

*Amelia Earhart took off
to fly around the world, and
was never seen again.*

Amelia Earhart

The pioneering American aviator who mysteriously disappeared ...

Amelia Mary Earhart was born on 24 July, 1897, in Kansas, USA, and from the start she had a strong sense of adventure. After seeing an airshow in Toronto, Canada, she made up her mind then that she wanted to fly, and not long after she bought her own aircraft. Amelia Earhart went on to break several aviation records. In 1932, she became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean, and was a role model for women everywhere.

On 1 June, 1937, Amelia Earhart and her aircraft navigator, Fred Noonan, left Miami in Florida, USA, and attempted to fly around the world. Their trip was carefully planned and divided up into smaller flights, to allow for refuelling. On 2 July, they took off in search of Howland Island – an uninhabited coral island in the

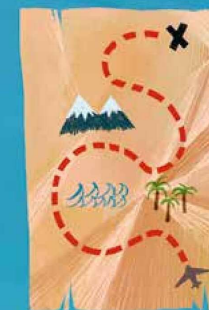
Pacific Ocean. It was on this journey that Amelia Earhart, her navigator, and her plane completely and mysteriously disappeared. An extensive mission was sent out – one of the biggest air and sea searches in American history – and more than 60 aircraft and several ships scoured the ocean.

Finally, the search was called off and Amelia Earhart was officially declared dead on 5 January 1939. However, people did not stop wondering what had happened to the famous aviator.

Amelia Earhart was never found. To this day, no one has been able to explain what happened or how she completely disappeared. Over the years, there have been many theories about her fate. One was that she returned to the USA and assumed another identity, another was that she became a castaway on a desert island. However, it appears most likely that Amelia Earhart's plane ran out of fuel and crashed into the Pacific Ocean.



In a letter to her husband, Earhart wrote, "Women must try to do things as men have tried. When they fail, their failure must be but a challenge to others."



Amelia's route to circumnavigate the globe would have involved flying about 45,450 km (27,000 miles).



Ryujin's Underwater Palace

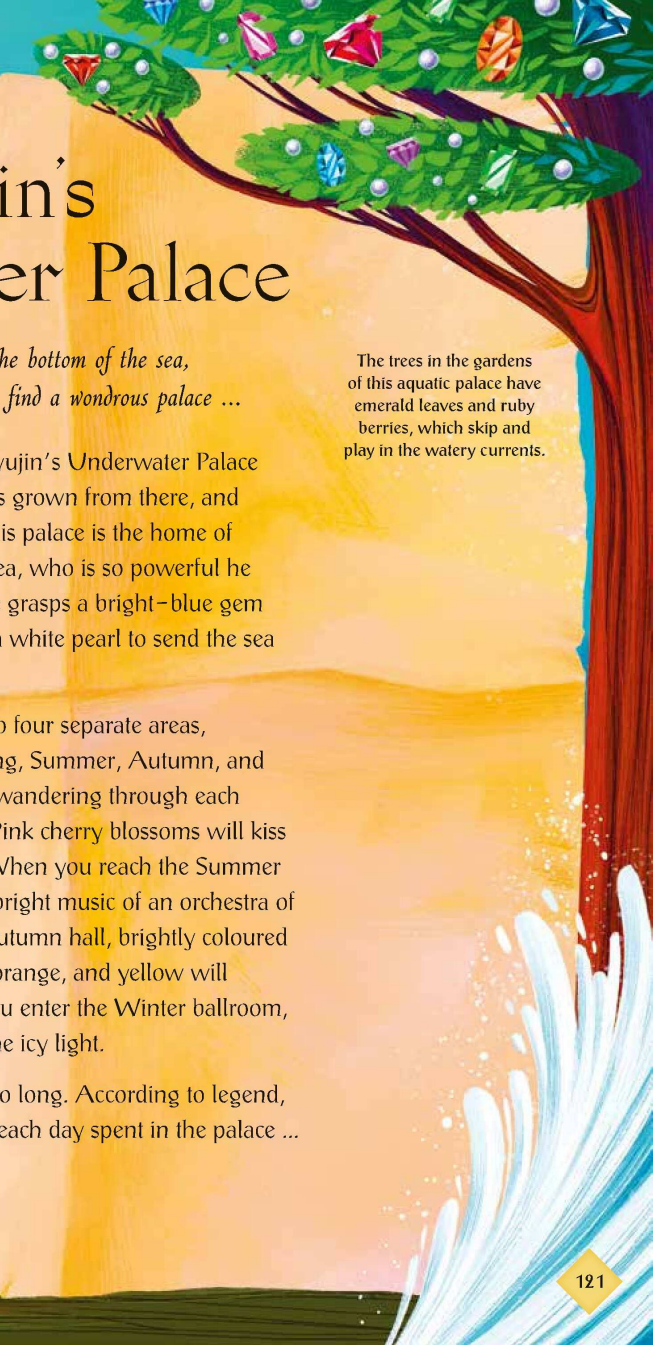
*If you should dive down to the bottom of the sea,
off the coast of Japan, you might find a wondrous palace ...*

Created from red and white coral, Ryujin's Underwater Palace emerges from the sea floor as if it has grown from there, and spirals up, up though forty floors. This palace is the home of Ryujin the dragon king, god of the sea, who is so powerful he can control the tides. In one claw, he grasps a bright-blue gem to draw in the sea and in the other, a white pearl to send the sea away again.

This palatial palace is divided into four separate areas, representing the four seasons – Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. Now, just imagine you are wandering through each section – what delights await you! Pink cherry blossoms will kiss your face in the Spring tea rooms. When you reach the Summer pavilion, your ears will fill with the bright music of an orchestra of crickets. As you walk through the Autumn hall, brightly coloured maple leaves in every shade of red, orange, and yellow will crunch under your feet. Then, as you enter the Winter ballroom, you will see snowflakes dance in the icy light.

Be careful though, don't stay too long. According to legend, one hundred human years pass for each day spent in the palace ...

The trees in the gardens of this aquatic palace have emerald leaves and ruby berries, which skip and play in the watery currents.





Area 51

For many years, a strange place in the USA known as Area 51 has been cloaked in mystery ...

High fences surround Area 51, a vast site located in a dry lakebed in Nevada. Armed guards patrol the perimeter, while electronic surveillance cameras follow every movement. Despite it being opened in 1955, the US government refused to acknowledge the existence of Area 51 until 2013. And, until recently, it did not appear on any maps.

This secret location, and the lack of information as to what it was, sparked the imagination of the nation, leading to wild claims and numerous conspiracy theories.

A number of people reported seeing UFOs in the area, while a few people even claimed that they had been abducted by aliens and then returned to Earth. An office was set up by the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) just to deal with the number of UFO sightings being reported over Nevada.

Today, there is still very little official information available about Area 51. However, it is believed that the site was set up to develop and test spy planes, and now develops other advanced spyware. This would explain a lot of the secrecy, as well as many of the UFO sightings – the new spy planes would have been a completely unfamiliar sight to anyone not used to them.

With such a high level of mystery still surrounding the site, who knows what else could have happened there over the years ...

The fences are covered in signs warning people to keep out. Taking photographs anywhere nearby is strictly forbidden.



The Phantom Number 7 Bus

A ghostly bus causes havoc on the streets of London ...

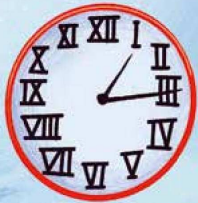
In London, England, from the 1930s right up to 1990, there were a large number of recorded sightings of a spooky, red number 7 double-decker bus careering wildly around a corner into a street called Cambridge Gardens in the middle of the night.

While most witnesses lived to tell the tale, one unfortunate driver died in 1934 when he swerved to avoid crashing into what became known as the Phantom Number 7 Bus. Missing the eerie vehicle, his car exploded into flames when it hit a tree.

Sightings always reported the bus as driving into the street, completely empty of passengers and with no one in the driving seat, before speeding down the middle of the road and completely disappearing into the night.

There were so many crashes in this particular spot, and so many individual witnesses to the mysterious appearances of the double-decker, that the police began to investigate. They knew they could not ignore reports from such a large number of people, as they couldn't all have been mistaken.

After interrogating the eyewitnesses, the police began to observe the location for any signs of the phantom bus. While they were unable to confirm the ghostly bus's existence, they decided to improve the lighting and safety in the square by widening the road. The strange sightings then stopped – and yet the mystery remains unsolved.



The Number 7 bus always appeared around Cambridge Gardens at 1:15 am – a time no buses should have been in the area.





Island of the Dolls

A strange and haunting tale of how a small island came to be overgrown with trees full of dolls ...

There lies a canal system in a district of Mexico City, in Mexico, called Xochimilco, which dates back to the time of the Aztecs. In the midst of this maze of canals and lakes is a chinampa, or small island, called the Isla de las Munecas – the Island of the Dolls.

The story goes that one sad morning, the island's caretaker came across a girl who had fallen into the canal and tragically drowned. There was nothing he could do to save her, and he was devastated by her death. Then a few days later he saw a doll that he assumed to be the girl's floating on the canal. The caretaker placed the doll in one of the trees on the island so that the girl's spirit could find it again.

The caretaker had been very shaken by his experience of finding the poor girl, and the memory haunted him. Each night, he thought he could hear the girl whispering and the sound of her footsteps. He wanted to make the girl's spirit happy so that she could rest in peace. And so he collected more and more dolls and placed them in the trees around the island for the spirit to play with.

Today, local people and tourists travel over to the island on brightly coloured boats, called *trajineras*, bringing even more dolls to keep the spirit of the girl happy.



Xochimilco is best known for its maze of canals built at the time of the Aztec empire (1300–1521).