

Chicago Tribune  
**TRAVEL**

# Exhibitions of eccentricity

From Iceland to Missouri, quirky museums explore male anatomy, marzipan, pencil sharpeners and more

BY KATHERINE RODEGHIER  
Chicago Tribune

Sure, you'll be enlightened by visits to the Louvre in Paris, the British Museum in London and the Smithsonian Institution in our nation's capital. But for an atypical take on the human experience, check out these unusual museums and their oddball collections.

## World of Coca-Cola

Most people know how Coca-Cola tastes, but at this attraction in downtown Atlanta, they can sample more than 100 of the company's most popular beverages around the globe, including Inca Kola, a sweet, fruity yellow drink created in Peru in 1935; Bibo Candy Pine-Nut, an African beverage with pineapple and coconut flavors; and Thums Up, the strong, top-selling drink of India.

The Coca-Cola experience includes a visit to The Vault, where the secret formula is kept, along with displays on its origins, myths and legends. Galleries in The Milestones section house exhibits on the history of Coke, featuring a 19th-century soda fountain similar to the one where the drink was first served and a 1939 Chevrolet truck used to deliver the product in Argentina. Other attractions include a 4-D (multisensory) movie, Coca-Cola TV ads from around the world, a peek at the bottling process and a chance to have a photo taken with the Coca-Cola polar bear.



Delivered all the way from Argentina, a vintage Coca-Cola delivery truck occupies a corner of the World of Coca-Cola museum in Atlanta, the city where the soft drink giant is based.

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Life-size marzipan figures draw attention in the Marzipan Museum above the Niederegger store in Lubeck, Germany.

## Marzipan Museum

Lubeck, Germany, enjoys a reputation for producing some of the world's finest marzipan. Nowhere is it more celebrated than at Niederegger, a confectioner that has been turning out the almond and sugar sweet since 1806. Upstairs from the store and cafe stand a dozen life-size marzipan mannequins styled as figures from Lubeck's history, along with a marzipan model ship and Faberge-like eggs. Exhibits and a video explain the history of marzipan and how it's made. Originally from the Middle East, it was carried home by Crusaders in boxes called mataban. Today shoppers can choose from the store's 300 varieties of marzipan.

## National Cookie Cutter Historical Museum

In many kitchens, the humble cookie cutter is relegated to the back of a cabinet until Christmastime, but in Joplin, Mo., it takes center stage all year in a section of the Joplin Museum Complex.

These cute kitchen utensils fill 11 display cases tracing their history. Europeans used hand-carved wooden molds to press dough into a variety of shapes, and when they immigrated to the U.S. they brought their molds with them.

Tinsmiths created the first American-made cookie cutters in the 1700s. These were followed by cutters made of aluminum and then, when metal was scarce during World War II, plastic. Companies gave away cutters as an incentive to buy their baking products.



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A collection of 3,450 pencil sharpeners is on display in a tiny building in the garden at the Hocking Hills Regional Welcome Center near Logan, Ohio.

## Paul A. Johnson Pencil Sharpener Museum

What started off as a hobby for a retired minister has become a curiosity at the Hocking Hills Regional Welcome Center near Logan, Ohio.

The Rev. Paul A. Johnson began collecting pencil sharpeners more than 25 years ago, after his wife gave him two shaped like metal toy cars as Christmas gifts. The collection grew to 3,450 sharpeners in a variety of shapes and themes. Some celebrate the holidays, while others replicate animals — horses, cats, dogs. Some are shaped like food, some like symbols of the zodiac. There are sharpeners representing popular travel destinations, like Disneyland and Spain, and some devoted to history and religion.

After Johnson's death, the tiny museum building was moved on a flatbed truck from the Johnsons' property to the front garden of the welcome center, where visitors to the Hocking Hills region stop in for tourist information. The sharpeners were carefully unpacked and placed on shelves in their original positions.

## International Spy Museum

James Bond wannabes get a taste of spycraft in Washington, D.C., at the only public museum in the nation dedicated to espionage.

The "School for Spies" exhibit contains more than 200 artifacts, including a CIA disguise kit and a buttonhole camera on a coat worn by KGB operatives. Historical displays detail the undercover work of purported (and executed) spy Mata Hari, cookbook author Julia Child and film director John Ford. A special exhibit chronicles 50 years of James Bond villains. In two immersive experiences, participants can try to locate a missing nuclear device and go on a GPS-based outdoor walking mission. The museum store stocks disguise kits, spy toys and books.

In the fall, the museum is scheduled to move from its current location in the Penn Quarter to a building at L'Enfant Plaza, where it will more than double its floor space.



INTERNATIONAL SPY MUSEUM

This lipstick pistol was employed by KGB operatives during the Cold War.

## Icelandic Phallogical Museum



HALLDOR KOLBEINS/GETTY

The Icelandic Phallogical Museum displays male sex organs from a wide array of mammals.

This storefront museum in downtown Reykjavik, Iceland, displays the male reproductive organ of almost every land and sea mammal in Iceland — and several more from outside this northern island nation.

It devotes itself to phallogology, the scientific study of the male member, and includes 282 specimens from 93 species of animals, most of them preserved in jars of formaldehyde or dried and displayed on the wall or in glass cases. The smallest, the baculum (penis bone) of a hamster, measures 0.08 of an inch and must be viewed with a magnifying glass, while the largest, from a blue whale, spans 67 inches — and that's just the tip.

Other animals represented in the collection include an African elephant, polar bear, seal, mouse, walrus, moose, giraffe and weasel. Five human donations have been pledged by men from Germany, England and the U.S. upon their deaths.

The museum's founder, historian Sigurdur Hjartarson, says his interest in phallogology began when he received a pizzle — a dried bull's penis made into a whip — while on summer vacation in the Icelandic countryside. His collection grew and was passed to his son, now the curator of the museum, which draws more than 12,000 people a year.

Katherine Rodeghier is a freelance writer.

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