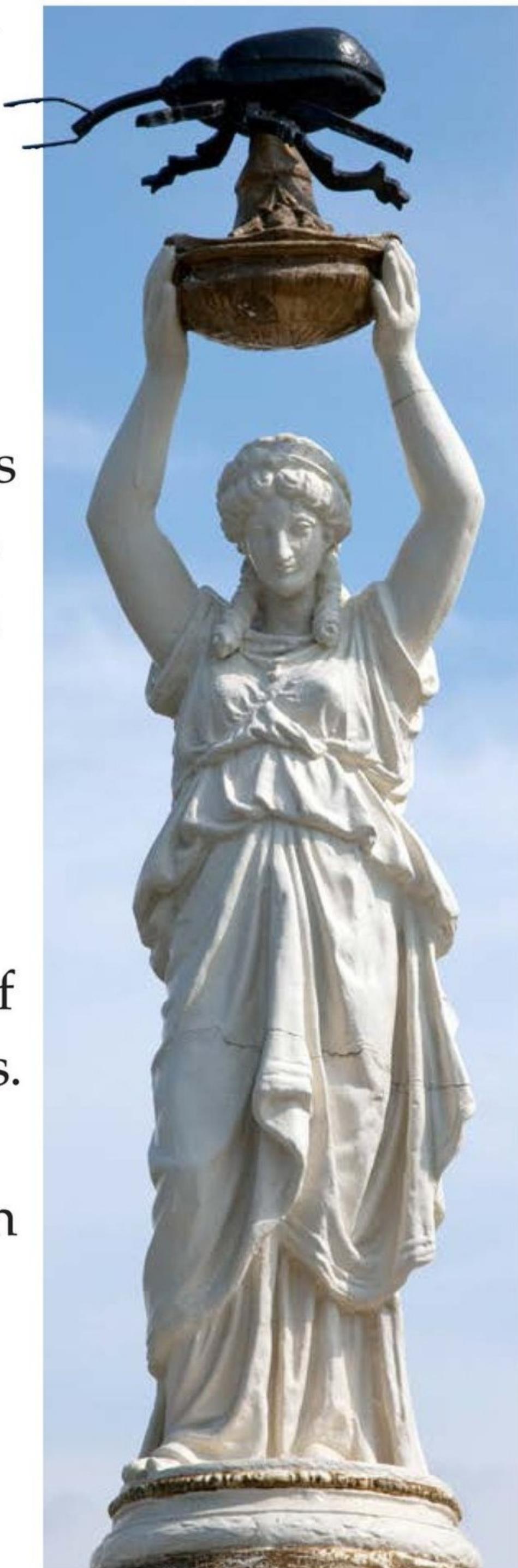
A big elephant needs a big drink of water.

Lucy the Elephant

In 1881, James V. Lafferty built the world's largest elephant to attract people to the land he was selling. The six-story building in Margate City, New Jersey, is covered with 12,000 square feet (3,658 sq m) of metal. Today, Lucy the Elephant is one of America's oldest roadside attractions. You can still climb inside her.

Boll Weevil Monument

You've probably heard of **monuments** for presidents, but have you ever seen one for a bug? The Boll Weevil Monument in Enterprise, Alabama, is one of the only statues in the world dedicated to a pest. In 1915, the bug destroyed the city's cotton crops, forcing farmers to grow different types of plants, such as peanuts. In the end, growing crops other than cotton helped the people of Enterprise. So they built a monument to **honor** the weevil.



Boll weevil, we salute you!



Sign Post Forest was started by a homesick soldier.

Sign Post Forest

If you're driving along the Alaska Highway, you'll find a forest that isn't made of trees. Sign Post Forest in Watson Lake, Canada, is made of more than 100,000 signs. It began in 1942 when Carl K. Lindley repaired a damaged signpost. He decided to add a new sign to the signpost with the distance to his hometown—Danville, Illinois. After Lindley hung his sign, others did the same, and the tradition continues today.

Carhenge



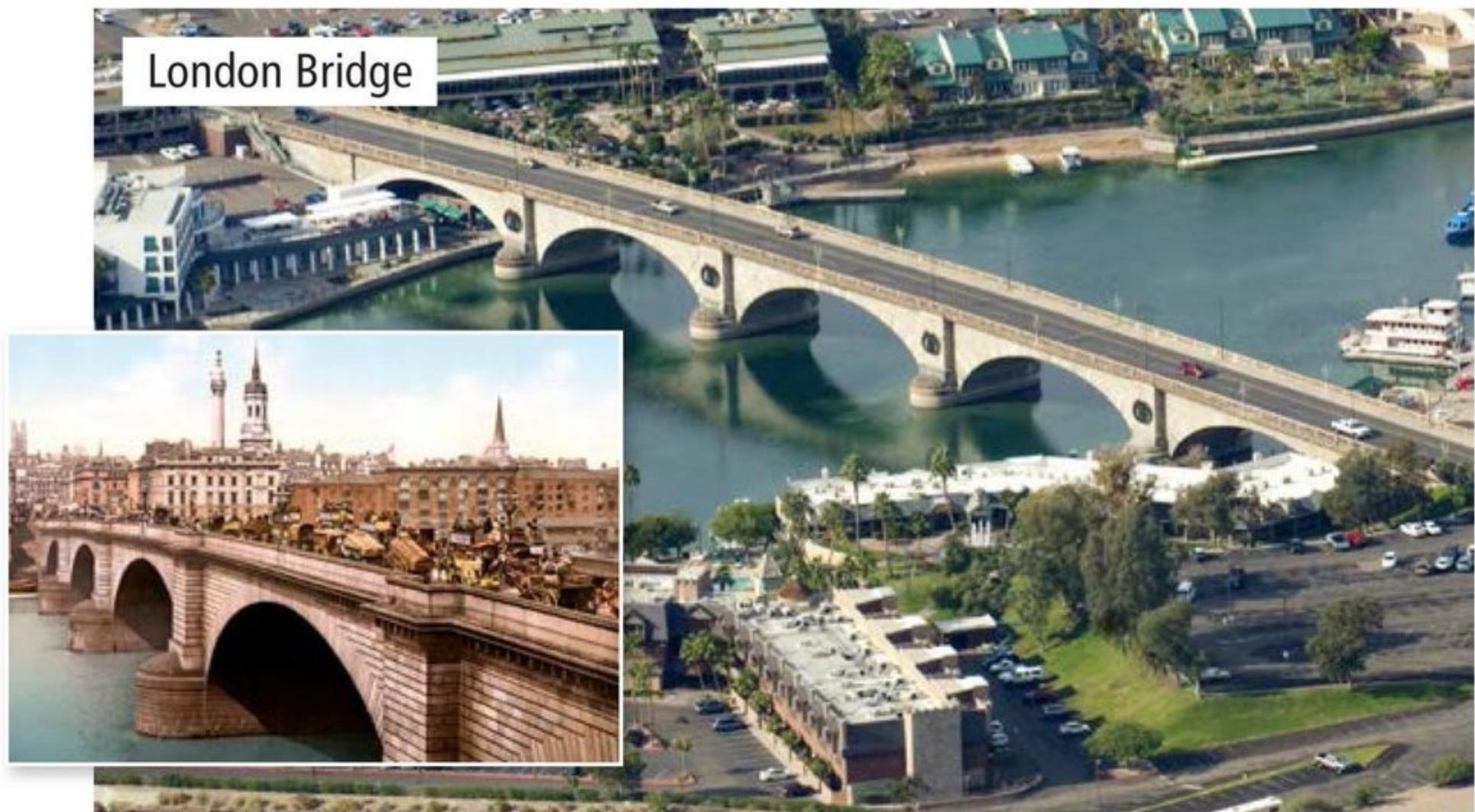
Stonehenge



Inset: Stonehenge is a mysterious ring of stones erected 4,000 to 5,000 years ago. It stands 90 miles west of London, England.

Carhenge

In Alliance, Nebraska, you can visit a replica of England's Stonehenge. It isn't built with old stones but rather with thirty-eight old cars. Artist Jim Reinders built Carhenge during a family reunion in 1987. Some local folk originally wanted the **site** turned into a junkyard. Now more than 80,000 people visit it each year.



Inset: In this 1890 photo, London Bridge still spanned the river Thames.

London Bridge

In what city can you find London Bridge? In Lake Havasu City, Arizona, of course. While a number of roadside attractions are replicas, this one is the real deal. The London Bridge was first built in 1831. Robert P. McCulloch bought it for \$2,460,000 in 1968. He had to spend another \$7 million to have the bridge taken down and rebuilt in Arizona. Before builders took it down, each brick was numbered so they would know exactly where to put it. **Tourists** can now stroll across the bridge.



The giant handles of this basket alone weigh almost 150 tons. The handles are heated to keep ice from forming.

World's Largest Basket

When you're going on a picnic, you often pack a picnic basket, but not one that's seven stories tall! Employees at the Longaberger Basket Company in Newark, Ohio, get to work inside the world's largest basket. The building is a replica of Longaberger's Medium Market Basket. When it was first built, a local pilot flew his small plane through the handles!

World's Largest (You Name It)

- 1 World's largest tire, Allen Park, Michigan
- 2 World's largest chest of drawers, High Point, North Carolina
- 3 World's largest violin, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, Canada
 - World's largest artichoke, Castroville, California
 - World's largest ketchup bottle, Collinsville, Illinois
 - World's largest cuckoo clock, Sugarcreek, Ohio
 - World's largest ear of corn, Olivia, Minnesota
 - World's largest rubber stamp, Cleveland, Ohio



1



2



3

Do You Know?

Not all roadside attractions are made by people. General Sherman Tree in Sequoia National Park is the world's largest tree by volume. It is estimated to be between 2,300 and 2,700 years old.



Stop and Look

There are many different types of roadside attractions, from giant museums to a person's garage. The one thing they have in common is that they all spark people's interest and cause them to stop. Do you want to know what The Thing is, off Interstate 10 in Arizona? You'll just have to pull off the road to find out!

Glossary

attractions (<i>n.</i>)	people, things, or types of entertainment that people enjoy (p. 4)
billboards (<i>n.</i>)	large, outdoor signs used for advertising (p. 4)
honor (<i>v.</i>)	to show respect for or think well of; to keep a promise (p. 9)
monuments (<i>n.</i>)	buildings, statues, or other structures built as a memorial to a person or event (p. 9)
murals (<i>n.</i>)	large works of art, usually paintings, created directly on walls (p. 6)
museum (<i>n.</i>)	a building used to store and show things that are important to history, science, or art (p. 5)
replica (<i>n.</i>)	a copy or reproduction of something (p. 5)
site (<i>n.</i>)	the piece of land where something is located; the location where something is found or took place (p. 11)
tourists (<i>n.</i>)	people who travel to a place for enjoyment or to learn more (p. 12)

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Front cover: A friendly *T. rex* rears its head beside the road in Cabazon, California.

Back cover: In Klamath, California, you can drive through a redwood tree!

Title Page: Come ride the giant jackrabbit outside Jack Rabbit Trading Post on Route 66 in Arizona.

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