

LEVELED BOOK • L

Roadside Oddities



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Written by Torran Anderson

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Billboards for The Thing make some people 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?"

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 leans over a five-story building in Kentucky. The bat is 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.

Do giants play baseball?





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

The Corn Palace

At the Corn Palace in South Dakota, they create art out of corn. Every year, the outside of the building is decorated with local grains and grasses. The Corn Palace is also the



world's largest bird feeder. When winter begins, the birds and squirrels eat the art!



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** in Texas. Barney opened the museum in 1992. It holds more than one thousand toilet seats Barney Smith has made into works of art.



A big elephant needs a big drink of water.

Lucy the Elephant

In 1881, James Lafferty built the world's largest elephant in New Jersey. Lucy is a six-story building covered with 12,000 square feet (3,658 sq m) of metal. You can still climb inside Lucy the Elephant today.

Boll Weevil Monument

In 1915, a bug called the *boll weevil* destroyed cotton crops in Alabama. It forced farmers to grow different types of plants, such as peanuts. In the end, growing other crops helped farmers. So they built a **monument** to honor the weevil.



No bigger than a pea, the boll weevil destroyed cotton crops across the American South.





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 northwest Canada is made of more than 100,000 signs. People have been hanging signs there since 1942.

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.



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

Carhenge

In Nebraska, you can visit a replica of England's Stonehenge. It was built in 1987, not with old stones, but with thirty-eight old cars. Some people once wanted the spot turned into a junkyard. Now more than 80,000 people visit it each year.

London Bridge



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

London Bridge

Where is London Bridge? In 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. In 1968, an American bought it for \$2,460,000. He had to spend another \$7 million to have the bridge taken apart and moved to Arizona.



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

World's Largest Basket

Workers at a basket company in Ohio get to work inside a basket that's seven stories tall. The building is a replica of one of their baskets. When it was first built, a 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
- 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





Stop and Look

Roadside attractions have one thing in common. They grab people's attention and cause them to stop.

Do you want to know what The Thing is, off the highway in Arizona? You'll just have to pull off the road to find out!

Glossary

- attractions** (*n.*) people, things, or types of entertainment that people enjoy (p. 4)
- billboards** (*n.*) large, outdoor signs used for advertising (p. 4)
- monument** (*n.*) a building, statue, or other structure built as a memorial to a person or event (p. 9)
- museum** (*n.*) a building used to store and show things that are important to history, science, or art (p. 7)
- replica** (*n.*) a copy or reproduction of something (p. 5)
- story** (*n.*) a level in a building (p. 5)

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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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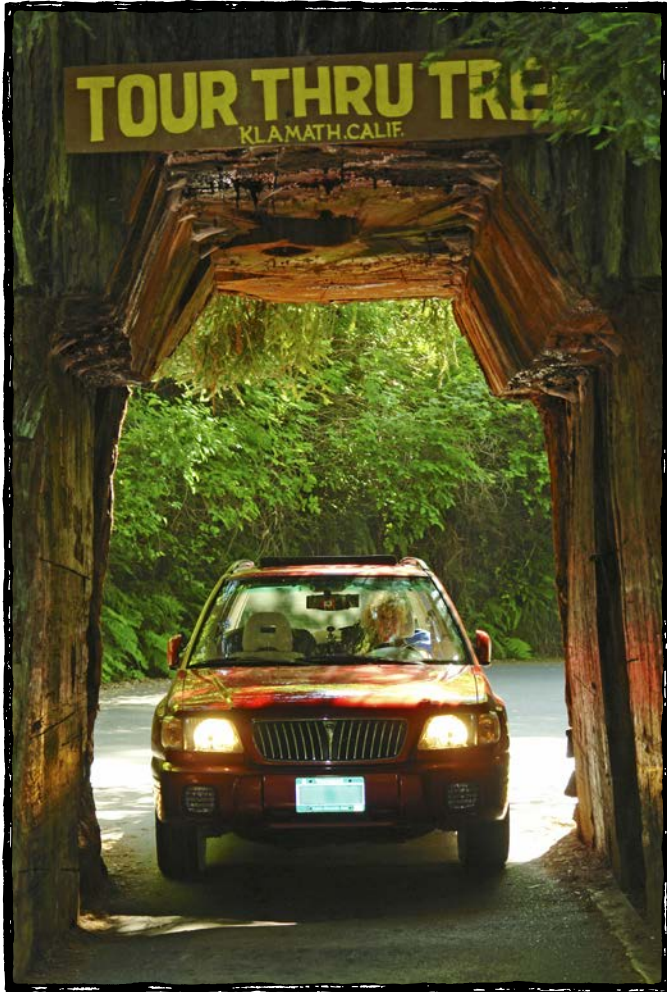
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