13 real estate fun facts to tickle your brain

If you stay in real estate long enough, you'll come across your fair share of the quirky and the outright bizarre — from the Manhattan mansion whose owners include five sovereign nations to the California "flyer bandit" whose cult sent him to collect as many home flyers as possible.

We thought we would share 12 of the most mind-boggling real estate facts with our readers. Try whipping one out at your next open house or office party.

1. This house is owned by 5 different countries

Last year, an opulent Manhattan mansion hit the market — a normal, everyday affair if not for the fact that its owners include the governments of Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia.

The 20,000-square-foot home, which was modeled after the castle of Versailles, was bought by the Republic of Yugoslavia as a New York embassy in 1946.

But when the republic dissolved into separate countries in 1992, the property suddenly found itself with five current co-owners — who all need to sign off if the house is ever to be sold.

Use public relations to tell your property’s story

PR can be used to great effect, as real estate professional Scott Carvill has seen across his luxury listings READ MORE

2. The most expensive listing in America sold at foreclosure auction

The most expensive listing in the United States, a 157-acre plot of land in Beverly Hills listed for $1 billion, actually sold for a mere fraction of that price ($100,000) at a foreclosure auction.

The place had accumulated over $200,000 in debt and the original lender paid to take it on in the purchase. Talk about having inflated expectations for what a place is worth.

Realtor.com

3. Keep your fliers close

This summer, the Santa Cruz County Association of Realtors sent out a safety warning alerting members to a so-called “flyer bandit” emptying the brochure boxes attached to open house

signage in several nearby cities. His suspected motive? According to the local police, the man is in a competition organized by a local spiritual cult in which whoever collects the most flyers wins *a bride*.

memegenerator.net

4. Out of the red

In Scotland, there is a common custom of painting your door red whenever you pay off your mortgage, according to Seth Williams.

Anyone local who owns a home knows about this custom — so, next time you're in Edinburgh, keep an eye out for homeowners who reached this important milestone.

Flickr

5. A town that’s built over a meteor

A Bavarian town named Nördlingen was actually built over 15-million-year-old meteor. An asteroid hit the town over a thousand years ago but, far from being pressured to leave, the locals started building a town on the remaining crater. You can still see the circular layout of the town to this day.

Wikimedia Commons

6. You will likely move 12 times (and need an agent each time)

The idea of a being born in the same home that you will one day pass down to your kids is becoming more and more of a myth.

According to a survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, the average person will move house just under 12 times in a lifetime — and, luckily, will need an agent's help each time he or she does so.

Photo credit: skeeze | Pixabay

7. Doorknobs aren’t as germ-ridden as you might think

Worried about how many people touched that the doorknob? For centuries, doorknobs and knockers have been specifically made of materials like silver, iron, copper and aluminum — these materials kill bacteria and serve as natural self-disinfectants. No need to worry about who touched the doorknob on the way to the open house.

norikko / Shutterstock.com

8. Warren Buffet lives in a modest home in Nebraska

You'd think that someone with Warren Buffet's means would jet set from mansion to mansion on some exotic islands. But that's not actually the case.

The stock magnate and fourth richest person in the world has famously chosen to live in the same Omaha, Nebraska, home that he had purchased for $31,500 in 1958.

Warren's attachment to the modest property — it's made of stucco and has five bedrooms and 2.5 bathrooms — has been a constant source of interest among businesspeople and real estate lovers alike.

Warren Buffett

9. ‘Friends’ got an unheard of deal

No shortage of people have tried to calculate just how much the famous purple apartment from Friends would be worth in today’s dollars.

The latest figures pin the cost of a two-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment in New York’s trendy West Village at well over $2 million.

(Fans will remember that Monica and Rachel were able to pay $200 in rent due to a rent-controlled lease passed down from a grandmother.)

Who said television wasn’t realistic?

NBC

10. There’s no such thing as vintage homes in Tokyo

If you’ve ever dreamed about buying a pre-owned house in Tokyo to save some money, you might have to rethink your plans.

Construction is such a bustling industry all over the country that nearly half the homes in Japan are torn down 30 years after being built.

Jonah Anderson / Shutterstock.com

11. Holy guacamole! Free toast for a year

Has anyone not yet made a joke about millennials who buy avocado toast instead of houses?

One Canadian development company played up this common stereotype by offering anyone who buys one of their new condo units for $400,000 Canadian dollars (roughly $290,000 USD), a year of one free avocado toast a week at a nearby café.

It sounds flashy, but the numbers actually added up to little more than a cute gimmick — if we assume that an avocado toast costs $15, having one a week for free would equal a $780 discount.

Photo Credit: Elena Shashkina/Shutterstock.com.

12. A guy bought a home for a paperclip

How do you bargain your way into selling a home for a paper clip? Canadian blogger Kyle McDonald once did just that after making fourteen trades over the course of one year — first a paper for a pen and then a doorknob and, eventually, a whole house in Saskatchewan. McDonald's keen bargaining abilities earned him fame around the world.

Nikoftime1229 / iStock.com

13. Mail-order houses go way back

You might think that DIY tiny homes that you order online are the latest real estate trend, but that's actually far from the case.

In the 1900s, Sears started featuring a kit for making a house in its catalogs. The mail-order kit would feature the blueprint and all the pieces you'd need to build a simple house — many settlers who came to America and bought a plot of land would build this type of simple house on it as they settled into life in the new country.

According to NPR, between 70,000 and 75,000 people ordered houses from Sears this way by 1940.

Sears

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