

White House Trivia

by
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Betcha you didn't know...

- > The first person to sleep in the White House was...Chief Justice John Marshall of the Supreme Court.
- > The White House (and Washington, D.C. in general), was built in a swamp.
- > There are White House replicas all over the world, including China.
- > The first baby born in the White House was Thomas Jefferson's grandson, James Madison Randolph, in 1805.
- > George Washington is the only president never to have slept in the White House.
- > The White House was the country's biggest house until after the American Civil War. It has 132 rooms and 35 bathrooms on six levels, as well as 412 doors, 147 windows, 28 fireplaces, 8 staircases, and 3 elevators. It is 168 feet long by 85 feet wide (without porticoes), 70 feet tall on the south side



and 60 feet 4 inches tall on the north side. The building and grounds are sprawled across 18 acres.

- > Although it's been the official residence of all U.S. presidents since 1800, the building wasn't formally deemed the "White House" until President Theodore Roosevelt used it on his stationary in 1901.
- > And why is the White House white? The building was first made white with lime-based whitewash in 1798, when its walls were finished, simply as a means of protecting the porous limestone from retaining moisture.
- > The White House is haunted! A myriad of Presidents, first ladies, staffers, and guests have reportedly seen ghosts lurking in the rooms of the historic building. The ghost of Abigail Adams has been seen heading toward the East Room, where she used to hang her laundry, and First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln had told friends that she had heard an angry and defeated Andrew Jackson stomping and swearing throughout the building's many halls. Of course, the most notable "ghost" comes in the form of President Abraham Lincoln; sightings have been reported by the first ladies of the Coolidge, Johnson, and Roosevelt presidencies, and even British Prime Minister Winston Churchill reported seeing Lincoln's ghost while staying at the White House during World War II.
- > White House pets? Of course, plenty of presidents have lived with standard house pets like dogs and cats, but others have welcomed animals that are much more... farm-friendly or even exotic. President John F. Kennedy welcomed a slew of animals onto the White House grounds, including birds, hamsters, rabbits, dogs, cats, and horses. Thomas Jefferson kept two bear cubs; Martin Van Buren had a pair of tiger cubs, which had been given to him by the Sultan of Oman and which Congress forced him to send to the zoo; William Henry Harrison kept both a billy goat and a cow; President James Buchanan had a pair of bald eagles; and among his array of puppies, ponies, and fish, Grover Cleveland also raised chickens on the White House property.
- > Some outgoing administrations have resorted to harmless pranks on the incoming administration, but one departing administration, however, truly upped its game: Before George W. Bush's administration took over in 2001, Clinton staffers apparently caused around \$20,000 in damage to the White House by removing the "W" keys from between 30 and 60 computer keyboards, which were found taped to the walls. The staffers also stole doorknobs, smeared the undersides of desk drawers with sticky goo, and rerouted about 100 phone lines to ring at other numbers.
- > One of the most notable mysteries surrounding the White House is the disappearance of its original cornerstone. A mere 24 hours after it was laid in 1792, the cornerstone, along with its inscribed brass plate, disappeared. No one has seen it since. The Freemasons, who constructed the building, denied taking it, and numerous Presidents, including Roosevelt and Truman, have tried to locate it, to no avail. One theory is that the cornerstone is hidden between two stone walls in the Rose Garden, but it has never been found.
- > In 1841, President William Henry Harrison was the first president to die at the White House.
- > In 1886, Grover Cleveland became the first and only president to get married in the White House.
- > Electricity was installed in the White House in 1891; however, Benjamin Harrison and his wife were afraid of the new invention and didn't like to use it!

[<https://www.rd.com/culture/white-house-facts/>; <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/questions/why-is-the-white-house-white>; <https://gazette665.com/2018/02/23/did-you-know-white-house-trivia/>]