

Photos: TripAdvisor Announces Top Free Attractions Unheralded in the U.S. and Coughs Up World's 'Germiest' Attractions

Copiously-Kissed Blarney Stone Tops List of Germ-Laden World Attractions

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TripAdvisor(R), the world's most popular and largest travel community, today announced the top 5 free unheralded U.S. attractions, and the top 5 germiest world attractions, according to TripAdvisor editors and travelers. According to a recent tripadvisor.com site poll of more than 4,600 travelers, 34 percent of travelers reported being more "germaphobic" by washing and disinfecting their hands more frequently when traveling since the swine flu outbreak. Additionally, TripAdvisor forums indicate that travelers have got germs on the brain, with use of the words "germs," "sanitizer," and "disease" up 97 percent, 182 percent, and 112 percent, respectively, between March and May of 2009 compared to the same period in 2008.

To view the Multimedia News Release, go to: <http://www.prnewswire.com/mnr/tripadvisor/37963/>

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Top 5 Germiest World Attractions

1. Kiss Me, I'm Filthy: Blarney Stone, Blarney, Ireland

Legend says that those who kiss the Blarney Stone, a block of stone built into Ireland's Blarney Castle, are rewarded with eloquent speech. But given that up to 400,000 mouths from all over the world touch the stone each year, putting your own to the grimy attraction (no easy task in itself) may be too high a price for the promised "gift of gab." One TripAdvisor traveler commented, "[You] have to bend over backwards, and kiss the stone upside down (imagine the germs on the stone from everyone doing that!)"

2. Sticky Situation: Wall of Gum, Seattle, Washington

A bizarre tradition at Seattle's Market Theatre in Post Alley has turned into a fascinating yet very germey attraction: a giant wall of gum. In the 1990s, visitors began sticking their gum to the wall while waiting in line, resulting in a colorful and somewhat stomach-turning sight after more than a decade of gum gathering. Some intrepid visitors have even molded shapes and faces out of their masticated gum. One TripAdvisor traveler reminds us, "Don't forget to contribute to the gum wall!"

3. Lip Reading: Oscar Wilde's Tomb, Paris, France

It is a testament to the love and respect felt by book-lovers and admirers the world over - Oscar Wilde's tomb in Paris' Pere-Lachaise cemetery is famously covered in lipstick prints. But with a rainbow of hundreds of visible kiss marks adorning the grave, and countless more planted every year, one can't help but wonder...isn't there a cleaner way to show your literary appreciation? One TripAdvisor traveler said, "The tombstone of Oscar Wilde is...well, wild, excuse the pun."

4. Foul Fowl: St. Mark's Square, Venice, Italy

A place of immeasurable beauty, Venice's famed St. Mark's Square has a dirty side - its thousands of hungry pigeons. While vendors no longer sell food to tourists to give to the birds, they still flock in countless numbers, with many visitors choosing to touch and even hold the pigeons. Be careful - these dirty fowl have been known to leave foul unexpected gifts on tourists. One TripAdvisor traveler recalls, "I know it does seem a little bit disgusting, but it's so totally hilarious to see your friend/partner/dad being attacked by birds!"

5. Grubby Mitts: Forecourt of Grauman's Chinese Theater (Handprints and Footprints), Hollywood, California

The forecourt to this historical Hollywood landmark features the hand and footprints of some of the biggest stars in history. But this intimate look at Hollywood's hands can get a bit grimy given that millions of fans place their fingers in the molds of their favorites. You may think about bringing some gloves or hand sanitizer before comparing your own paws to those of the greats.

One TripAdvisor traveler said, "You couldn't help comparing your feet and hands, too [with those of the stars]."

Top 5 Free Unheralded U.S. Attractions

1. Spectacular Sunset: Mallory Square, Key West, Florida

Local artisans, food vendors, street performers, and tourists gather here every evening for a celebration of dazzling Key West sunsets. Revelers enjoy the entertainment of acrobats, musicians, and other performers, all while awaiting the main attraction of the evening: the setting sun's spectacular display. According to one TripAdvisor traveler, "Of course, the best of Mallory Square is the sunset. You can't imagine the beauty of this, it is just awesome."

2. Sandstone Sensation: Garden of the Gods, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Its name does not overstate the beauty and the scale of this impressive sight. The Garden of the Gods is home to some of the most uniquely beautiful sandstone rock formations in the country, and affords incredible views of Colorado's famous Pike's Peak mountain behind the stunning red giants of the park. According to one TripAdvisor traveler, "Beautiful and right near the city, it's free. Be sure to look for the 'kissing camels' (two rocks that resemble camel heads kissing)."

3. Breakers' Best: Cliff Walk, Newport, Rhode Island

Newport's lovely three-and-a-half mile scenic Cliff Walk gives a serene and striking view of the Atlantic Ocean and of the famous Newport mansions that overlook it. Just away from the bustle of downtown Newport, Cliff Walk is a New England treasure that doesn't cost a dime. One TripAdvisor traveler said, "We've been doing the hike for decades and it always seems new and fresh....Seeing the water on one side and the huge looming mansions on the other is an incredible experience."

4. Night Sky Delight: Griffith Observatory, Los Angeles, California

Visitors can marvel at the night sky through the observatory's telescopes, or can simply enjoy the jaw-dropping view of Los Angeles and the Hollywood sign from Griffith's perch more than 1,100 feet above sea level on Mount Hollywood. The observatory also houses fascinating exhibits and massive, awe-inspiring celestial murals. According to one TripAdvisor traveler, "The observatory really shines after dark, when you can observe the heavens from the 12-inch rooftop telescope."

5. Furry Friends: Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, Kanab, Utah

Set on 33,000 acres in Utah's peaceful Angel Canyon, Best Friends Animal Sanctuary welcomes visitors to take a free tour of its vast grounds, or volunteer to help the animals the Sanctuary protects. Travelers rave about the amazing combination of beautiful surroundings and incredible experience of helping the approximately 1,700 animals that call Best Friends home. One TripAdvisor traveler said, "The work they do is amazing, the scenery is beautiful, and I guarantee you will fall in love with at least one animal and want to take it home with you!"

"Free attractions can be a great way for travelers to save on their summer travel this year," said Michele Perry, vice president of communications for TripAdvisor. "But beware - as our germiest attractions list reveals, sometimes the world's most famous and beloved landmarks can actually be breeding grounds for germs. Don't forget to pack the hand sanitizer!"

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SOURCE: TripAdvisor

CONTACT: Brooke Ferencsik, TripAdvisor, +1-617-670-6575,
bferencsik@tripadvisor.com

Web Site: <http://www.tripadvisor.com/>

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