



#### **MEDIA CONTACT**

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### **The Unique and Unexpected Side of Kansas**

*2015, Kansas . . .* Every state has its oddities, but the ones in Kansas have grown to legendary status, sometimes even known the world over. That's what happens when you've been around for nearly 150 years.

Long before European explorers knew of its existence the Kansas River was used for transportation by native tribes living in the area. The Kansas River is one of the world's longest prairie rivers, and today, provides countless recreational opportunities and wildlife habitats. The **Kansas River Trail** allows uniquely beautiful exploration of eastern Kansas – putting paddlers up close and personal with birds and wildlife. Find peaceful solitude – or challenge yourself with more adventurous parts of the river. The river has 19 public ramps for paddlers to access the river.

At the annual **Lenexa Spinach Festival**, held each September in Lenexa, the world's largest spinach salad is tossed with pitchforks in a plastic pool. The Spinach Festival celebrates Lenexa's earliest claim to fame as the "Spinach Capital of the World" during the 1930s. Belgian farmers grew spinach in the Lenexa area and shipped it out by rail. Great for the whole family, the festival includes over 100 arts, craft, and antique booths, a visit from Popeye and Olive Oyl, a petting zoo, pony rides, and an antique tractor display.

Created by Civil War veteran Samuel Perry Dinsmoor between the years of 1907 and 1932, **The Garden of Eden** in Lucas is internationally recognized as a monument to individualism. A collection of buildings and more than 150 religious, political, and other figures in fantastical settings crafted from concrete and native post rock depict Dinsmoor's interpretation of life and biblical stories. The Garden of Eden was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977, and is celebrated 100 years of concrete art in 2007. While in Lucas you will not want to miss the **Grassroots Art Center** -- dedicate to self-taught artists using recycled 'everything' to create the beautiful one-of-a-kind art, and Bowl Plaza -- surely the most unique (and creative) public restrooms in the USA!

And for those who can't decide if they like really big things or really small things best, there's the **World's Largest Collection of the World's Smallest Version of the World's Largest Things**. This interactive traveling roadside museum and attraction is based in Lucas and explores and celebrates miniatures of roadside monuments billed as the World's

Largest Things. This customized bus travels all over the country and contains display space for its unique collection of miniature replicas of things such as badgers, otters, bulls, balls of twine, and baseball bats billed as World's Largest.

Kansas history can be found underground in Ellinwood, where German-Austrian settlers built Main Street buildings in the unique **Ellinwood Tunnels**, including an underground barber shop, livery, and bath house, all connected by a series of underground tunnels. These shops date from the earliest days of the city, 1887, and at one time ran throughout the entire business district.

And for those who like being underground, **Greensburg** is home to the **world's largest hand-dug well**. When the Santa Fe railroad proposed building a well to supply water for steam locomotives, the city granted a franchise and construction of the Big Well began in August 1887. The only tools used were shovels, picks, half barrels, pulleys, and rope. Reaching 109 feet deep and 32 feet in diameter, the well was completed in 1888 and is recognized as a masterpiece of pioneering engineering.

...Really like underground -- how about 650 feet down, where at **Strataca** your Kansas Underground Salt Museum tour in Hutchinson begins...

In Cawker City, the **World's Largest Ball of Twine** is constantly growing. Started by Frank Stoeber on his farm in 1953, the ball currently weighs in at 17,320 lbs, has a 40 foot circumference, and includes nearly seven million feet of sisal twine. Given to the city in 1961, the ball's size benefits from an annual twine-a-thon. As an added attraction, there are more than 40 paintings by artist Cher Olson that include a twine ball, such as "American Gothic (with Twine Ball)," and "The Scream (with Twine Ball)."

Visitors can't miss the giant 24- by 32-foot **Van Gogh Sunflower** reproduction painting on an 80-foot easel in Goodland. Part of the Big Easel Project, this painting is one of only seven in the world in the effort to reproduce all seven of Vincent van Gogh's sunflower paintings on giant easels in seven different countries around the globe. When complete, the project is expected to be included in the *Guinness Book of World Records*.

Across Kansas, travelers have fun finding the largest, smallest, best and most unique things the state, and the world, have to offer.

For more information on Kansas, visit [www.TravelKS.com](http://www.TravelKS.com). All press materials, including hires photography are available for downloading. Follow us at [Facebook.com/TravelKS](https://Facebook.com/TravelKS), or [Twitter.com/TravelKS](https://Twitter.com/TravelKS).

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