

Cultural Spotlight

I n t e r n a t i o n a l S t u d e n t a n d S c h o l a r S e r v i c e s

Interesting Summer Facts:

- July is National Ice Cream Month; it was created by President Ronald Reagan in 1984
- The extended “summer break” was implemented in the mid 1800s by education reformer Horace Mann
- 2.6 million people lived in the US on July 4, 1776; today, the estimated population for July 4, 2013 is 316.2 million

Summer: America’s Favorite Season

Summer in America is a time for fun and celebration. The weather is warm, and Americans of all ages participate in a variety of festivities. For many Americans, summer means vacation, outdoor pursuits, many kinds of festivals, and a variety of other warm-weather activities. This issue of Cultural Spotlight explores a few necessities of experiencing an American summer.

First, read about that very first American holiday, the 4th of July, also called Independence Day. Find out what’s going on in the Champaign area for this special day. Page 2 offers information about unique American festivals: these attractions occur all over America, in big cities and small. Next, there is a history of the drive-in movie theater, a popular way of watching movies in the 1950s and 1960s.

Finally, on page three, read about “America’s Past-time,” the sport of baseball. There are many different options for catching a game in the Champaign-Urbana area. Find out more in the article.



4th of July

You may be familiar with the name of this famous American holiday, but still wonder “What is it all about exactly?” For many Americans, there are many different traditions and ways to celebrate, but they are all celebrating for the same reason: the independence of the United States from Great Britain. For this reason, the 4th of July is also referred to as “Independence Day”, also a nod to the official document, the Declaration of Independence, which was signed July 4th, 1776.

The 4th of July is an official federal holiday, so many businesses and governmental agencies are closed on this day. Many towns will have community celebrations, including parades, festivals, and fireworks, while many families will cele-

brate on their own with barbecues, cookouts, and their own personal firework show. Often, they may do a combination of both as the fireworks sold for personal use are not as big (or loud!) as the ones communities can show.

You can also expect to see LOTS of red, white, and blue on this day, as those are the colors of the U.S. flag. Many people will wear these colors, decorate their house with U.S. flags or decorations, and many food items are made using these colors, or even made to look like the flag!

Here in Champaign, there are many activities going on that are open for anyone to attend and participate in, such as a 5K Run/Walk, parade, concert, and finally fireworks! This

year, all events are located right on campus near Memorial Stadium and the State Farm Center. For a full list of activities and times, you can visit www.july4th.net.

Also, in just about any city you can find some kind of parade, festival, or fireworks show, not only just on the 4th but other days too (especially if the 4th falls on a weekend!). If you will be visiting another city, or want to make plans to visit another for the 4th of July, just search online for a visitors information guide for that city for a list of events. Surely, you will be able to find something that fits your wants and needs in participating in this national celebration!

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****Please Note:** The city of Champaign forbids the use and sale of Class C and Division 1.4 Fireworks for personal use. This includes bottle rockets, roman candles, firecrackers, and handheld fireworks.

Unique Attractions: Festivals in the U.S.

Festival: A periodic commemoration, anniversary, or celebration: *an annual strawberry festival.*

Festivals are a huge part of spring and summer for many Americans. Washington, DC starts off spring with the National Cherry Blossom Festival, a celebration of the colorful and aromatic flowers that bloom each spring. Milwaukee, WI is home to the largest music festival in the world, Summerfest. As the temperatures increase and the days get longer, festival season begins. While many are big festivals that take place in big cities, there are also small, unique festivals that take place in small towns across America.

Bell Buckle, TN is home to the RC and Moon Pie Festival, celebrating “the South’s finest tradition: RC Cola and Moon Pies.” You can practice throwing cow chips (dried cow dung) at the annual Wisconsin State Cow Chip Throw and Festival in Prairie du Sac, WI. Many festivals feature music, arts and crafts,

games, and 5K or 10K Runs as part of the festivities.

If you don’t like Moon Pies or cow chips aren't your thing, no worries. Champaign-Urbana and the surrounding areas are home to entertaining festivals throughout the summer months. See the list below for local festivals that offer unique events and celebrate important aspects of life in the mid-west.

Champaign Blues, Brews, and BBQ Festival (June 28-29); Live blues music, lots of BBQ ; <http://bluesbrewsandbbqfest.com/>

Bloomington Gold Corvette Show (June 28-30); Classic corvettes on display; <http://www.bloomingtongold.com/>

Champaign Music Festival (July 20); Live music in downtown Champaign; www.champaignparkdistrict.com

Urbana Sweetcorn Festival (August 23-24); “All the local sweetcorn you can eat,” plus live music, crafts, and a family area; www.urbanabusiness/events

Pygmalion Music and Lit Festival (Sept. 26-28); Multi-day music festival with indie-rock acts from around the world; there is also a 2-day lit fest featuring authors reading selected works; www.pygmalionmusicfestival.com

For a complete list of festivals in every state in the US, go to www.festing.com



The Urbana Sweet Corn Festival is the largest festival in Champaign County

The Drive-In Theater: An American Relic

Today’s movie-watcher has many options: 3D, IMAX, Blue-Ray, DVD, streaming video. Exciting new viewing and sound options are routinely introduced to viewers. It may be difficult to imagine a time when only a few options existed: traditional, indoor theaters or outdoor, drive-in theaters.

The first drive-in theater was opened in Camden, New Jersey on June 6, 1933. The facilities experienced tremendous growth during the baby boom years of the 1950’s and early 1960s. At one time, there were more than 4000 drive-in theaters in the U.S.

The numbers of drive-ins decreased

throughout the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. There was competition from VCRs, cable TV, and other sources of entertainment. Today, while nowhere near the previous numbers, there are drive-ins that offer unique movie-going experiences.

The Harvest Moon Twin Drive-In, in Gibson City, IL (30 miles north of Champaign) is one such theater. Originally opened in 1954, the theater closed in the 1980s. It was reopened in 2003 and is now the area’s #1 drive-in theater. It features digital FM sound and 4k Digital HD projectors. Visitors can watch from lawn chairs—you don’t have to sit in your car— and enjoy the night sky while watching. Homemade snacks

are available from the concession stand. The venue always offers the newest releases but also features older movies on special theme nights. Check out www.harvestmoondrivein.com for more info.

“This is as close as you’ll ever get to IMAX under the stars.”





Baseball and Summer

The United States is rather unique in the fact that there isn't one sport you can point to and say 'that's the national sport'. Many sports fight for dominance, and this is helped by the fact that most sports have distinct seasons. American football starts in the early Fall, and is over by early February. The basketball season starts around November and is normally done by late Spring. Ice hockey follows a similar pattern to basketball, which leaves a big hole for sports in the summer. And that's where baseball comes in.

Baseball players are often known as 'the boys of summer', despite the fact the professional season runs for seven months, starting in April and not concluding until late October. Yet in the American consciousness, baseball is a summer game, is THE summer game. It is known as 'America's pastime', not because it is the most popular sport but because it is the sport of the lazy sunny days of June and July. It is because it has been romanticized in the eyes of Americans more than other sports that are either played indoors or in the dead of winter, romanticized partly due to its summer season and partly due to the pace of the game. Much slower than other major sports,

baseball lends itself to conversation amongst its audience far more than the fast action of its competitors. Like cricket, a baseball game is broken down into innings where each team gets a chance to bat then field, but unlike cricket, each game has nine innings! With a change in the middle to swap the fielding and hitting teams, that's up to 17 breaks in play- plenty of time to chat with your friends and grab something to eat or drink.

In the UK, many fans consider a trip to the match incomplete if they haven't eaten a pie at half time. Baseball fans often think the same of hot dogs. Hot dogs are the quintessential baseball food, often washed down with an ice cold beer. Due to the friendly rather than fierce rivalries between fans, and the slower pace of the game, alcohol is usually sold at games without incident.

The sheer scale of the professional baseball system in the US helps give baseball the largest sporting attendances in the country. This contributes to the idea of this being America's pastime, as almost every community has a professional baseball team a short drive away. In this way, baseball mimics many other countries where the

professional leagues stretch from the 60,000 seater stadiums down to the smallest leagues where attendances rarely crack 4 figures. Major League Baseball has 30 teams, all housed in major cities; the closest teams to Champaign being the Chicago Cubs and the Chicago White Sox to the north, and the St Louis Cardinals to the south. However below the Major League level are three leagues of Minor League Baseball, known as Triple A, Double A, and Single A. The more A's, the higher the level of play and the larger the stadiums. For Champaign, the closest AAA team is the Indianapolis Indians to our east, but the closest team in the whole professional baseball system are the Single A Peoria Chiefs, an 80 minute drive to the west.

Whether you choose to attend a major league game at historic Wrigley Field with 40,000 other Chicago Cubs fans, or whether you decide to head to the smaller confines of Dozer Park in Peoria, you'll find that baseball and summertime really do go together like- well, baseball and hot dogs!

