



Celebrating May

Adopt a Horse Month

Older Americans Month

Mystery Month

May Day

May 1

Star Wars Day

May 4

Cinco de Mayo

May 5

Salvation Army Week

May 15–21

Mother's Day

May 14

International Museum

Day

May 18

Victoria Day (Canada)

May 22

World Lindy Hop Day

May 26

Memorial Day (U.S.)

May 29

A Cheesy Tradition

The rolling hills of Gloucestershire, England, are usually quiet, except on the last Monday in May when the locals participate in one of the world's wildest competitions: the annual Cheese-Rolling at Cooper's Hill. These are the famous cheese races, where men and women, young and old, chase a nine-pound wheel of Double Gloucester cheese down a precipitous hill. The first one to catch the wheel wins the cheese, but the cheese rolls so fast—up to 70 mph!—that this almost never happens. Instead, the first one to cross the finish line is usually declared the winner.



The most famous aspect of the race is not the cheese, but Cooper's Hill. This hill is so steep and treacherous that every year injuries occur. In 2007, in a notoriously wet and windy race, 20-year-old Christopher Anderson tumbled head-over-heels across the finish line and fell unconscious. When he awoke, miraculously unhurt, he learned that he had won a victory worth its weight in cheese.

Written records date the cheese-rolling in Gloucestershire back 200 years, but even then, it was considered an old tradition, with some claiming that it began in the 1400s. Since 1988, the cheese has been handmade by local cheese-maker Diana Smart, using milk from her own Brown Swiss, Holstein, and Gloucester cows at Churcham farm. Her cheese wheels are housed in a protective wooden casing and then wrapped in traditional blue and red ribbons. Between 1941 and 1954, due to food rationing during World War II, a wooden cheese was used. The largest cheese ever rolled was a 40-pound cheddar donated by New Zealand in 1958.

The sport's reach has gone global, and athletes from all over the world now compete. Winners have hailed from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Belgium, Egypt, and Nepal. Hundreds of spectators often arrive to watch the festivities, taking their lives in their hands as they throng the hill to watch the speedy cheese and its foolhardy followers.

Berry Pleasing



Peak season for picking strawberries is April, which makes May, as Strawberry Month, the perfect time to enjoy these luscious, red berries. In ancient Rome, strawberries were a symbol of Venus, the goddess of love and beauty, thanks to their heart shape and red color. Strawberries are linked to the myth of the death of Adonis. He was gored to death by a boar in a hunting accident, which broke Venus' heart. As she cried, her tears mingled with Adonis' blood, and when they hit the ground, they turned into strawberries. Strawberries have long been associated with love, purity, and perfection. No wonder they are a perfect May snack!

The Milwaukee Bridge War

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, began as three separate settlements, each named for its founder. Juneautown, east of the Milwaukee River, was settled by Solomon Juneau in 1818. West of the river was Kilbourntown, an area settled by Byron Kilbourn 16 years later in 1834. To the northwest, where the river emptied into Lake Michigan, lay Walker's Point, settled by George Walker in 1834. Each man believed his settlement to be the center of Milwaukee, and tensions between the settlements ran high until the Milwaukee Bridge War erupted on May 3, 1845.

Kilbourn made the first move, against Juneautown in 1835 when he laid out a street grid west of the river that completely ignored the existing grid in Juneautown to the east. Kilbourn's maps showed Juneautown as a blank, undeveloped space, an assertion he continued to make to the steamship captains traveling upriver to deliver vital goods to his west-side outpost. Kilbourn's ploy was clear: isolate Juneautown and make it reliant on a superior Kilbourntown.



Despite Kilbourn's efforts, Juneautown remained the most populous of the three Milwaukee settlements. Hostilities between the neighborhoods persisted even as bridges were built over the Milwaukee River to connect the competing districts, until May 3, 1845, when a schooner rammed and partially wrecked a Kilbourn-supported bridge at Spring Street.

Kilbournians accused the Juneaus of bribing the captain. They retaliated by damaging a bridge important to Juneautown. The Kilbournians also dismantled another Juneautown bridge for spare parts to fix their own, causing that bridge to collapse. In less than a month, four of the town's five bridges were destroyed. Throughout the summer, both sides armed themselves and prepared for battle. Miraculously, tensions calmed. Three new bridges were built under armed guard, and in January of 1846, the city of Milwaukee was formed.

In It for the Long Haul



The second Saturday in May is celebrated as World Migratory Bird Day. When you get to know some of the world's more impressive migratory birds, you'll understand why this is a worldwide celebration. Consider the Arctic tern, a small bird that flies from pole to pole each year, logging 30,000 miles. To survive this epic journey, terns must find many places to stop along the way throughout Europe, North and South America, and Africa, making it crucial for countries all around the world to provide habitat for these long haulers. With these remarkable birds living up to 30 years, the total life journey of a tern is equivalent to flying round trip three times to the moon and back. That is an accomplishment worth celebrating.

The U.S. Camel Corps

The pioneers leading the march into the American southwest during the 1830s faced parched deserts and other inhospitable conditions. After spending several years on the American frontier, U.S. Army Lieutenant George Crosman proposed a solution: “For strength in carrying burdens, for patient endurance of labor, and privation of food, water, and rest, and in some respects speed also, the camel and dromedary (as the Arabian camel is called) are unrivaled among animals.”



Crosman’s outlandish suggestion of utilizing camels as beasts of burden was largely ignored by the War Department. Then, in 1847,

Crosman met Major Henry Wayne, another camel enthusiast. Wayne passionately took up the cause, petitioning both the War Department and Congress to import camels for military use. Finally, after years of negotiations and politicking, and with the help of Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, on May 14, 1856, Wayne disembarked from the vessel *Supply* at Indianola, Texas, with 34 camels. Wayne then moved his herd to Camp Verde, 60 miles northwest of San Antonio, and set up the U.S. Army’s first Camel Corps.

Eager to prove the camels’ worth, Wayne tested them against a team of mules. The camels made a roundtrip to San Antonio in just two days’ time, both moving more than twice as fast as the mules and carrying double the weight. The response from Secretary Davis was enthusiastic. In February of 1857, forty-one more camels arrived at Camp Verde for Wayne to train.

The defining test of the Camel Corps’ worth came in June of 1857, when camels were used as part of a surveying expedition ranging from New Mexico to the border of Arizona and California. Expedition leader Edward Beale was skeptical, but by the second week of the journey, he was convinced of the camels’ worth, writing: “Certainly there never was anything so patient and enduring and so little troublesome as this noble animal.” Alas, the outbreak of the Civil War ended the camel experiment entirely.



Mother’s Peace Day



Anna Jarvis is often credited with founding the first Mother’s Day, in 1908, but it was poet and abolitionist Julia Ward Howe who made the first Mother’s Day Proclamation for Peace, in 1870. Howe was already well

known for authoring “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” and her fame lent greater weight to her advocacy for peace. As a nurse during the American Civil War, Howe had seen firsthand the ravages of war. When she saw the specter of war rising yet again at the onset of the Franco-Prussian War, she spoke out for an international Mother’s Day where mothers from all over the world would give counsel on how to achieve peace. She wrote: “Arise, then, women of this day! Arise all women who have hearts, whether our baptism be that of water or of tears!” Indeed, Anna Jarvis’ mother had worked with Julia Ward Howe, a relationship that inspired Jarvis’ Mother’s Day.