

Great Balls of Fire

On October 29, thousands of visitors will line the banks of the Mekong River in Thailand to celebrate the end of *Vassa*, a period of intensive Buddhist meditation when Buddhists often give up meat or alcohol, a practice that has led some to call *Vassa* “Buddhist Lent.” But the real highlight is the river itself, which holds a mysterious secret.



Each year, along a 150-mile stretch of river, glowing balls of red light shoot from the river and disappear into the sky. A local legend attributes the fireballs to Naga, a massive serpent who lives in the river and awakens at the end of *Vassa*. The Naga is a deity who is believed to guard a treasure in the underwater kingdom of Naga-Loka, a palace adorned with precious gems. The god is also a protector of Vientiane, the capital of Laos.

Scientists have attempted to explain the fireball phenomenon. The fireballs may be the result of a buildup of the swamp gas methane. As organic matter in the riverbed decomposes, methane increases until it is released in great underwater bubbles. When the methane touches the oxygen-rich air, it spontaneously combusts, creating brief explosions of fire. Other researchers have discovered traces of the flammable gas phosphine, a gas that is typically manufactured for industrial uses. None of the research explains why the fireballs always coincide with the end of *Vassa*, although some scientists have concluded that the phenomenon might correspond to a unique alignment of the sun, moon, and Earth, which coincides with the lunar holiday of *Vassa*.

Some skeptics have an alternate explanation. They assert that people from the county of Laos across the river from Thailand shoot flares up into the sky, perpetrating a massive ruse on the spectators. However, local villagers who have witnessed the Naga lights for decades find this hard to believe. While the debate over the origin of the fireballs continues, people still flock to the river to watch the mysterious lights, often joining in the fun by setting off fireworks of their own.

October Birthdays

In astrology, those born from October 1–22 balance the scales of Libra. Libras strive to find equilibrium and fight for equality and justice. They use their sharp minds to de-escalate conflicts and find peace. Those born from October 23-31 are Scorpio’s scorpions. Scorpions seek deep connections and nurture deep empathy and commitment.

Residents:

Elyn Roberts – October 2nd
 Esther Rogers – October 7th
 Shirline Butler – October 26th

Staff:

Nick Warney – October 18th

(Birthday Happy Hour celebrated the last Friday of each month.)

See October Calendar for details.)

The Lady with the Lamp



Would the “Florence Nightingale effect” exist if Florence Nightingale never left for Crimea on October 21, 1854? Nightingale and her nurses

arrived at the Crimean War hospital in Scutari to find that conditions were so unsanitary that soldiers were dying ten times faster than they should have. Nightingale nearly single-handedly turned the hospital around, cleaning the rooms, providing laundered clothes and linens to patients, bringing fresher food, flushing out the sewers, and ventilating the rooms. She made her nightly rounds with a handheld light, earning her the nickname the “Lady with the Lamp.” Some wonder, did Florence Nightingale fall in love with any of the patients under her care? Records show that Nightingale never married out of fear that it would interrupt her duties as a nurse. Perhaps we should be thankful for that decision, as Nightingale’s efforts have earned her renown as the “Founder of Modern Nursing.”

Meadow Creek Village

Cascade Living Group | 3988 12th Street Cutoff SE | 503-375-9732 |

Music Vendors visiting in October:

Chaplain Steve
(American Classics and Gospel)

October 3rd

1:00pm in Dining Area

Rowdy Rumlbers
(Classic Rock)

October 4th

3:00pm in Dining Area

Uncle Dave
(Old School Country)

October 11th

1:00pm in Lounge

Curtis McDonald
(Old School Country)

October 16th

1:30pm in Dining Area

Brianna Blanchfill
(Gospel Music)

October 22nd

2:00pm in Dining Area

Blake Johnston
(Rockabilly)

October 24th

11:00am in Dining Area

A Magical Life

When Harry Houdini died on October 31, 1926, obituaries called him the world’s greatest magician and an unparalleled escape artist. Houdini was born in Hungary and emigrated to the United States with his family, where they soon fell into poverty. Houdini began his magic career in 1891 with little success. It wasn’t until 1899 that Houdini impressed vaudeville manager Martin Beck with a handcuff escape act. He went on to baffle inspectors from Scotland Yard with his escapes, a feat that earned him regular performances and a decent salary. It did not take long before Houdini was a household name all over Great Britain. He dazzled audiences with card tricks, illusions, and, of course, escape acts. Houdini suddenly found himself the highest-paid entertainer in the world.

Houdini’s escapes, while marvelous and death-defying, were also extremely dangerous. Failure to escape meant certain death. Houdini wrapped himself in chains and plunged into a river. He was put in handcuffs and sealed into a milk can filled with milk. He was wrapped in a straitjacket, placed in a coffin, and buried alive. One of his most famous tricks was the “Chinese water torture cell,” where his ankles were locked in stocks, and he was suspended upside down in a locked glass-and-steel cabinet filled with water. His escapes were so unbelievable that critics often called him a fake. But no one took their work more seriously than Houdini, and as president of the Society of Magicians, he did not hesitate to expose frauds.

Houdini might be the most famous name in magic, but he is far from the world’s only famous magician. Other greats include illusionist Jean-Eugene Robert-Houdin, from whom Houdini took his name. Robert-Houdin is credited with transforming magic from a gimmick for the lower classes to respectable entertainment for the wealthy. And Alexander Herrmann, billed as “Herrmann the Great,” was married to Adelaide Herrmann, known as the “Queen of Magic.” Hermann was an expert card thrower and could land cards in the highest balcony of a theater. And, of course, he perfected pulling several rabbits out of a hat.

Absolutely Gourd-geous



Anyone who's attended a county fair is probably familiar with gargantuan, record-breaking pumpkins. Last October, Travis Gienger grew the largest pumpkin in America at 2,560 pounds. But in September of 2021, Italian farmer Stefano Cutrupi set a new world record for the world's largest when his colossus weighed in at 2,702.9 pounds. Why grow pumpkins to such enormous sizes? A better question to ask is how do pumpkins get so big? And can you grow a giant in time for Pumpkin Day on October 26?

Pumpkins are members of the genus *Cucurbita*. These fruits are related to the cucumber family and include squashes, gourds, zucchini, and, of course, pumpkins. All these plants are native to tropical and subtropical areas of North and South America. They grow on vines and can naturally grow as large as 200 pounds, making them the heaviest fruits on the planet.

Over the years, farmers moved these plants out of the tropics and began to grow them around the world. They selected certain species and explored which cultivars could be cross-bred to create the largest pumpkins. At the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, William Warnock wowed crowds with a 365-pounder. In 1900, Warnock showed off a 400-pound pumpkin at the World's Fair in Paris. His giant pumpkins had become major attractions.

It wasn't until the 1970s that Howard Dill of Nova Scotia bred a pumpkin known as the "Atlantic Giant," a cross between the Rennie's Mammoth (itself descended from the Goderich Giant) and Mammoth Chile pumpkins. Over the next decade, pumpkins would grow to 700 pounds.

Growing an Atlantic Giant takes 130 days, with plenty of full sunshine, fertilizer, and water. A frost will ruin the growth, so it's important to keep the pumpkin warm early in the season. Once the vine bears a pumpkin, choose the best to focus on and remove the rest. Even nonprofessionals can grow Atlantic Giants as large as 500 pounds!

Leif the Lucky

Each year, October 9 is proclaimed Leif Erikson Day to honor the Scandinavian explorer who landed in North America over 1,000 years ago. For many people of Scandinavian descent, this is a day to remind the world that Leif Erikson, also known as Leif the Lucky, was the first European to set foot in North America.

Both the *Saga of Erik the Red* and the *Saga of the Greenlanders* are books that offer details about Leif Erikson's voyage to Vinland, in present-day Newfoundland. While sailing from Norway to Greenland, Erikson was blown off course. He discovered a land full of wild grapes, wheat, and maple trees, samples of which the seafarers brought back to Greenland. The new land was called Vinland, or "wine land," after the grapes found growing there. Erikson never returned to Vinland, but others from both Greenland and Iceland did, including the Icelandic explorer Thorfinn Karlsefni, who unsuccessfully attempted to establish a permanent settlement there.

Giving Thanks



Thanksgiving may fall on the fourth Thursday of November in America, but for Canadians, the second Monday in October will always be Thanksgiving. Canada's holiday commemorates Sir Martin Frobisher, who sailed from England to Canada in 1578 in search of the Northwest Passage. When Frobisher reached Nunavut in the eastern Arctic, he gave a "thanksgiving" for their safe arrival, eating a meal of salty beef, biscuits, and mushy peas. Luckily, most Canadians don't repeat this meager meal on Thanksgiving. As in America, most Canadians opt for turkey. Stuffing and pumpkin pie also grace the Thanksgiving table, but the stuffing is made of rice and bread crumbs, and the pie is chock full of ginger and other spices, like cloves, nutmeg, and cinnamon. As the holiday's name implies, it is still a day to give thanks for family and the fall harvest.

Tale of the Tape



The very first ticker-tape parade was a spontaneous celebration held on October 28, 1886, at the official dedication of the Statue of Liberty, which was presided over by President Grover Cleveland. After the dedication, a parade wound its way through lower Manhattan's financial district. From financial offices high above, workers threw down ticker tape, the one-inch-wide strip of paper that continuously "ticked" out of machines and showed the values of stocks being traded on the stock market. Normally, the tape streamed out of machines and formed useless piles on the floor. Workers saw the piles as potential confetti waiting to rain down on the president, visiting dignitaries, and their cavalcade. The rain of ticker tape was such a hit that "ticker-tape parades" became a hallmark of New York City celebrations.

The largest ticker-tape parade New York has ever seen was held in 1951 for General Douglas MacArthur. The 19-mile route attracted seven million spectators and amassed 3,000 tons of ticker tape. While this parade was the largest New York has ever seen, the parade with the most ticker tape was held in 1945 following the Allied victory over Japan. Over 5,000 tons of paper, including ticker tape and confetti, rained down in celebration.

Alas, traditional ticker-tape parades went out of style when the stock market switched from ticker-tape machines to electronic boards in the 1960s. These days, parades still take place, but confetti is used in place of ticker tape. Regardless of when a parade has taken place, during or after the ticker-tape era, almost all parades travel a one-mile stretch of Broadway from the Battery to City Hall, known as the Canyon of Heroes. Today, visitors to the Canyon of Heroes will find over 200 black granite plaques detailing each parade that has been held in New York, honoring astronauts, world leaders, explorers, scientists, and sports heroes. This is New York City's version of the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

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The Difference Between Living and Living Well

Burgoo Days



October 7 and 8 bring the Burgoo Days to counties across the American Midwest and South. Burgoo is a traditional stew that celebrates both the pioneers and the harvest season, as it was traditionally made with whatever meats and vegetables the pioneers could find, including venison, squirrel, opossum, raccoon, game birds, lima beans, corn, okra, tomatoes, cabbage, and potatoes. In Kentucky and Indiana, the making of burgoo is a vast communal enterprise, where members of the community each bring an ingredient and the stew is slow-cooked in a public setting. Burgoo is considered an iconic dish of the Kentucky Derby.