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## Long Beach Fun Facts: World Wonders and National Novelties

Long Beach has many unusual and fun places to visit. From the world's largest mural of ocean wildlife to the thinnest house in the country, here are some interesting Long Beach locations.

- **World's largest mural.** Environmental marine artist, Wyland, completed Planet Ocean on the Long Beach Arena in 1993 with the Guinness Book of World Records certifying it as the world's largest mural. It took four weeks and 3,000 gallons of paint to create it. In 2009, Wyland returned, broke his record and painted "Earth, the Blue Planet," a rooftop mural on the arena spanning three acres; the project completed in less than 24 hours for Earth Day.
- **One of the world's longest breakwater.** Long Beach's breakwater, a man-made rock jetty constructed in the 1920's to slow wave action and create a calm harbor, stretches nine miles, making it the longest in the world. It was built during World War II to protect the U.S. Navy's 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet.
- **One of the world's largest selection of hats.** The Village Hat Shop at Shoreline Village boasts the world's largest selection of hat and carries everything from Panama hats to berets.
- **The World's Most Famous ocean liner berths in Long Beach.** The RMS Queen Mary was the largest, fastest and most elegant ocean liner in the world when she sailed on her maiden voyage in 1936. With a gross tonnage of 81, 237 and a length of 1,018 ½ feet, you wouldn't think such a huge hunk of steel could move very fast. But from 1936 to 1952, the Queen Mary held the Trans-Atlantic speed record between New York and Southampton. Today, this grand dame of the seas is a luxurious hotel, shopping, dining and entertainment complex, permanently moored in Queensway Bay and the perfect backdrop to the Long Beach skyline.

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- **Long Beach's Aquarium of the Pacific** is the fourth most attended aquarium in the U.S. with more than 1.5 million visitors each year. The Aquarium is more than just a tourist attraction, it is a scientific research facility and animal care center. The Aquarium gained fame for being the first to breed Weedy Sea Dragons in captivity. Now these endearing but endangered cousins of the seahorse can be shared with other aquariums around the world. The Aquarium has also been successful in breeding endangered Keyes Island Penguins.
- **House of style.** The nation's skinniest house, shown on *Ripley's Believe it or Not*, is located on Gladys Avenue. The Skinny House was built in 1932 by Nelson Rummond on a bet that he could not build a habitable residence on the lot, which measured only 10 feet by 50 feet. He went ahead and built the compact house, which is 3-stories high and 860 square feet.
- **Full speed ahead.** More than 200,000 racing fans flock to Long Beach each year to witness the nation's auto biggest race through city streets, the *Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach*.
- **Bikestation demo now a permanent delight.** The city of Long Beach's Bikestation at the First Street Transit Mall was the first full-service bike transit facility in the United States. It opened as a transit demonstration project in 1996 and mimics the bicycle facilities that are so popular in Europe. Today, the facility offers bike rentals, storage and repair services.
- **Egypt or Long Beach?** The Walter Pyramid, Cal State Long Beach's on-campus sports and athletic complex, opened in 1994 to become one of only three true pyramid structures in the United States and is the largest space-frame structure in North America.
- **Oil islands in disguise.** Visitors to Long Beach are always curious about the four small islands just off Long Beach's coastline. Decorated with artistic sculptures and waterfalls that light up at night and beautifully landscaped with palm trees and shrubs, as well as tall towers that are sometimes mistaken for hotels, the islands look like vacation resorts. But these are "oil islands," with active oil drilling and pumping equipment at work around the clock. THUMS, a consortium of the Texaco, Humble Union, Mobile, and Shell oil companies built the islands in 1965 to tap the vast offshore oil deposits of the Wilmington Oil Field. The City of Long Beach insisted that the islands would not detract from the Pacific Ocean view. To make the islands soundproof and pleasing to the eye, THUMS hired a landscape architect to camouflage them. They are the only oil islands in the U.S. decorated as such. In the 1970s the city named the islands after the four astronauts who died during the Apollo program, so they are now known as islands Grissom, Chaffey, Freeman, and White.
- **Take a Gondola ride through picturesque canals.** Gondola Getaway features authentic Venetian gondolas manned by costumed gondoliers who may even croon an Italian love song for you. Sip on your favorite beverage as you glide past the beautiful homes of Long Beach's exclusive Naples Island neighborhood.

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- **Run, bike, or walk through 26 scenic miles of Long Beach.** The International City Bank Marathon takes place every October and is a truly memorable event. It is the only marathon in the world where 80 percent of the racecourse is adjacent to water. The marathon winds around downtown Long Beach's Rainbow Harbor, passes near the Queen Mary and travels for 5 ½ miles along a beachfront bike and pedestrian pathway and also gives participants scenic views of the Colorado Lagoon, Marine Stadium, and picturesque Alamitos Bay.
- **Thar She Blows!** Long Beach's Rainbow Harbor is the ideal spot to jump aboard a modern, high-speed excursion boat and set sail to view the largest creatures that have ever lived on Earth. Daily whale watch cruises off the Long Beach coastline give passengers a closeup view of Blue Whales, Gray Whales, dolphins, seals and sea lions.

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