

Reading

Strange buildings

The Shoe House

Along the Lincoln Highway, near a small town in the state of Pennsylvania, you can see one of the strangest, funniest, most unusual buildings in the US. It's the Shoe House. It looks exactly like a gigantic shoe, but, at almost eight metres high, it's a lot bigger than any ordinary shoe or boot! These days, it's a museum and ice-cream shop but, unbelievably, it was once someone's home.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, a boot and shoe manufacturer built the house in 1948 because he wanted a home that was also an advertisement for his business. He gave one of his boots to a local architect and said, 'Build me a house like this!' Fortunately, the architect knew exactly what to do, and designed a five-storey, three-bedroomed house. At first, the owner decided to make a home in his wonderful new building, but then he moved into another house - it wasn't comfortable or luxurious enough for a successful businessman!

After he left, he invited old people to stay in the house for luxury weekends. The people had a maid, a cook, and a driver to look after them! And everyone got a free pair of shoes when they left!

The Toilet-shaped House

This is the weirdest house in South Korea. In 2007, the mayor of the city of Suwon decided to construct a two-storey mansion which looked exactly like an enormous toilet. And naturally there is a big hole in the top! It cost over a million dollars to build and is one of the most expensive homes in the city. It is also one of the best for the environment as the house has some of the world's best technology for saving water. It also has a roof-top balcony, and, of course, it has four of the most elegant bathrooms you can imagine, including a large, glass-walled bathroom right at the centre of the house.

The mayor didn't build the house to show off. He had a political reason for spending all that money on something so strange. The first important meeting of the World Toilet Association (or WTA) took place at the house, and both the mayor and the WTA wanted to bring attention to the fact that two billion people in the world don't have a toilet. Building a huge toilet in the shape of a house is a great way of doing that!

Following the death of the mayor, the house is now a museum and it teaches people about the history of toilets. And, if you think that's funny, wait until you hear the name of the house. In Korean, it's called Haewoojae. In English, that means 'a peaceful place where you don't have to worry about things'. Isn't that the perfect name for a house – and a toilet?!

Read the text. Circle the correct answers (a–d).

- 1 Where is the Shoe House?
 - a It's in the state of Pennsylvania.
 - b It's in the centre of a small town.
 - c It's not far from the city of Lincoln.
 - d It's just off the highway near a large town.
- 2 What do we find out about the boot manufacturer who first owned the Shoe House?
 - a He made and sold shoes and boots in the house.
 - b He didn't live in the house for very long.
 - c He built the house by himself.
 - d He loved living in his wonderful house.
- 3 What did the owner do after he left the Shoe House?
 - a He sold the Shoe House.
 - b He invited people to come and stay at the Shoe House.
 - c He made it into a museum and shop.
 - d He left the house empty.
- 4 What do we find out about the toilet house in South Korea?
 - a There aren't many bathrooms.
 - b It's got features which aren't good for the environment.
 - c The house has only got one floor – it's a very big bungalow.
 - d You can stand on the roof of the house.
- 5 Why did the mayor build the house?
 - a Because he wanted everyone to like him.
 - b Because he had an important message for the world.
 - c Because he wanted to build a toilet museum.
 - d Because he wanted to start a toilet organization.

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