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Introduction

It starts innocently enough. You notice the interesting motif on a beer bottle top. You put it in your pocket and when you get home, flip it into a bowl on your bookshelf. Another day, another beer, another bottle top catches your eye. It gets flipped into the bowl too.

Six months later you've attached 4563 bottle tops (some donated by friends who think your obsession is quirky) to one wall of your living room. You start a website documenting your collection.

One year on: your friends are often busy, but so are you, and in any case, the bottle-top collection has sky-rocketed, your bottle-top collecting web connections have inspired you

and the display room (your ex-garage) suddenly takes on a new guise: Bottle Top Museum.

We've pretty much left sane-land, we're now in the land of ooooh in the city of ahhhhh; firmly in the country of collector mania.

This is basically how every museum begins.

And really, thank the stars for these obsessives, these documenters of the great and trivial, these people who want to show us all something wonderful about their collections and share the insights into humankind each of them illuminates. They might be the easiest way for aliens to get to know us, if not for us to learn about ourselves. Oooooh ... alien artefacts. There's a collection to start... maybe you'll visit soon.



4 JING SHAN QIAN JIE,
DONGCHENG, BEIJING, CHINA
WWW.DPM.ORG.CN

Forbidden City / China

THE FAMOUS FORBIDDEN CITY, FORBIDDEN NO LONGER?

For more than 500 years the world's largest palace complex was the exclusive haunt of royal dynasties, but after a Republican coup overthrew the last Qing Emperor the complex was open to all.

SO WE CAN WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ROYALTY?

It's like stepping back in time. Crossing the 52m-wide moat that rings the complex takes you into the centre of the best-preserved ancient buildings in all of China.

WHERE DOES THE MUSEUM PART COME IN?

The buildings in the Forbidden City are collectively known as the Palace Museum and treasures and ancient royal artefacts are scattered through hundreds of rooms and galleries.

HOW DO WE APPROACH SUCH AN ENORMOUS SIGHTSEEING CHALLENGE?

See the City as divided into an outer and an inner court. Each is comprised of buildings with grandiose names like 'The Palace of Earthly Tranquillity'. Our tip for making the most of your time: wander unhurriedly through the endless halls and corridors and soak up the history at your own pace.



SIX DIFFERENT EUROPEAN LOCATIONS;
 MAIN CENTRE MMM FIRMIAN, SIGMUNDSKRON CASTLE,
 BOLZANO, ITALY WWW.MESSNER-MOUNTAIN-MUSEUM.IT

Messner Mountain Museum / Italy

IS THIS A MUSEUM THAT COUNTS AN ENTIRE MOUNTAIN AS AN EXHIBIT?

If you're picturing some kind of magic trick where mountains are turned into molehills in order to fit inside a museum space then we're sorry to disappoint on the miracle front.

WELL HOW IS THIS GOING TO WORK THEN?

The Messner Museum is the brainchild and lifetime passion of mountaineer and climber Reinhold Messner. He turned his obsession with mountains into a museum project that aims to be an education on the geology of mountains and glaciers, an exploration of the myths and legends of

particular mountains and the history of mountaineering and rock climbing, and last, but not least, a study of the various cultural groups that call mountains home.

A MOUNTAINOUS UNDERTAKING.

So much so that the museum is spread over six locations, with a particular focus at each: Firmian (man's relationship with mountains); Corones (the discipline of mountaineering); Juval (the mystical and religious significance of mountains); Dolomites (geology); Ortles (glaciers and climbing on ice); and finally Ripa (the culture, religion and tourism of mountain people from around the world).

LOOK: DIE BILDAGENTUR DER FOTOGRAFEN GMBH © ALAMY



4725 E MAYO BLVD, PHOENIX,
ARIZONA, USA
WWW.MIM.ORG

Musical Instruments Museum / USA

THERE ARE A FEW OF THESE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MUSEUMS AROUND THE WORLD.

WHY SHOULD I VISIT THIS ONE?

This Phoenix-based museum stakes its claim as one of the best by showcasing musical instruments from every country in the world. There are more than 15,000 instruments on display throughout five geographically arranged galleries.

WORLD MUSIC AT ITS BEST.

From an antique European charter horn to mechanical zithers to the iconic modern-day Fender guitar and everything in between.

I RECOGNISE THE FENDER.

There's also an entire gallery devoted to world-famous artists. You can see instruments played by Elvis, John Lennon, Johnny Cash, cellist Pablo Casals and Taylor Swift.

IF THERE WAS EVER ANY DOUBT THAT MUSIC WAS A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE THIS PLACE PUTS THAT UNCERTAINTY TO BED.

Visitors are given the opportunity to speak the language in the 'Experience' gallery: try your hand at playing guitars, Southeast Asian tribal drums, Japanese gongs – and even the quirky, electronic theremin.



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