

Prison Escapes 1

Maze Prison Escape



In the biggest prison escape in British history, on 25 September 1983 in County Antrim, Northern Ireland, 38 Irish Republican Army (IRA) prisoners, who had been convicted of offenses including murder and causing explosions, escaped from H-Block 7 (H7) of the prison. One prison officer died of a heart attack as a result of the escape and twenty others were injured, including two who were shot with guns that had been smuggled into the prison. HM Prison Maze was considered one of the most escape-proof prisons in Europe. In addition to 15-foot fences, each H-Block was encompassed by an 18-foot concrete wall topped with barbed wire, and all gates on the complex were made of solid steel and electronically operated.

Shortly after 2:30, the prisoners took control of the H-block holding the prison guards hostage at gunpoint. Some of the prisoners took the guards clothing and car keys in order to help with their escape. At 3:25, a truck bringing food supplies arrived and the prisoners told the driver that he was going to help them escape. They tied his foot to the clutch and told him where to drive. At 3:50 the truck left the H-block, and soon after the prison, carrying all 38 men.

Over the next few days, 19 escapees were caught. The remaining escapees were assisted by the IRA in finding hiding places. Some of the group ended up in the USA but were later found and extradited. Due to politics in Northern Ireland, none of the remaining escapees are being actively sought and some have been given amnesties. Note the wires strung across the yard in the picture above – this is to prevent helicopters from landing due to another escape attempt at Maze Prison. [Image Source | Wikipedia]



“Alfie” Hinds was a British criminal and escape artist who, while serving a 12 year prison sentence for robbery, successfully broke out of three high security prisons. Despite the dismissal of thirteen of his appeals to higher courts, he was eventually able to gain a pardon using his knowledge of the British legal system. After being sentenced to 12 years in prison for a jewelry robbery, Hinds escaped from Nottingham prison by sneaking through the locked doors and over a 20-foot prison wall for which he became known in the press as “Houdini” Hinds.

After 6 months he was found and arrested. After his arrest, Hinds brought a lawsuit against authorities charging the prison commissioners with illegal arrest and successfully used the incident as a means to plan his next escape by having a padlock smuggled in to him while at the Law Courts. Two guards escorted him to the toilet, but when they removed his handcuffs Alfie bundled the men into the cubicle and snapped the padlock onto screw eyes that his accomplices had earlier fixed to the door. He escaped into the crowd on Fleet Street but was captured at an airport five hours later. Hinds would make his third escape from Chelmsford Prison less than a year later.

While eluding Scotland Yard, Hinds continued to plead his innocence sending memorandums to British MPs and granting interviews and taped recordings to the press. He would continue to appeal his arrest and, following a technicality in which prison escapes are not listed as misdemeanors within British law, his final appeal before the House of Lords in 1960 was denied after a three hour argument by Hinds before his return to serve 6 years in Parkhurst Prison. Pictured above is Nottingham Prison – the first prison that Hinds escaped from. [Wikipedia]



The Texas 7 was a group of prisoners who escaped from the John Connally Unit near Kenedy, Texas on December 13, 2000. They were apprehended January 21-23, 2001 as a direct result of the television show America's Most Wanted. On December 13, 2000, the seven carried out an elaborate scheme and escaped from the John B. Connally Unit, a maximum-security state prison near the South Texas town of Kenedy. Using several well-planned ploys, the seven convicts overpowered and restrained nine civilian maintenance supervisors, four correctional officers and three uninvolved inmates at approximately 11:20 a.m.

The escape occurred during the slowest period of the day when there would be less surveillance of certain locations like the maintenance area — during lunch and at count time. Most of these plans involved one of the offenders calling someone over, while another hit the unsuspecting person on the head from behind. Once the victim was subdued, the offenders would remove some of his clothing, tie him up, gag him and place him in an electrical room behind a locked door. Eleven prison workers and three uninvolved inmates were bound and gagged. The attackers stole clothing, credit cards, and identification from their victims.

The group also impersonated prison officers on the phone and created false stories to ward off suspicion from authorities. They eventually made their way to the prison maintenance pickup-truck which they used to escape from the prison grounds. The remaining 5 living members of the group are all on death row awaiting death by lethal injection. Of the other two, one committed suicide and one has already been executed. [Wikipedia]



Wetzler was a Slovak Jew, and one of a very small number of Jews known to have escaped from the Auschwitz death camp during the Holocaust. Wetzler is known for the report that he and his fellow escapee, Rudolf Vrba, compiled about the inner workings of the Auschwitz camp – a ground plan of the camp, construction details of the gas chambers, crematoriums and, most convincingly, a label from a canister of Zyklon gas. The 32-page Vrba-Wetzler report, as it became known, was the first detailed report about Auschwitz to reach the West that the Allies regarded as credible.

The evidence eventually led to the bombing of several government buildings in Hungary, killing Nazi officials who were instrumental in the railway deportations of Jews to Auschwitz. The deportations halted, saving up to 120,000 Hungarian Jews. Wetzler escaped with a fellow Jew named Rudolf Vrba. With the help of the camp underground, at 2 p.m. on Friday, April 7, 1944 – the eve of Passover – the two men climbed inside a hollowed-out hiding place in a wood pile that was being stored to build the “Mexico” section for the new arrivals. It was outside Birkenau’s barbed-wire inner perimeter, but inside an external perimeter the guards kept erected during the day. The other prisoners placed boards around the hollowed-out area to hide the men, then sprinkled the area with pungent Russian tobacco soaked in gasoline to fool the guards’ dogs. The two remained in hiding for 4 nights – to avoid recapture.

On April 10, wearing Dutch suits, overcoats, and boots they had taken from the camp, they made their way south, walking parallel to the So?a river, heading for the Polish border with Slovakia 80 miles (133 km.) away, guiding themselves using a page from a child’s atlas that Vrba had found in the warehouse. You can read their report on Auschwitz here. [Wikipedia]



Rawicz was a Polish soldier who was arrested by Soviet occupation troops after the German-Soviet invasion of Poland. When the Soviet Union and Germany took over Poland, Rawicz returned to Pi?sk where NKVD arrested him on November 19, 1939. He was taken to Moscow. He was first sent to Kharkov for interrogation, and then after trial he was sent to the Lubyanka prison in Moscow. He claims to have successfully resisted all attempts to torture a confession out of him in prison. He was sentenced, ostensibly for spying, to 25 years of hard labor in a Siberian prison camp. He was transported, alongside thousands of others, to Irkutsk and made to walk to Camp 303, 650 km south of the Arctic Circle, to build the camp from the ground up.

On 9 April 1941, Rawicz claimed that he and his six allies escaped in a middle of a blizzard. They rushed to the south, avoiding towns in fear they would be betrayed, but apparently they were not actively pursued. They also met an additional fugitive, Polish woman Krystyna. Nine days later they crossed the Lena River. They walked around Lake Baikal and crossed to Mongolia. Fortunately, people they encountered were friendly and hospitable. During the crossing of the Gobi desert, two of the group (Krystyna and Makowski) died. Others had to eat snakes to survive. Around October 1941 they claim to have reached Tibet. Locals were friendly, especially when men said they were trying to reach Lhasa. They crossed the Himalayas somehow in the middle of winter. Another of the group died in his sleep in the cold and one fell into a crevasse and disappeared. Rawicz claims the survivors reached India around March 1942.
[Wikipedia]



In its 29 years of operation, there were 14 attempts to escape from Alcatraz prison involving 34 inmates. Officially, every escape attempt failed, and most participants were either killed or quickly re-captured. However, the participants in the 1937 and 1962 attempts, though presumed dead, disappeared without a trace, giving rise to popular theories that they were successful. The most famous and intricate attempt to escape from Alcatraz (June 11, 1962) saw Frank Morris, and the Anglin brothers burrow out of their cells, climb to the top of the cell block, cut through bars to make it to the roof via an air vent. From there they climbed down a drain pipe, over a chain link fence and then to the shore where they assembled a pontoon-type raft and then vanished.

The trio are believed to have drowned in the San Francisco Bay and are officially listed as missing and presumed drowned. However, they may have made it and gone to a place where people did not know them. [Wikipedia]

4

Libby Prison Escape



The Libby Prison Escape was one of the most famous (and successful) prison breaks during the American Civil War. Overnight between February 9 and 10, 1864, more than 100 imprisoned Union soldiers broke out of their prisoner of war building at Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia. Of the 109 escapees, 59 succeeded in reaching Union lines, 48 were recaptured, and 2 drowned in the nearby James River. Libby Prison encompassed an entire city block in Richmond. To the north lay Carey Street, connecting the prison area to the rest of the city. On the south side ran the James River.

The prison itself stood three stories above ground with a basement exposed on the river side. Living conditions were extremely bad; the food, sometimes lacking altogether, was poor and sanitation practically nonexistent. Thousands died there. The prisoners managed to break in to the basement area known as “rat hell” which was no longer used due to rat infestations, and dig a tunnel. After 17 days of digging, they succeeded in breaking through to a 50-foot vacant lot on the eastern side of the prison, resurfacing beneath a tobacco shed inside the grounds of the nearby Kerr’s Warehouse. When Col. Rose finally broke through to the other side, he told his men that the “Underground Railroad to God’s Country was open!”

The officers escaped the prison in groups of two and three on the night of February 9, 1864. Once within the tobacco shed, the men collected inside the walled warehouse yard and simply strolled out the front gate. The tunnel provided enough distance from the prison to stealthily subvert those jurisdictional lines and allow prisoners to slip into the dark streets unchallenged. [Wikipedia]

3
Pascal Payet



There can be no doubt that this man deserves a place on this list – he has escaped not once, but twice from high security prisons in France – each time via hijacked helicopter! He also helped organize the escape of three other prisoners – again with a helicopter.

Payet was initially sentenced to a 30 year jail term for a murder committed during the robbery of a security van. After his first escape (in 2001) he was captured and given seven more years for his role in the 2003 escape. He then escaped from Grasse prison using a helicopter that was hijacked by four masked

men from Cannes-Mandelieu airport. The helicopter landed some time later at Brignoles, 38 kilometres north-east of Toulon, France on the Mediterranean coast. Payet and his accomplices then fled the scene and the pilot was released unharmed. Payet was re-captured on September 21, 2007, in Mataró, Spain, about 18 miles northeast of Barcelona. He had undergone cosmetic surgery, but was still identified by Spanish police. [Wikipedia]

2

The Great Escape



Stalag Luft III was a German Air Force prisoner-of-war camp during World War II that housed captured air force personnel. In January 1943, Roger Bushell led a plot for a major escape from the camp. The plan was to dig three deep tunnels, codenamed “Tom,” “Dick,” and “Harry.” Each of the tunnel entrances was carefully selected to ensure they were undetectable by the camp guards. In order to keep the tunnels from being detected by the perimeter microphones, they were very deep – about 9 metres (30 ft) below the surface. The tunnels were very small, only two feet square (about 0.37 m²), though larger chambers were dug to house the air pump, a workshop, and staging posts along each tunnel. The sandy walls of the tunnels were shored up with pieces of wood scavenged from all over the camp.

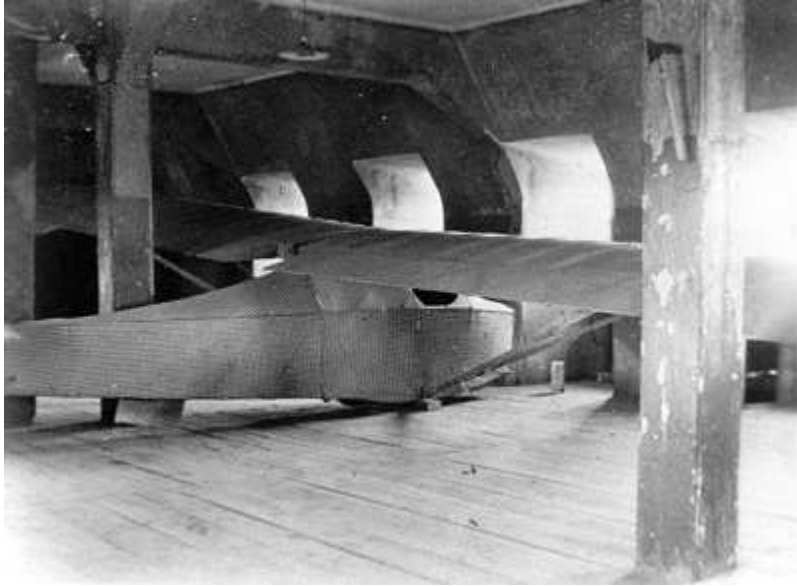
As the tunnels grew longer, a number of technical innovations made the job easier and safer. One important issue was ensuring that the person digging had enough oxygen to breathe and keep his lamps lit. A pump was built to push fresh air along the ducting into the tunnels. Later, electric lighting was installed and hooked into the camp’s electrical grid. The tunnellers also installed small rail car systems for moving sand more quickly, much like the systems used in old mining operations. The rails were key to moving 130 tons of material in a five-month period; they also reduced the time taken for tunnellers to reach the digging faces.

“Harry” was finally ready in March 1944, but by that time the American prisoners, some of whom had worked extremely hard in all the effort to dig the tunnels, were moved to another compound. The prisoners had to wait about a week for a moonless night so that they could leave under the cover of complete darkness. Finally, on Friday, March 24, the escape attempt began. Unfortunately for the prisoners, the tunnel had come up short. It had been planned that the tunnel would reach into a nearby forest, but the first man out emerged just short of the tree line. Despite this, 76 men crawled through the tunnel to initial freedom, even through an air raid during which the camp’s (and the tunnel’s) electric lights were shut off. Finally, at 5 AM on March 25, the 77th man was seen emerging from the tunnel by

one of the guards. Out of the 76 men only 3 evaded capture. Fifty men were killed and the rest were captured and sent back. [Wikipedia]

1

Colditz Escape



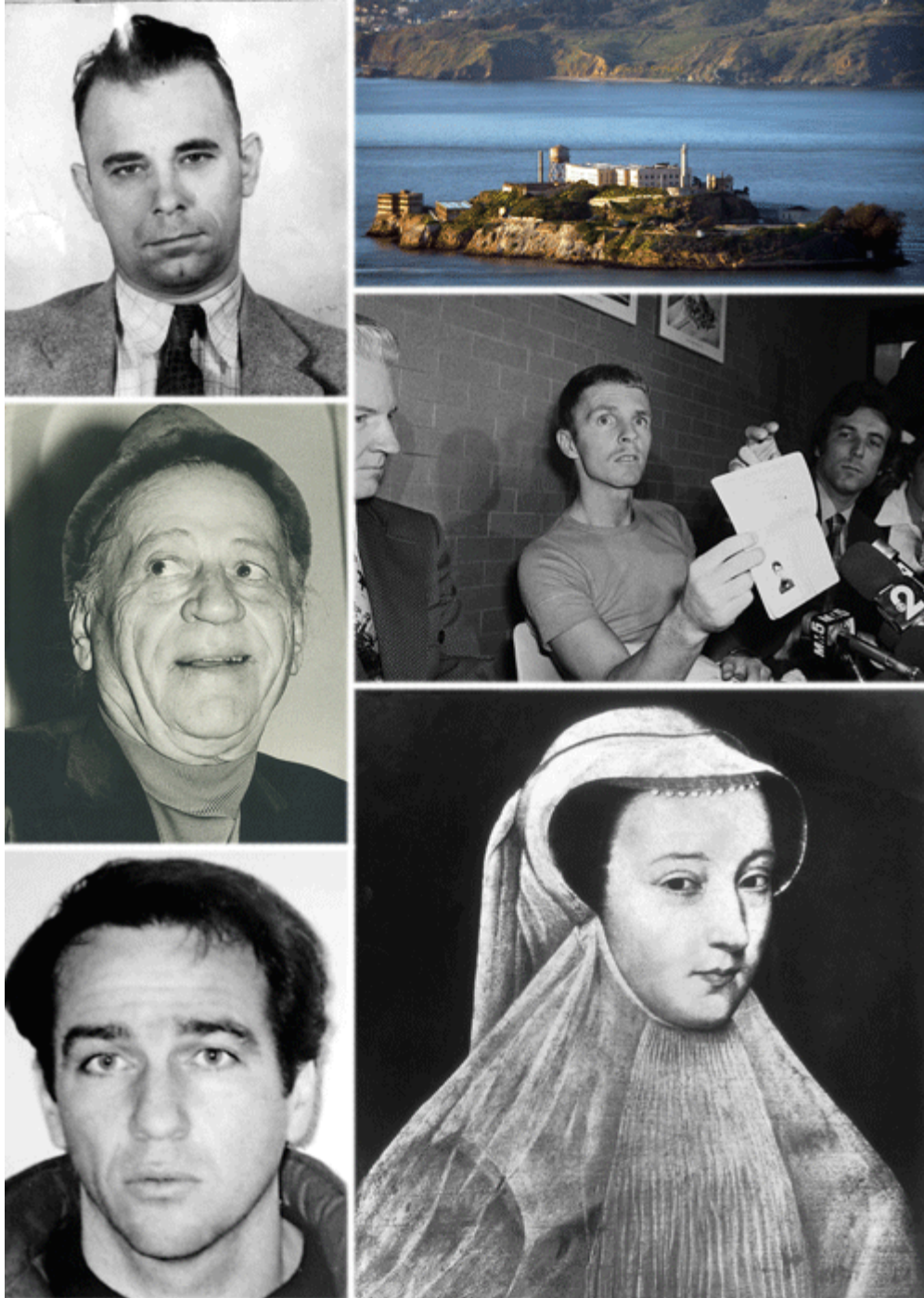
Colditz was one of the most famous German Army prisoner-of-war camps for officers in World War II. The camp was located in Colditz Castle, situated on a cliff overlooking the town of Colditz in Saxony. There were numerous successful attempts at escaping Colditz, but one in particular is the most interesting. In one of the most ambitious escape attempts from Colditz, the idea of building a glider was dreamt up by two British pilots, Jack Best and Bill Goldfinch, who had been sent to Colditz after escaping from another POW camp. The plan was to construct a two-man glider part by part.

The glider was assembled by Bill Goldfinch and Jack Best in the lower attic above the chapel, and was to be launched from the roof in order to fly across the river Mulde, which was about 200 feet (60 m) below. The officers who took part in the project built a false wall, to hide the secret space in the attic where they slowly built the glider out of stolen pieces of wood. Since the Germans were accustomed to looking down for tunnels, not up for secret workshops, they felt rather safe from detection. Hundreds of ribs had to be constructed, predominantly formed from bed slats, but also from every other piece of wood the POW's could surreptitiously obtain. The wing spars were constructed from floor boards. Control wires were made from electrical wiring in unused portions of the castle.

A glider expert, Lorne Welch, was asked to review the stress diagrams and calculations made by Goldfinch. Although the Colditz Cock never flew in real life, a replica of the Colditz glider was built for the 2000 Channel 4 "Escape from Colditz" documentary, and was flown successfully by John Lee on its first attempt at RAF Odiham with Best and Goldfinch in tearful attendance. While Best and Goldfinch did not escape Colditz (the camp was relieved by the allies just as the glider was nearing completion), they certainly had the most interesting and innovative method for executing it. [Wikipedia]

15 of the Greatest Prison Escapes

by admin on November 9, 2010



In an ideal world, prisoners would be held in prisons which would be impossible to escape from and an innocent person would never end up there. Fortunately, our world is much more awesome and people escape from even the most labyrinthine prisons on Earth with relative frequency and often stunning brilliance. Throughout history the only sure thing when it came to prisons was that as soon as you said it was “inescapable” some inmate (who was usually a total badass) would stroll comfortably out the front door.

Alfred Wetzler



Image Source

Often when you hear the story of a Jew in Europe during the 40s, it either ends in a concentration camp or with them narrowly surviving until the end of the war. Alfred Wetzler decided that sort of noise was for surrender-monkey French Jews and got together with his fellow Auschwitz inmates and hatched a plot to escape. The already weak, tired and starving Wetzler hid in a wood pile with friend Rudolf Vrba for 4 days, after which they made a mad dash for freedom... by donning smuggled suits and calmly walking out of the camp and to the Polish border.

Now after escaping from one of the most hellacious locations to ever curse the surface of the planet, most people would call it a day and thank God they're alive. But Wetzler and Vrba were obviously not content to simply escape the Nazis. They pulled an Inglorious Basterds and drafted a detailed report of Auschwitz and the surrounding terrain that ended up being instrumental to subsequent Allied bombing runs.

Billy Hayes

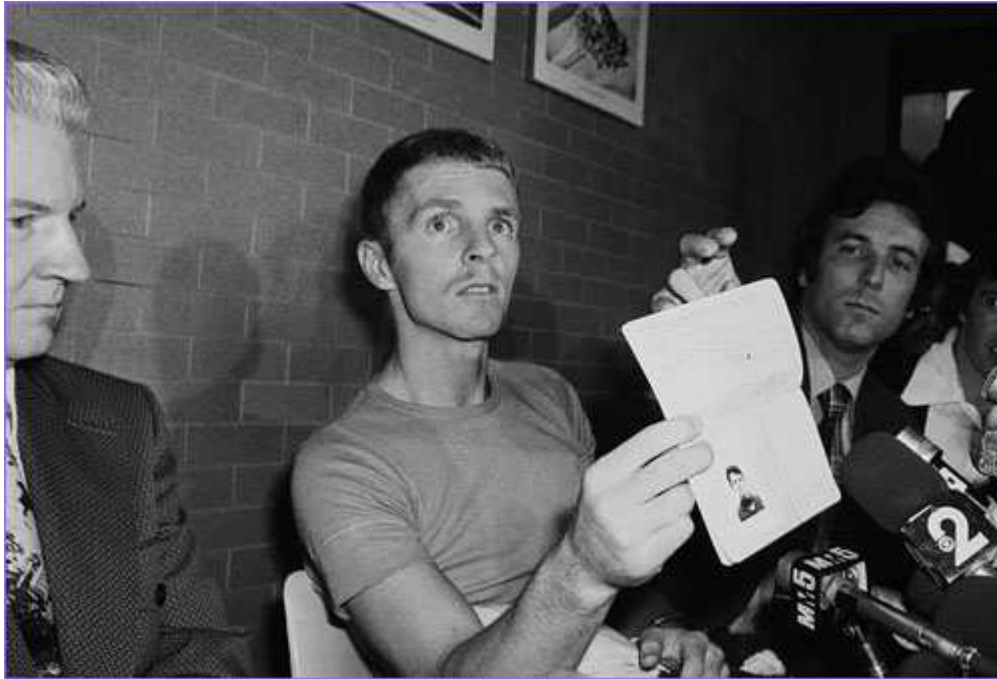


Image Source

Careless world travelers often forget that while in America marijuana is practically legal and socially acceptable, in many countries it is considered the leaf of Satan and will land you in jail for a couple of decades. That is if they don't outright kill you.

In 1970, Billy Hayes was caught trying to smuggle some Mary Jane out of Turkey. While the amount Hayes was trying to smuggle is probably less than most people reading this are hiding in their desk drawer, in a country where even alcohol and cigarettes are of dubious legality, Turkish officials didn't exactly take a shine to such behavior. They expressed this mild disappointment by sentencing him to a life imprisonment performing hard labor.

Hayes, demonstrating an "Eff The Po-Leece" attitude far ahead of his time, orchestrated a daring escape. He stole a small dinghy, navigated it through the treacherous Aegean Sea, then stayed incognito for several days because he wasn't quite sure he had made it out of Turkey. He was eventually recaptured, but this time by Greek Police — who, fortunately for Hayes, were possibly the only people on the planet who hated Turks more than he did. He eventually made it back to America where he turned his drug use into fame and fortune by authoring the book *Midnight Express*, which was eventually made into an Oliver Stone movie.

John Dillinger



Image Source

John Dillinger was well known in the late 20s and 30s as one of the most famous criminals in America. His gang was infamous throughout Chicago and northern Indiana for its apparent invincibility and knack for escape from every prison ever built.

Indiana was then, as now, somewhat well known for housing some of the most dangerous criminals in the country, and they had gotten quite good at it. But then John Dillinger came along and, through a combination of cleverness, bravado and a little thing called dynamite, proceed to waltz right out of the Hoosier state and right into the nearest bank. Which he promptly robbed.

Deciding it was time to get serious, federal officials locked Dillinger in the Crown Point maximum-security prison, known at the time as completely inescapable. This time, Dillinger managed to break out not through violence or charm, but by crafting a wooden “gun” and coloring it black with shoe polish. He took some guards “hostage” then laughed all the way to the bank. Which he promptly robbed.

Pascal Payet

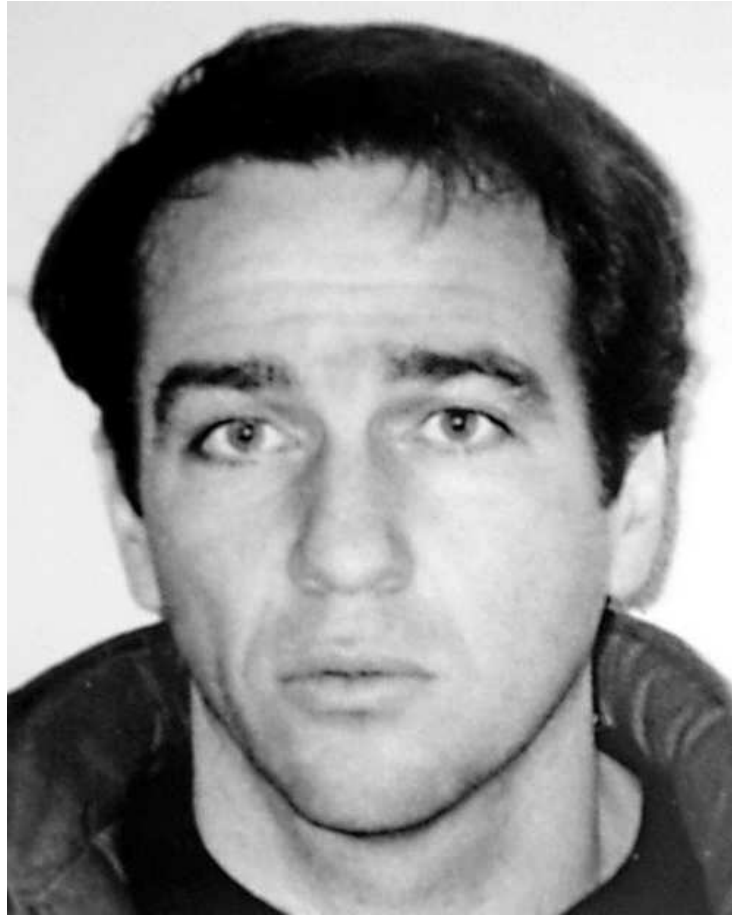


Image Source

Pascal Payet is a French criminal with a rap sheet that includes murder and a definite flair for the cinematic. He was captured and tried for the murder of a security guard while attempting to hijack a security fan. He was sentenced to life in prison and locked up at the Luynes prison. Like a typical Frenchman, Payet decided that tunnels, steel files, and holding guards hostage were soooooo passe. He subsequently hijacked a helicopter and staged a daring escape from the roof of the prison.

Payet was quickly recaptured and thrown back in prison, with French officials reasonably concluding that lightning wouldn't strike twice. Except it did, and Payet escape by hijacked helicopter once again. Payet was recaptured, but proved that he was a special type of God-touched bastard by escaping via a hijacked helicopter for an unbelievable third time. He was finally recaptured in 2007 and imprisoned once again. Experts predict an impending escape by hovercraft.

The Texas 7



Image Source

Despite the Titanic-like hubris that surrounds many of the modern “inescapable” maximum security prisons that dot the country, they actually have a pretty impressive track record when it comes to holding the nations most dangerous criminals. Which makes the escape of the so called Texas 7 that much more impressive.

What’s even more impressive is how this rag-tag group of hardened criminals managed to escape. They covertly kidnapped several guards and maintenance workers and then, instead of holding them hostage as one would expect, stole their uniforms and strolled out the front door. But while most of the people on this list are easily cheered as either charismatic, innocent, and not bloodthirsty, the Texas 7 are a good example of why we build prisons in the first place. During the crime spree that followed their escape, an unlucky cop named Aubrey Hawkins crossed paths with the gang. The seven shot Hawkins no fewer than eleven times, and then just to be sure, *ran over his corpse* as they fled the scene. Fortunately, having bungled the whole “laying low” thing, the seven were recaptured within a month and are now safely stowed away in separate prisons.

The Escape from Alcatraz



Image Source

In American lore, there is no other prison more famous for its inescapability than Alcatraz Island. Located on an island in the middle of the San Francisco bay, if you somehow manage to get out of your cell and aren't spotted while traversing several yards of bare rock, there's still a miles-long swim through the waters of the bay. Waters which, at last report, were classified by experts as "testically-shriveling cold".

Officially, no one has ever escaped from Alcatraz alive. But because this is America — the land of impossible dreams and disrespect for authority — there is Frank Morris. In 1962 Morris got together with some fellow inmates and decided to Shawshank his way out of there. Not only did he burrow through the wall of his cell, but Morris also constructed an elaborate dummy so that, unless they looked closely, guards would think he was still in his cell. He then crawled through an air duct, across the island, and used a makeshift pontoon boat to head out in to the bay. His body was never recovered so for the sake of the dreams of all the little criminals out there, let's just say he made it and has been living in secrecy ever since.

Mary, Queen of Scots



Image Source

Queen Mary could never seem to catch a break. After being exiled to France for several years, she returned to her home country right as the Scottish nobles were rebelling. She was subsequently imprisoned at various times as that bickering of inbred rich people the British call “history” took place. Being one of 6 people in the British Isles with anything approaching an education at the time, Mary conceived of several plots to escape her imprisonment.

The first consisted of that age old trick of dressing like something other than a prisoner and walking out the front door. Unfortunately, someone realized that the disguised queen—being the only person without heavily calloused hands and not covered in filth—was trying to escape. Her second attempt was almost too adorable to not be apocryphal. Having befriended a local orphan, the queen convinced the little scamp to let her out of the castle where she managed to steal a horse and escape.

Bill Cody



Image Source

America was quite a different place in the 1800s. Sure you can point to things like the fact that we actually considered war with France, war with ourselves and war with Indians to be dire threats. But more importantly, back in the good old days America had celebrities that were actually worth a damn.

Buffalo Bill Cody was a traveling performer so famous, you probably recognize his name even today. He was the guy who made Annie Oakley famous. He was also a total badass that could probably kill a modern-day traveling performer like Barry Manilow with a glance.

Cody's most famous act of total awesomeness came in the form of a courageous escape after being captured by Indians. Cody knew his captors needed fresh food so he convinced them to allow him to guide them to a nearby buffalo herd. The Indians slapped Cody on a slow-moving donkey and had him lead the way. He proceeded to outrun the horse-mounted Indians. On a donkey. And it wasn't like he

shouted “Look! Brightly-Colored Beads!” then ran before they could react. No, the chase was close, lasted for miles, and ended with Cody seriously wounded and barely surviving. Let’s see Spidey do *that*.

Papillon



Image Source

Papillon was the nickname of convicted criminal Henri Charrière and his multiple, daring escapes from several French prisons. He became famous after he published his autobiography in 1969 and it was made into a movie starring Steve McQueen and Dustin Hoffman.

Papillon’s escapades included escaping an island penal colony by floating away on a bag of coconuts, hiding out with a colony of lepers, and befriending a group of South-American natives deep in the jungle. His exploits became legendary, and Charrière for a while was known as one of the most accomplished escape artists in history. That was until people realized it was all fake. According to recent reports, the “real” Papillon, the man on which Charrière based his book, was a real person named Charles Brunier. Charrière, on the other hand, never once attempted escape and was, in fact, considered a model prisoner.

”The Great Escape”

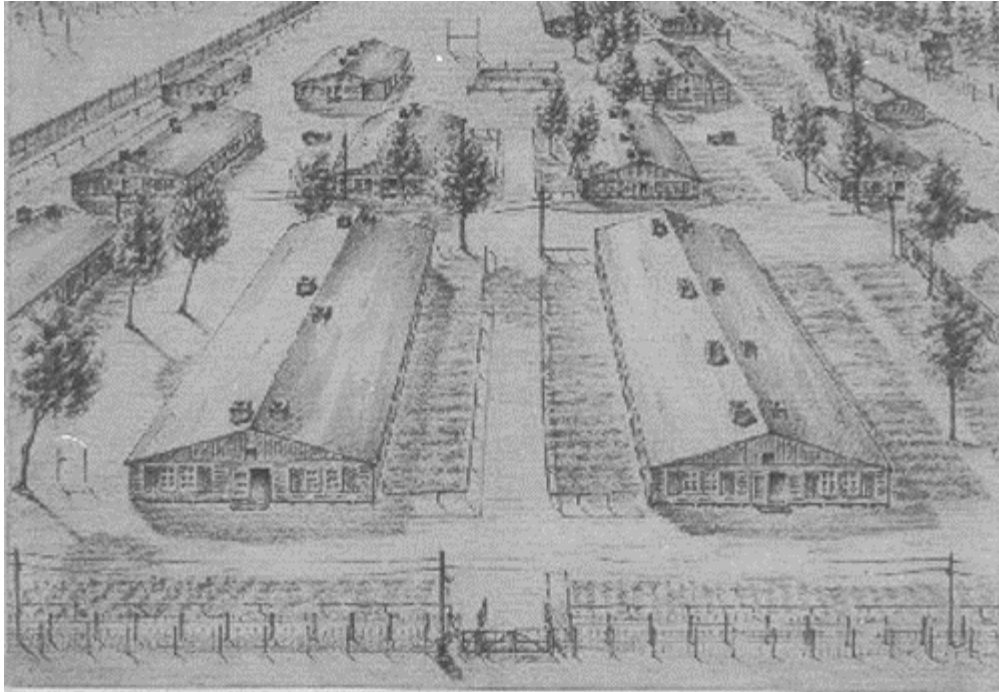


Image Source

While we're on the topic of movies starring Steve McQueen, there's what's considered "The Great Escape" or the escape of 76 POWs from the German prison camp Stalag Luft III (which, by the way, included precisely no Americans). Stalag Luft III was constructed as the prisoner camp for prisoners who kept escaping. There were two rows of barbed wire, seismic sensors to prevent tunnel-dwelling, and the barracks were raised on stilts so any tunnel would be visible.

The airmen in the camp dug tunnels thirty feet deep, reinforced with scavenged wood, and they even put in a ventilation and mini tram system for ferrying dirt just because they were classy like that. And they did this three times over, constructing the tunnels simultaneously.

All told, 76 prisoners made it out, but only 3 actually made it safely to neutral territory. Hitler, showing his usual amount of restraint, said he was tired of these guys escaping all the time and violated the Geneva convention by having the majority of them shot. But Steve McQueen made it out alright, mostly due to the fact that the person his character was based on, once again, never existed.

Giacomo Casanova



Image Source

Yes, this is the same Casanova everyone uses nowadays as a descriptor of philanderers. Apparently, Italian officials didn't quite like the fact that he was sleeping with all of their wives so they through him in a prison with lead-lined walls. No seriously he was imprisoned for sleeping with too many peoples' wives.

Fortunately for players everywhere, Casanova managed to procure an iron tool, and began the slow, arduous process of digging his way out of prison. That was all well and good, until he was transferred and put under constant watch. Hereupon he displayed the charisma he was legendary for, and convinced another prisoner to first dig to his cell, then they would both escape together. Desperation makes strange bedfellows, and in this case it put a monk named Balbi in the same boat with perhaps one of the most promiscuous men in history.

The Berlin Wall Balloon



Image Source

While East Berlin during the Soviet occupation wasn't technically a prison, the Soviets sure did their damndest to make it look and feel like one. Barbed wire, dogs, guard towers, and execution if you were caught escaping were all facts of life for East Berliners. So it's no surprise that some went to ridiculous lengths to escape.

Some built tunnels or crammed themselves into tiny secret compartments of cars. The Wetzel and Strlzyck families went with a slightly crazier option. Buying nylon cloth in small batches and constructing a makeshift flamethrower, they actually managed to build a working hot air balloon over the course of several months. And not only that, but they successfully flew it over the wall and landed in West Berlin. The flight was something of a PR coup at the time, and the Soviets responded by making it virtually impossible to purchase lightweight cloth in East Berlin.

Alfie Hinds



Image Source

Alfie Hinds was a British criminal with a serial escape record. Arrested in 1953 for robbing a jewelry store, he was sentenced to a 12 year term — the majority of which he spent breaking out of prison. He managed escapes from three separate maximum security facilities, most of which were accomplished by picking the right time to walk out the front door.

Hinds adamantly insisted on his innocence, and tirelessly pursued any means to get the charges against him dropped. Needless to say, he spent a lot of time out of prison and arguing in court. During one such occasion, he came upon the opportunity to smuggle some things into his jail cell. What did this criminal mastermind choose? A hammer? A gun? A steel file? No, Hinds successfully smuggled in a padlock...which he used to lock three guards in a room and walk out the front door of his prison. And so Alfie Hinds goes down in history as possibly the only criminal to every escape from prison using exactly the same tools that were used to imprison him.

Slawomir Rawicz



Image Source

A lot people forget that while Germany was invading Poland in 1939, so was Soviet Russia. Slawomir Rawicz was a Polish officer who found himself sandwiched between a rock and the hardest place in history, and was captured by the Russians. Shipped off to remote Yakutsk, Siberia — also known as the most bumfuck nowhere place on the planet.

In the Siberian Gulags, even if you escaped the harsh climate miles from civilization was expected to kill you off anyway. Rawicz set off with a small contingent to prove that Poles are capable of much, much more than simply putting screen doors on submarines. His ragtag band traversed Siberia, the Gobi desert and finally crossed the Himalayas in the dead of winter to find freedom in British-controlled India. In case you missed it, that means that Rawicz traversed—on foot and running from the law—what are well-known as the most hostile climates on the planet.

Doug Bader



Image Source

Doug Bader was an RAF pilot shot down over German-occupied France in 1941. He was captured and treated quite congenially by the Nazis for many years. No, seriously. This was probably due to the fact that he didn't have any legs. The Germans most likely thought "Where's a POW with no legs going to run to?". The answer, it turns out, is anywhere he goddamn wants to.

Bader orchestrated multiple escapes, aided by the fact that nearly everyone is willing to help out a charming, no-legged guy with a British accent. He escaped with the prisoners at Stalag Luft III, among many, many other attempts. He was so frequently an attempted escapee, the Germans threatened to take away his legs. He was eventually shipped to the "inescapable" Colditz castle, where he presumably conspired to help construct the famous "Colditz Cock": a plane designed to fly out of the prison, a plan foiled only by the humorless Americans when they liberated the castle in 1945.

6 Insane Prison Escapes That Actually Happened

By: Luis Prada January 11, 2009 829,056 views

[Add to Favorites](#)





What do you get when you take thousands of guys, give them tons of free time, creativity and a healthy portion of desperation? Some freaking awesome prison escapes.

Some of these were badass enough to have had movies made about them, but all of them made Andy from *The Shawshank Redemption* look like a lazy pile of shit.

#6.

Stalag Luft III Escape (aka The Great Escape)



Even with the Geneva Conventions basically turning Salag Luft III into the World War 2 prison equivalent of the Ritz-Carlton, British inmate Roger Bushell felt he had some escaping to do. He and 49 other prisoners devised a plan to dig three tunnels -- codenamed Tom, Dick and Harry -- out of a prison that was specifically designed to piss off tunnelers with its loose yellow subsoil and, in a huge dick move, seismograph microphones buried along the fences. If a shovel made even the slightest vibration the plan was shot, leaving the prisoners to fall back on their untested "It was Sandworms" alibi.



Not as uncommon an alibi as you'd think.

The team found brilliant ways to nullify every problem that popped up:

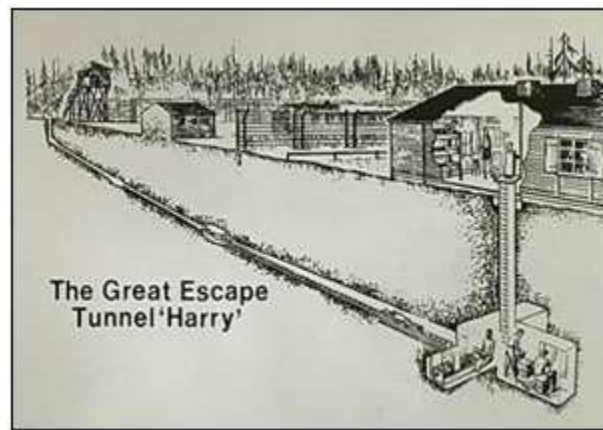
*The team dug 30 foot deep holes to evade the microphones;

*For faster tunnel traveling, they created a railway system;

*They built what were, essentially, Christmas tree lights that plugged into the camp's grid;

*The crafty escapees even constructed a tunnel ventilation system composed of nearly every piece of junk lying in your garage: bed parts, hockey sticks, ping-pong paddles, knapsacks and flattened tin cans of powdered milk with the ends removed.

When rumors swirled that some of the prisoners may be moved to another prison, they picked up the pace which, finally, caught the attention of the guards who soon discovered the "Tom" tunnel. Just before the completion of Harry, some of the diggers were, indeed, sent off to a newer, Nazier prison and never got the chance to escape.



But the rest started crawling through the tunnels on a moonless March night in 1944. They got 76 men through before, finally, when the 77th inmate gophered his way out someone realized an escape was going down.

The Nazi guards later took count of all of the missing supplies that were used in the escape: 4,000 bed boards, the complete disappearance of 90 beds, 52 tables, 34 chairs, 10 single tables, 76 benches, 1,219 knives, 478 spoons, 582 forks, 69 lamps, 246 water cans, 30 shovels, 1,000 feet of electric wire, 600 feet of rope, 3,424 towels, 1,700 blankets and more than 1,400 milk cans.



"Do you guys ever think it's weird that we've only got, like, three beds in this whole prison?"

Keep in mind they were able to get all of this stuff while in a Nazi prison camp. Think about that the next time you find yourself bartering like a nomadic goat herder just to get a couple of ballpoints from your office supply manager. Virtually all of the escapees were caught and either killed or re-imprisoned, but we still like to think this was the point the Nazis realized they could not win a war against an army full of MacGyvers.

#5.

The Pascal Payet Escapes (aka "Get to the Choppa!")



After killing an armored truck driver, Pascal Payet was arrested and sentenced to a 30-year stint in France's Luynes prison. But Luynes prison had one major flaw in its design that Payet knew how to exploit: it had a sky over it.

By 2001, Payet was probably up to his cheeks in prison rape so he decided to leave... via helicopter that some buddies of his hijacked. Sadly, the details of this glorious break out are scant but we're assuming it involved him leaping in slow motion and grabbing onto the skids of the helicopter in midair.



"And, now, could you point me in the direction he took the helicopter, officer?"

After roaming free for a couple of years, Payet must have figured that if dropping a helicopter into a prison worked once, why wouldn't it work again? In 2003, he hopped in a helicopter, flew back to Luynes prison and busted out three inmates. These men were friends of his, but we're pretty sure he was just having one of those moments where you do something so cool you have to do it again just to make sure.

After breaking out his buddies, Payet was captured and given an additional seven years on his sentence. This time he wasn't placed in just one big-house, but was moved to a different prison every three months or so in a sad attempt to make the process helicopter proof. It remained that way until July of 2007, when a helicopter carrying four masked men landed on the roof of Grasse prison in Southeast France during the start of the night shift.



"Holy shit I can't believe how easy this is."

The men broke Payet out of his isolation ward and flew off him off into the sunset. And just to prove that he knows a thing or two about symbolism, this break-out occurred on Bastille Day, a French holiday that commemorates the storming of a prison. Payet, you glorious son of a bitch...

#4.

The Mother of All Break-Outs



What is more powerful than the love of a mother? And it's even more powerful when a mother uses a big rig truck to mow down your chest cavity and ram their love directly into your heart.

Jay Junior Sigler, an inmate in his eighth year of a 20-year sentence for armed robbery at Everglades Correctional Institution, started out his day just like any other:

11:28 AM: Walk off threat of aggressive anal penetration.

2:03 PM: Artfully dodge a shanking.

2:58 PM: Receive aggressive anal penetration.

3:00 PM: A visit from Mom and some friends.

But unlike most Plexiglas and wired phone visits from loved ones, this one went a bit differently. In broad daylight an 18-wheel truck driven by Sigler's friend, John Beaston (who was accompanied by Christopher Michelson and Kelly Mitchell), rammed though not just one, but four prison fences, immediately followed by a Cutlass Supreme driven by none other then mommy dearest herself, Sandra Sigler.



"The parking lot was full"

When Jay, who was in the courtyard, reached the car, Beaston tossed him a shotgun and together they fired at the oncoming guards. Jay and everyone from the truck jumped into Mrs. Sigler's Cutlass like kids after Karate practice and hightailed it out of there.

They then made a pit stop at local mall and swapped vehicles; Jay and Michelson in one car, Mama Sigler, Beaston and Mitchell in another. Jay and Michelson had made it all the way to Pompano Beach, some 40

miles away from the prison, when they realized they were being followed. In a desperate attempt to flee, they sped into an alley and burst out the other side just in time to blow by a stop sign and slam into an oncoming vehicle, killing the 55-year-old driver.

Michelson, who had recently been released from prison himself, was brought in on charges of first-degree murder along with Sigler. As for Mother Sigler, she and her car mates were arrested at a gas station a few miles from the prison shortly after the car swap. Just goes to show that, holiday or not, a visiting parent will inevitably fuck up your day.



"By all accounts the mother masterminded everything," said Miami-Dade detective Rudy Espinosa. This didn't turn out to be entirely correct as Jay Sigler had actually conceived of the plan some four months earlier. Mama Sigler just handled the small, intricate details of the escape like, for instance, ramming a huge fucking truck through four prison gates.

#3.

The Texas Seven



On December 13, 2000, seven inmates at the John Connally Unit -- a prison in Karnes County, Texas -- escaped via an amalgam of brute force and the kind of plan an elementary school child would concoct.

The escape began when inmate Rivas convinced Maintenance Supervisor Patrick Moczygamba to allow him and some fellow inmates to forego lunch in order to wax the floors of the maintenance room. They lured Moczygamba into the warehouse and once there, Rivas duped him by essentially shouting, "Hey! Look over there!" Moczygamba acquiesced and was greeted with an ax handle to the head.



Threatening him with a homemade knife, they undressed Moczygamba, bound him and tossed him into an electrical room, beginning a chain reaction of events more akin to a comedy of errors than a jail break. As new people entered the maintenance room, they were each given a variation of the "Hey! Look over there!" technique, along with a punch in the face and the threat of a stabbing from a new and totally random sharp object. In all, they captured nine supervisors, four correctional officers and three uninvolved inmates using simple vaudevillian misdirection.

By impersonating various supervisors over the course of three phone calls, the inmates not only made good with one of the 12 daily head counts, but gained access to a gatehouse under the guise of monitor installers. No guards questioned them because a little company is welcomed after hours of trying to decide whether or not masturbating at work is a fireable offense (answer: No).

After entering the gatehouse, some more phone trickery allowed the inmates to headlock the guard into submission and gain entry to the radio tower. In the tower, inmate Halprin snatched a revolver off of a desk and, in a moment that proves that a gun can get you anything you want in life as long as you point it at a human, the guard opened the gate and even told the inmates about the weapons cache at the bottom of the tower.



"Hey, how come Garcia and Harper get to smile like dipshits?"

The Texas Seven drove their way out of the back gate, effectively launching one of the largest manhunts in U.S. history. They were eventually hauled in after appearing on the TV show *America's Most Wanted*. Some of them actually demanded a television appearance before they would agree to surrender,

presumably planning to point at the camera, say "Look behind you!" and then escape once more while all of America had its back turned.

#2.

Antonio Ferrara Goes Commando



Antonio Ferrara was the personification of the classic movie gangster: He was a part of a group of veteran bank robbers -- nicknamed the "Dream Team" - that was labeled the "most dangerous gang in Europe" by Interpol. He was also famous in the French underworld for his remarkable ability to create the perfect explosive concoction that could blow open a safe and leave the cash within unharmed. At the age of 29 he was sentenced to serve an eight-year prison term for two armed robberies and had been suspected of at least 15 more.



And to top it all off, he looks like a total douche.

Five years into his prison career, he decides to call it quits and escape the only way an explosives expert knows how (hint: explosives). At 4:30 AM on March 12, 2003, six men drove up to the front gate of Fresnes Prison in fake police cars, clothed in police uniforms and ski masks. Some fired AK-47s at the two

adjacent guard towers, while the other group blew open the front gates with rocket-propelled grenade launchers. Yes, someone came up with a plan even less subtle than the truck-driving mom up there.

With all of this going down, Ferrara was presumably awoken by the sound of gun fire and explosions outside. He must have figured that he needed to take the initiative and check it out himself, so he blew open his cell door with a stick of dynamite that is believed to have been given to him by a guard (either the guard was a co-conspirator or Ferrara is one hell of a smooth talker).



"Come on, just let me borrow it, don't be a dick."

Once out of his cell, he joined up with his clan of fellow Michael Bay enthusiasts and fled. It all took 10 minutes.

After being on the loose for four months (and being declared France's most wanted man by President Nicolas Sarkozy) Ferrara was recaptured in a Paris bar during a massive undercover operation. When Ferrara came face to face with the arresting officer, he was quoted as saying only one thing: "You again?".

#1.

Alcatraz



No surprise here. When most people think "prison escape," they think Alcatraz.

Frank Morris's long history of jail breaks prompted the move to a more inescapable place. So how about the San Francisco prison with tough iron bars, twelve cell checks per day and, oh yeah, is surrounded by the frigid waters of the Pacific.

Frank and his fellow inmates Allen West and Clarence and John Anglin realized there just so happened to be an unguarded utility corridor just behind their cells. The corridor housed a ventilation shaft, which led to the roof. In need of digging tools, West placed stolen drill bits and a vacuum cleaner motor under a napkin, waved his hand and poof, out came a drill somehow.



Made of a toothbrush, drill bits and *magic!*

The drill (the sound of which was masked by an equally ear-grating accordion) loosened the air vents at the back of their cells by making closely spaced holes around the cover so the entire section of the wall could be removed.

After they gained access to the corridor everything else just fell in line: The Anglin brothers fabricated crude paper mache replicas of their own heads, with real human hair from the prison barber shop. Over fifty prison-issued rain coats were either donated by or stolen from fellow inmates and were meticulously glued together to form a six-by-fourteen foot inflatable raft. Morris even modified one of the ear-grating accordions into an air pump for inflation.



Un-fucking-canny.

On June 11, 1962, after two years of planning, Morris decided that it was time to make with the breaking out. Allen West, who was so bogged down with making life preservers and rowing paddles, had yet to finish the holes in his cell's air vent. Morris didn't give a shit and went ahead with the plans. They placed their dummy heads in their beds and set off through the air vent holes. They were going to break out

West, but they opted to flip him off, laugh and high-five instead. They scaled 30-feet of plumbing to the roof and shimmied down 50-feet of piping to the freedom fortified dirt below.

In an interview, West later said that the rest of the plan would have involved paddling to nearby Angel Island, resting and then riding the tides to shore where they would go their separate ways. No one knows if Morris and the Anglin's completed that portion of the plan, but many experts pretty much agree that they did. Why?

Because before they came along every escapee that had made it to the waters of around Alcatraz was later found with a bad case of the deads. The bodies of Morris and the Anglin's, however, were never found. Also because the story becomes kind of pointless if they just sank like rocks after all that effort.

Read more: http://www.cracked.com/article_16945_6-insane-prison-escapes-that-actually-happened.html#ixzz2Rjq7HKCw

After 500 Taliban prisoners are freed through Great Escape-style tunnels in Afghanistan - forces fight back by recapturing 65

By David Gardner

UPDATED:01:53, 24 June 2011

- [Comments \(121\)](#)

- [Share](#)

-
-
-
-

- **1,000ft tunnel constructed over more than five months**
- **Prisoners took more than four-and-a-half hours to escape**
- **Afghan police searched the compound two months before jail break**
- **Local government weakened and citizens are 'afraid to go out'**

Security forces have struck back after the Taliban dug a 1,000ft tunnel to enable 500 of its militants to escape from an Afghan prison.

The government was scrambling to recover from the massive security breach, saying that 65 escapees had already been recaptured after the brazen jail break on Sunday night.

Officials in Kandahar said Afghan and international forces are working together to find the missing convicts and re-arrest them. It said the troops have already caught 65 and killed two who tried to resist arrest.



Hole in the floor: Afghan jailer Ghulam Dastager Mayaar points to the tunnel through which 500 prisoners escaped from Kandahar jail

Authorities have stored biometric data on each prisoner which will help to identify them. However the escape is already proving to be a huge blow to the already weakened provincial government.

Adding to the feelings of insecurity, the prison break came less than two weeks after the Kandahar police chief was killed by a suicide bomber inside his heavily defended office compound.

'How can we trust or rely on a government that can't protect the police chief inside the police headquarters and can't keep prisoners in the prison?' asked Islamullah Agha Bashir, who sells washing machines in Kandahar city.

More...

- SAS facing 'recruitment crisis' as elite force fails to attract regular soldiers
- Failed Taliban suicide bomber shot dead in Afghanistan was 'sleeper from London'
- Prince Andrew 'cancels luxury jet flights with shady tycoon'
- Revealed: How Al Qaeda high command watched 9/11 unfold on TV (while one was in hospital having his tonsils out)

'Last night while we were eating dinner I told my two sons not to go out as much because I am afraid that now when the morale of the Taliban is high, they will attack more.'

Starting at a house outside the prison walls, the escape tunnel made its way right into the cell blocks at the high-security jail in Kandahar. Once it was completed, the inmates who were in on the plan started ushering their fellow prisoners into the tunnel and out to freedom.



Long crawl to freedom: The tunnel was dug under the jail wall and a number of security posts

It was discovered at 4am yesterday – about half an hour after the Taliban said they had got all their men out, some of them senior commanders.

The tunnel, which took five months to build, was accessed through a hole cut into the concrete floor of one of the cells.

One escapee told the BBC it had taken him about 30 minutes to crawl the length of the tunnel. Once outside, the inmates were ferried to safe houses in a fleet of trucks.

‘There were four or five of us who knew that our friends were digging a tunnel from the outside,’ said Mohammad Abdullah, who had been locked up for two years after being captured with a stockpile of weapons.

‘Some of our friends helped us by providing copies of the keys. When the time came at night, we managed to open the doors for friends who were in other rooms.’



Basic: A policeman stands guard at the entrance of the Political Prisoner's section of the jail which is meant to be high security

Officials in the capital Kabul were already starting to place blame for the jail break. Justice Minister Abibullah Ghalab sent a letter to President Hamid Karzai acknowledging that prison officials or guards likely acted as accomplices but also saying that Afghan and international security forces should have detected the plot.

He said: 'The escape of all the prisoners from one tunnel... shows that collaborators inside the prison somehow provided an opportunity.'

He noted that Afghan police searched the compound from which the tunnel originated about two and a half months before the prison break and Canadian and American forces have been responsible for security improvements to the prison. A full investigation was under way.

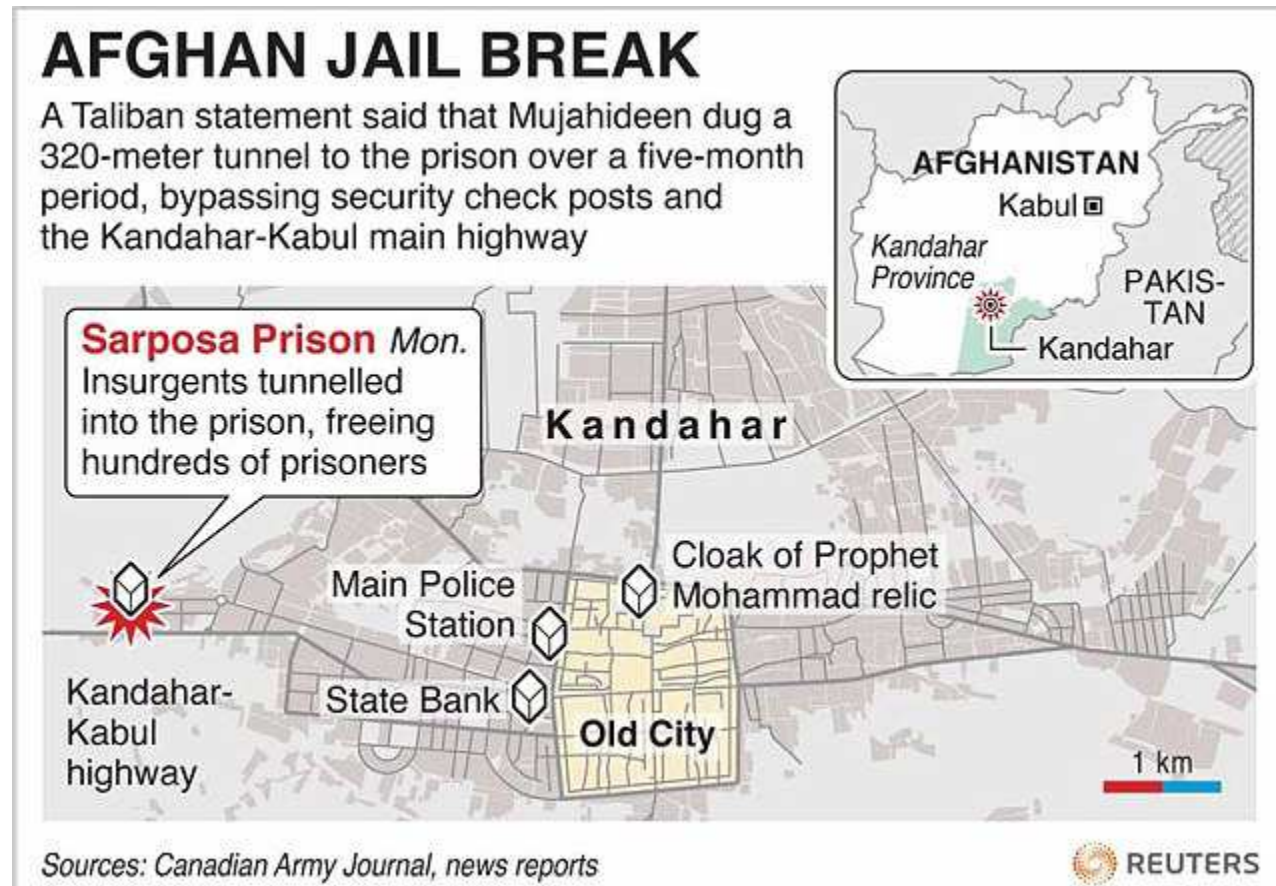
Colonel Richard Kemp, who led British troops in Afghanistan, told BBC Radio 4 the break-out would put the lives of UK servicemen in jeopardy.



On guard: The prisoners easily slipped past Afghan soldiers and had even obtained copies of keys to cells



Great escape: Afghan policemen and NATO forces stand guard next to Kandahar jail after hundreds of Taliban prisoners escaped through a tunnel on Sunday night



'There is absolutely no excuse for these things to happen,' he said. 'We mustn't forget that many American, British, Afghan and other Allied soldiers have lost their lives in getting men like these behind bars. We cannot have a repetition of this.'

'If we are handing it back to a government who are incapable of handling it then everything we will have done will have been for nothing.'



Steve McQueen and Richard Attenborough in a scene from *The Great Escape: The Afghan jail breakout* also involved a tunnel and months of work

The Sarposa prison in Kandahar – home city of the Taliban – was supposed to have become one of the most secure in the country after militants launched an attack three years ago and freed 900 prisoners.

The tunnel allowed the Taliban prisoners to bypass checkpoints, watchtowers and concrete barriers topped with razor wire.

‘This is a blow. It is something that should not have happened,’ said Afghan president Hamid Karzai’s spokesman Waheed Omer yesterday. ‘We are looking into finding out what exactly happened and what is being done to compensate for the disaster.’

Kandahar has been the focus of the U.S.-led military campaign over the past year, with tens of thousands of American and Afghan troops launching offensives around the city.

Farid Ahmad Najibi, a spokesman for the justice ministry, said he could not rule out the possibility that guards had played a part in the escape.

‘It is either a case of the jailers being financially motivated and being bribed, or a case of them being politically motivated,’ said Waheed Mujhda, a Kabul-based analyst and expert on the Taliban.

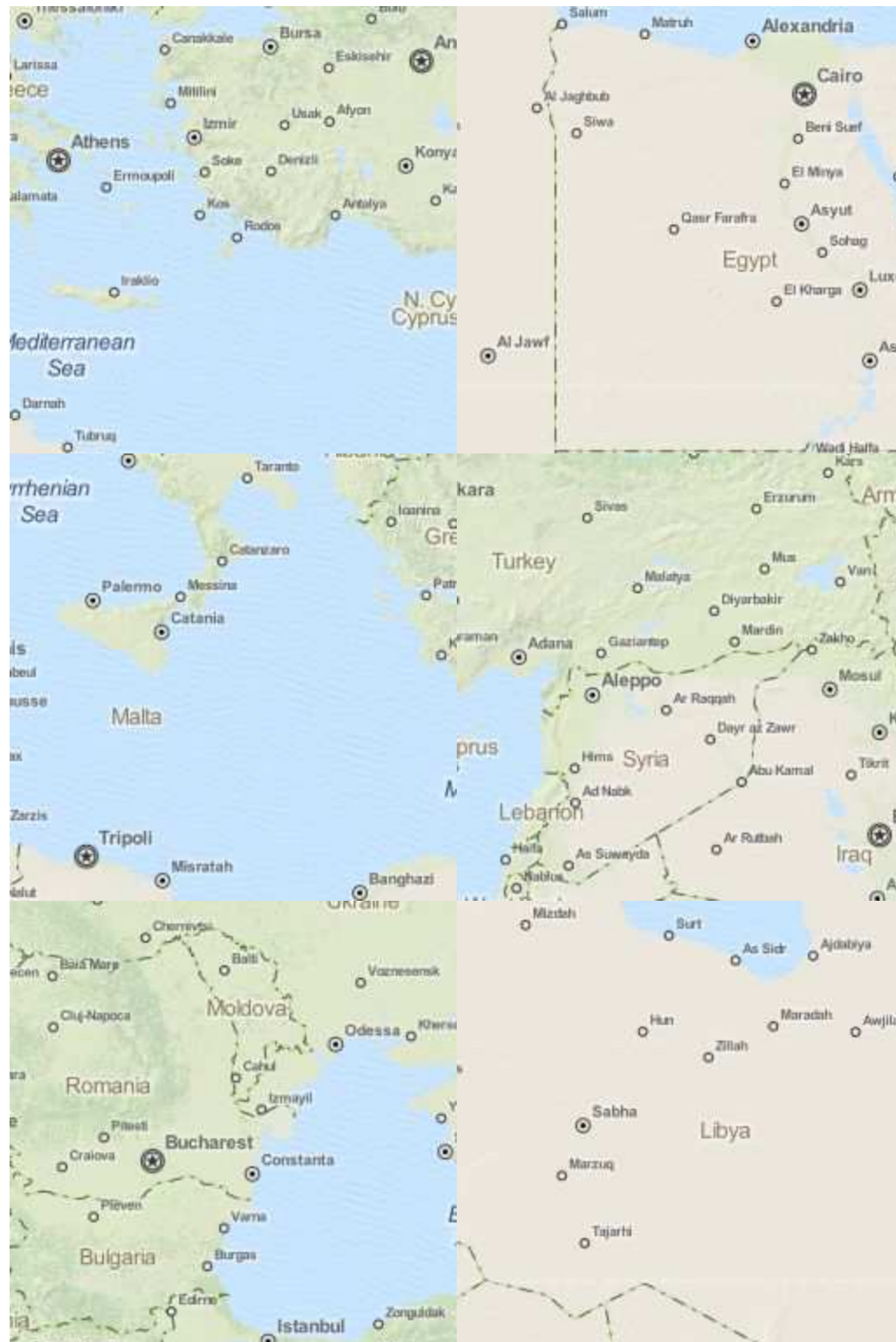
Kandahar police shot and killed two who tried to evade capture and rearrested another 26. The jail break comes months before the start of a transfer of security responsibilities from foreign to Afghan forces.

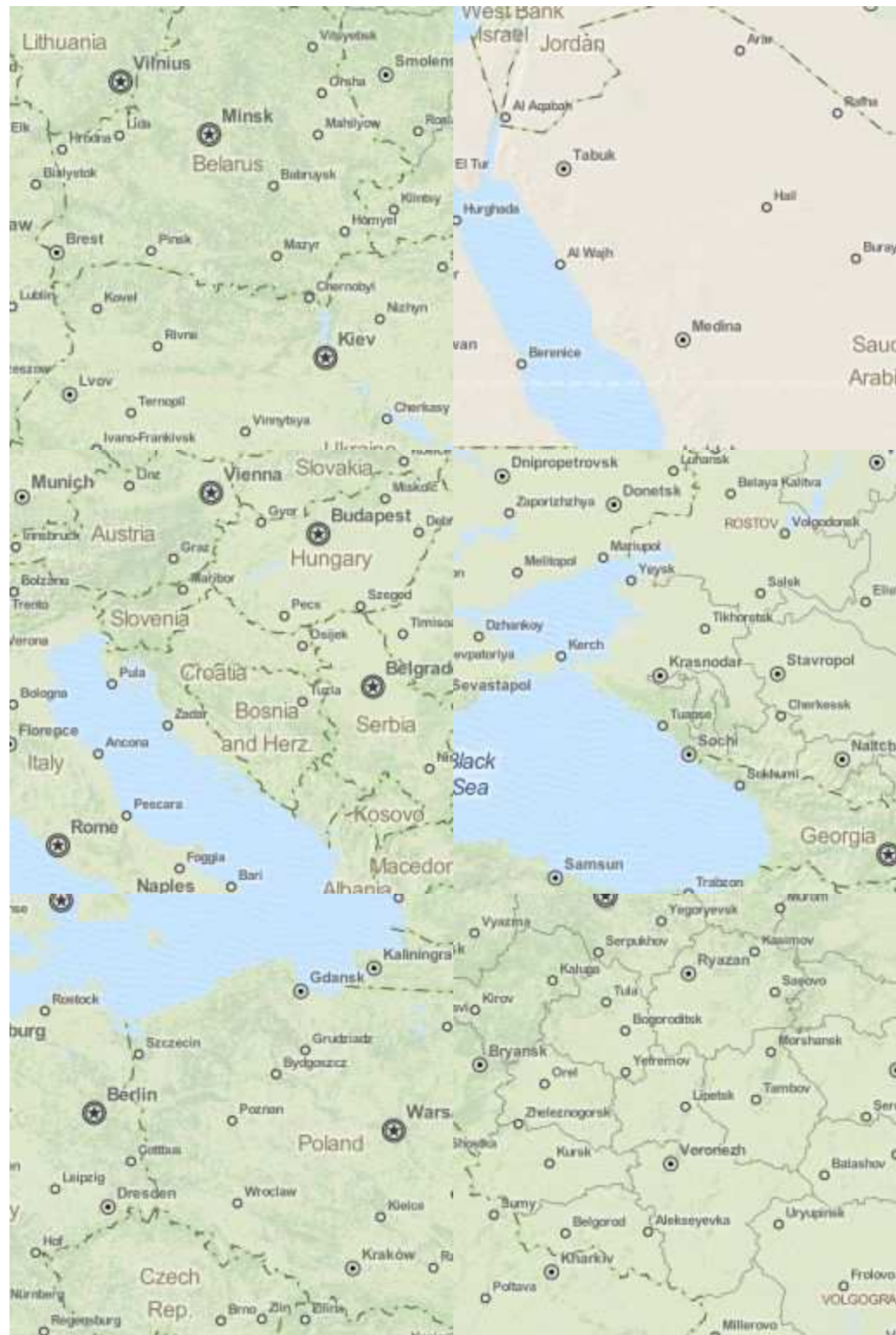
GREECE Prison Shooting: 2 Injured, 11 Escape In Gun, Grenade Attack In Trikala

By COSTAS KANTOURIS 03/23/13 07:51 PM ET EDT **AP**

[redditstumble](#)









TRIKALA, Greece — At least 11 inmates escaped from a Greek prison Friday night after gunmen brazenly attacked the site with grenades and automatic weapons, kicking off a nightlong standoff between police and prisoners. Two guards were injured, one of them seriously.

A police official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media, told the Associated Press that two of the escaped inmates had been found and arrested Saturday afternoon. He said they were hiding in a church not far from the site of the prison. The official added that all the escapees were Albanian. A third escapee was arrested later Saturday in a nearby village, police announced.

The incident occurred near the town of Trikala, in central Greece, some 320 kilometers (200 miles) northwest of Athens. As many as six gunmen attacked the prison after driving up to the site in a van and pickup truck, according to officials.

The Ministry of Justice announced that gunmen using "two vehicles and very heavy weapons" attacked the prison's outside guards, as well as a prison patrol vehicle and two police cars.

"During the exchange of heavy fire that lasted over half an hour and turned the area into a battlefield, two perimeter guards were injured in the abdomen, one of them seriously," the ministry said.

Justice Minister Antonis Roupakiotis, who visited the prison Saturday evening, called the escape a "commando operation, with hundreds of shots fired."

"Until now we were worried that inmates would escape from the inside, because this was the danger. Now we have to redesign the security plan of the prisons, because as it seems with the new form that organized crime has taken, there is a risk of attacks coming from the outside to help inmates escape," added Roupakiotis.

Prison authorities were investigating reports that weapons had also been fired from inside the facility. The ministry's announcement said that "no guns or casings confirming the use of an automatic weapon by inmates during the escape have been found. However, the search continues."

When asked about the possible presence of guns inside the prison, Roupakiotis replied that the search continues.

Police spokesman Capt. Christos Parthenis told reporters Saturday that a number of sharp instruments were found inside the prison that the escapees used to prise open cell windows, as well as ladders that were used in their escape, but no weapons. He added that one of the vehicles used by the attackers was found, totally burned, in an attempt to erase incriminating evidence.

At least five grenades exploded, while army experts were expected at the prison to dispose of two unexploded grenades.

The attack started at around 8:30 p.m. (1830GMT) Friday, when a police patrol jeep was fired upon.

"It was like a war was going on. There was so much gunfire," said Trikala city councilor Costas Tassios, who lives in the village of Krinitisa, near the prison.

A bullet fired at the village damaged a coffee shop window in an incident also being investigated by police.

The escaped prisoners used ropes and bed sheets tied together to climb down from a guard tower that had been attacked. They had to go through two more perimeter fences, topped by barbed wire, before they escaped. The same police officer told the Associated Press that wire-cutting tools had been recovered.

Police set up roadblocks near the prison, searched vacant homes and farm buildings, and used two helicopters in the manhunt. Officers from evidence units were scouring the jail perimeter after dawn.

The attack was the latest dramatic incident at Greek prisons, which are suffering from serious overcrowding and staff shortages as the country struggles through a financial crisis and a recession that started in late 2008.

Last month, guards foiled a breakout attempt by four inmates who tried to escape by helicopter from Trikala prison, including notorious Greek inmate Panagiotis Vlastos, who is serving life for murder and racketeering. Gunmen in the helicopter had fired on guards in the Feb. 24 incident and lowered a rope in to the courtyard, but the chopper was forced to land after being hit by returned gunfire.

In a separate incident on March 17, a convicted contract killer, Albanian inmate Alket Rizaj, took several prison guards hostage in an attempt to escape from another prison in central Greece. The attempt was unsuccessful and the hostages were released unharmed following a 24-hour standoff.

History's Ten Greatest Prison Escapes¹⁴



History's Ten Greatest Prison Escapes

The primary purpose of a prison is to keep the bad people in, and for the most part, they're quite successful at doing exactly that. Occasionally, however, a resourceful few manage to get out – it's never easy though. This is the case in the KoldCast TV series *Cell*, a story about a man that wakes up in a cell after a night on the town and soon realizes that he's not alone and he's not exactly in jail. Whether you're guilty or not (everyone claims to be), we thought we would “applaud” those that have successfully beat the system... well, sort of. Here is a list of history's most famous prison escapes.

1. The Texas Seven

Known as the Texas 7, this group of guys successfully escaped from the John Connally Unit near Kenedy, Texas on December 13, 2000. The seven men carried out an elaborate scheme and managed to escape a maximum-security state prison using several well-planned ploys: the seven convicts overpowered and restrained nine civilian maintenance supervisors, four correctional officers and three uninvolved inmates during the slowest period of the day when there would be less surveillance of certain locations. After gagging them, the seven inmates stole their clothing, credit cards, and identification. They eventually made their way to the prison maintenance pickup truck, which they used to escape from the prison grounds. Believe it or not, they were actually apprehended January 21-23, 2001 as a direct result of the television show *America's Most Wanted*.



Garcia



Halprin



Harper



Murphy



Newbury



Rivas



Rodriguez

2. Alfred Wetzler and Rudolf Vrba

Alfred Wetzler was a Slovak Jew, and one of a very small number of Jews known to have escaped from the Auschwitz death camp during the Holocaust. He and fellow escapee, Rudolf Vrba, with the help of the camp underground, dug their way inside a hollowed-out woodpile just outside the barbed-wire inner perimeter, but inside an external perimeter the guards kept erected during the day. The other prisoners placed boards around the hollowed-out area to hide the men, then sprinkled the area with pungent Russian tobacco soaked in gasoline to fool the guards' dogs. The two remained in hiding for 4 nights before putting on Dutch suits, overcoats, and boots they had taken from the camp and headed for the Polish border. The pair compiled an incredibly detailed report about the inner workings of the Auschwitz camp including construction details of the gas chambers, crematoriums and, most convincingly, a label from a canister of Zyklon gas. The 32-page Vrba-Wetzler report, as it became known, was the first detailed report about Auschwitz to reach the West that the Allies regarded as credible.

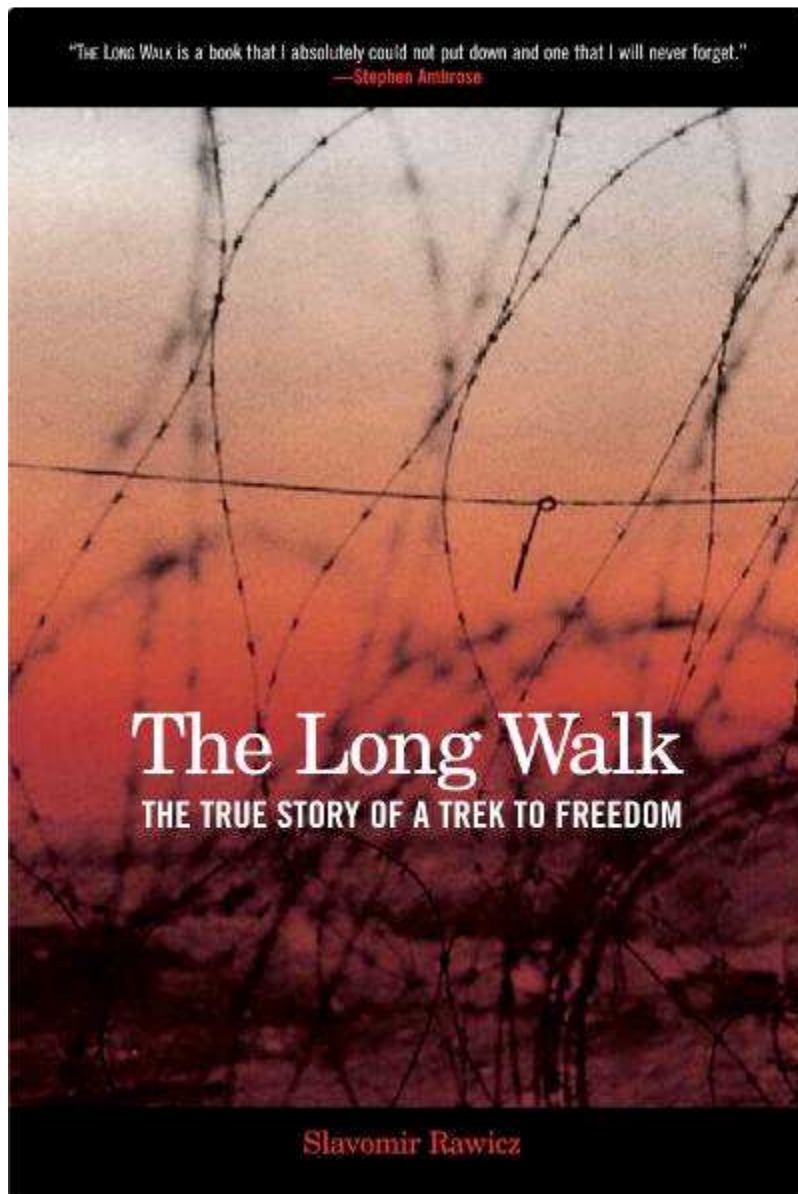


3. The Escape From Alcatraz

In its 29 years of operation, there were 14 attempts to escape from Alcatraz prison. Officially, every escape attempt failed. The most famous and intricate attempt to bust loose from the world's most famous prison came on June 11, 1962. Frank Morris, and the Anglin brothers burrowed out of their cells, climbed to the top of the cellblock, and then proceeded to cut through bars and make it to the roof via an air vent. They then scurried down a drainpipe, over a chain link fence and to the shore where they assembled a pontoon-type raft and then vanished. It's widely believed that the trio actually drowned in the San Francisco Bay, though their bodies were never discovered. Seeing as "technically" their whereabouts are unknown, I'm going to call this one an escape and give it a spot on the list.

4. Yakutsk, Siberia

Landscapes don't come a heck of a lot more unforgivable than Siberia. Among Stalin's imprisoned Polish in 1939 was a cavalry officer by the name of Slavomir Rawicz. While in Siberia, Rawicz befriended the camp commissar's wife, and with her help, he and six other prisoners managed to escape during one of many blinding snowstorms. A journey of absolutely epic proportions followed. A Polish teenage girl who had escaped her own camp joined the ragtag group of escapees as they skirted Lake Baikal, slipped over into Mongolia, traversed the Gobi Desert, and crossed the Himalayas. After a journey of 4,000 miles, the Polish officer and four others that managed to survive the trip staggered into British-controlled India nearly a year after their initial escape, finally free.



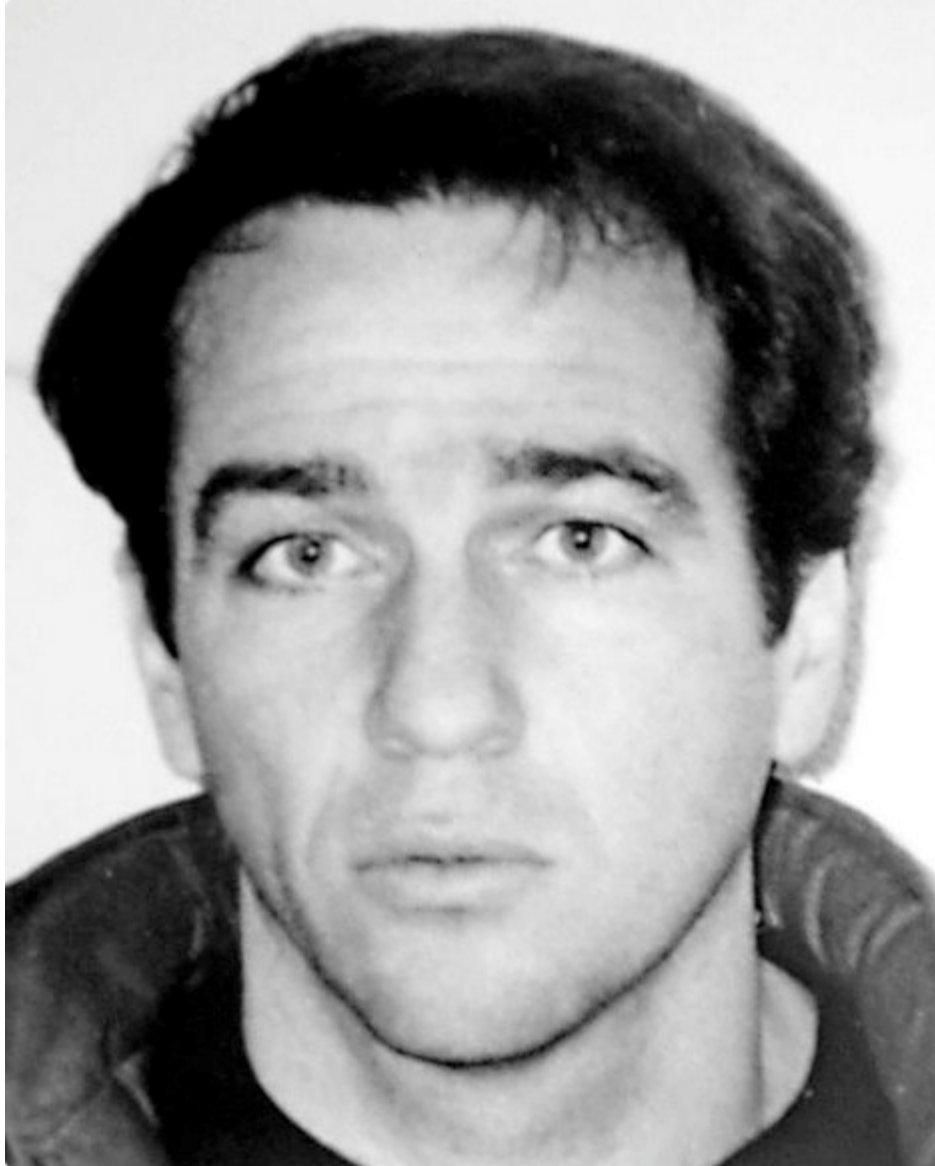
5. The Libby Prison Escape

Easily the most famous (and successful) prison escape during the American Civil War, the Libby Prison escape took place overnight between February 9th and 10th, 1864. More than 100 imprisoned Union soldiers broke out of their POW building at Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia that night by breaking into the basement area known as “rat hell” and digging a tunnel. After 17 days of digging, they succeeded in breaking into a 50-foot vacant lot on the eastern side of the prison beneath a tobacco shed. From there they collected themselves into a group and simply strolled out the front gate unchallenged. Of the 109 escapees, 59 succeeded in reaching Union lines, 48 were recaptured, and 2 drowned in the nearby James River.



6. Pascal Payet

If anyone is deserving of a spot on this list, it's Pascal Payet, sentenced in 2001, to 30 years for murder. The man managed to escape not once, but twice from high security prisons in France. Believe it or not, on both occasions he used a hijacked helicopter. The chopper used in his second escape had been hijacked by four masked men from Cannes-Mandelieu airport. It landed some time later at Brignoles, 38 kilometres northeast of Toulon, France on the Mediterranean coast. Payet and his accomplices fled the scene and the pilot was released unharmed. Payet was re-captured on September 21, 2007, in Mataró, Spain, about 18 miles northeast of Barcelona. Though he had undergone extensive cosmetic surgery in hopes of keeping himself out of prison, he was identified by Spanish police.



7. Tower of London, England

In the late 1500s, a Jesuit priest named John Gerard was incarcerated at the Tower of London, which at the time served as a jail for political prisoners. Catholicism was illegal and practicing priests were immediately guilty of treason. During his imprisonment, Gerard wrote letters to supporters on the outside and hid secret clues written in invisible ink made from diluted orange juice. He also sent some messages to another prisoner, John Arden, who was held in a separate jail in the Tower. The pair conspired to escape with the help of friends and a sympathetic guard. On October 4, 1597, Gerard hacked through stones around the door to his cell. Once out, he snuck past guards and reached a high wall overlooking a moat, where he met up with Arden. A supporter and an escape boat waited below. Via a rope tied to a nearby cannon, the pair inched down and rowed to safety.



8. Stalag Luft

Stalag Luft III was a German Air Force prisoner-of-war camp during World War II that housed captured air force personnel. In January 1943, a group led by Roger Bushell came up with a plan to dig three deep tunnels, codenamed “Tom,” “Dick,” and “Harry.” Each of the entrances was carefully selected to ensure they would be undetectable by the guards. The tunnels were very small and shored up with pieces of wood scavenged from all over the camp. To ensure that the person digging had enough oxygen to breathe and keep his lamps lit, a pump was built to push fresh air along the ducting into the tunnels. Later, electric lighting was installed and hooked into the camp’s electrical grid. The group also managed to somehow install a small rail car system for moving sand more quickly. These rails were key to moving 130 tons of material in a five-month period. Eventually 76 men crawled through the tunnel to initial freedom but the 77th was unfortunately spotted emerging from the tunnel by one of the guards. Out of the 76 men only 3 evaded capture.



9. Billy Hayes

Billy Hayes was an American student who was arrested in 1970 when he tried to smuggle two pounds of hash onto a plane in Turkey. After being caught, he was sentenced to thirty years in the exceptionally

harsh Turkish prison system. Hayes toiled in Sagmilicar Prison for five years, but he was eventually transferred to an island prison in the Sea of Marmara. It was here that Billy began to seriously plan his escape. Though the island had no boats, a nearby harbor would frequently fill up with small fishing vessels any time there was a strong storm. Hayes spent days hiding in a concrete bin, and when the time was right, he swam to the harbor and stole a small dinghy. From here, he was able to make his way to Greece and eventually traveled halfway around the world before arriving safely back in the United States. He later wrote a book about his ordeal called "Midnight Express," which was then adapted into film by Oliver Stone.



10. The Colditz Escape

Colditz was possibly the most famous German Army prisoner-of-war camps for officers in World War II. It was located in Colditz Castle, and situated on a cliff overlooking the town of Colditz in Saxony. While there were, in fact, numerous successful attempts at escaping Colditz, it's one in particular that stands above the rest. A pair of British pilots by the name of Jack Best and Bill Goldfinch came up with the wacky idea of building a glider and using it as a means of escape. Constructed of stolen pieces of wood, electrical wires, and anything else they could get their hands on in the lower attic above the chapel, the plan was to launch it from the roof and fly across the river Mulde, which was about 200 feet below. The end of the war saw the closing of Colditz, and the glider never actually took to air. Still, this sort of ingenuity earns Best and Goldfinch a spot on the list.



A Brief History of Strange Prison Escape Tools

The recent Taliban prison escape was undeniably crafty. But especially noteworthy was the creation of the 320+ meter tunnel without power tools, which would have been too noisy. Here are six other great escapes, and the gear that made them possible.

Alcatraz Federal Prison, San Francisco, 1962



The most famous escape attempt from Alcatraz was also the last to happen on the prison island. In 1962, John Anglin, Clarence Anglin and Frank Morris put on a master class in fashioning improvised tools, using a vacuum cleaner motor to hack together a drill, creating life rafts out of rain jackets. The inmates spent months creating an escape hole in their cell (which they hid with a dummy wall) which led to a fan vent. Leaving hair-covered, paper mache masks in their beds to deceive prison guards, the trio escaped in the night where they presumably used their life rafts to get away. No trace of the escapees was ever found, on land or sea. *[Image via Seven Morris/Flickr]*

Santa Martha Acatitla Prison, Mexico City, 1971



Maybe it's not a tool in the way that the rest of these prison escape aids were, but the helicopter has a long and storied history in aiding inmates trying to get out from captivity. The first (and most famous) helicopter escape took place in 1971 outside Mexico City at the Santa Martha Acatitla prison. Joel Kaplan Jr. ran a hedge fund that was under investigation as a CIA money conduit when he was convicted of murdering his business partner in Mexico. While serving his

sentence, Kaplan somehow arranged for a helicopter to touch down in the middle of the prison yard, and whisk him away (along with another inmate) in under two minutes. This became the model for countless other helicopter escapes, not to mention the basis for the movie *Breakout*.

Sir David Longland Correctional Centre, Brisbane, 1997



Diamond-encrusted wire sounds like something that could only exist in a movie, but it's been used in real life to help inmates escape prison walls at the Sir David Longland Correctional Centre, outside of Brisbane. Using the "angel wire" to cut through cell bars, then bending those bars back using sheets, five inmates in Australia (three of which were murderers) were able to escape. The prisoners also used the diamond wire to cut through security fences, a chair to get over the razor wire atop other fences, and finally had a pair of bolt-cutters tossed to them from their accomplices on the other side. Law enforcement to launched a 150 officer manhunt for the escapees. And quickly caught four of them, finally catching the fifth fugitive months later.

SCI-Pittsburgh, 1997



In 1997, six inmates at the maximum security SCI-Pittsburgh prison gained unauthorized access to blueprints and power tools used for prison work (which included a JACKHAMMER), using them to chip their way out of the penitentiary. Inmates were being used to help install new steam pipes at the prison, and used these tools under supervision. Officials never found out how they got a hold of them afterwards, but it's probably safe to say that using inmate labor wasn't the best idea in this instance.

Erie County Correctional Facility, New York, 2006



In 2006, Ralph "Bucky" Phillips was in prison after violating parole for a previous burglary conviction. While serving his term at Erie County Correctional Facility in western New York, Phillips got hold of a can opener and used it to cut through the corrugated metal roof of the prison kitchen. Once free, Phillips evaded police for over five months, and became a folk hero in the process. But that was before Phillips decided to shoot three officers, one of whom died as a result. He's now serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole.

Long Bay Prison, Sydney, 2006



Using a butter knife to escape from prison makes sense, but laxatives can also be a useful aid. In 2006, Robert Cole used laxatives to lose over 31 pounds, allowing him to squeeze his 123-pound body through the window of the prison hospital and the space he carved out between the brick walls and the iron bars guarding said window. Cole was on the run for three days before getting caught and sentenced to another year in prison.

[Image via Cosma/Shutterstock]

Prisoners hide escape tunnel with pin-ups

Two prisoners used pictures of women in bikinis to hide holes they used to escape and left a thank-you note, signed with a smiley face, for a guard they claimed helped them, officials said.

Jose Espinosa, 20, and Otis Blunt, 32, squeezed through the openings before dawn on Saturday in a high-security unit of the Union County jail in New Jersey.

They jumped on to a roof below, and over a 7.5m (25ft) fence topped with razor wire, authorities said.

Authorities withheld the name of the officer the inmates said was involved. The note, found in Espinosa's cell, read: "Thank you officer ... for the tools needed. You're a real pal. Happy holidays."

Authorities are investigating the claims. The guard named in the note has not yet submitted a report, and disciplinary action has not been taken against any guard, said the county prosecutor, Theodore J Romankow, whose office is overseeing the escape investigation.

Police were still searching for the men yesterday. Espinosa was awaiting sentencing for manslaughter in a drive-by shooting, and Blunt is facing robbery and other charges over the shooting of the manager of a convenience store.

Meanwhile, authorities are reviewing security measures, and have barred inmates from pinning pictures on their cell walls.

The jailbreak is reminiscent of one in the movie *The Shawshank Redemption*, in which the main character, an inmate, uses posters of women, including Raquel Welch in a bikini, to conceal an escape tunnel. Espinosa and Blunt used at least two improvised tools - a piece of wire and a shut-off wheel - to remove breeze blocks from the wall, Romankow said.

The wire was used to scrape mortar from around a breeze block in the wall between their cells, and then around a breeze block in an exterior wall in Espinosa's cell that faced a busy railway track, Romankow said.

The shut-off wheel was used to crush the breeze blocks so they could be hidden in the cells, Romankow said. They also laid out pillows and sheets to make it look like men were sleeping under blankets, authorities said.

When they landed outside the fence, they ran in opposite directions, he said.

It was the first escape since the jail opened in 1986.

History's Great Escapes

- By Lexi Krock

Throughout history, prisoners of all sorts have gone to unheard-of lengths to free themselves from confinement, whether it be house arrest in Tibet or a life sentence in Alcatraz. Most have failed, but a significant minority has tasted freedom through patience, skill, and in many cases sheer dumb luck. Here, relive some of the greatest jailbreaks of all time.



A 16th-century portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots EnlargePhoto credit: © Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis Images

Mary, Queen of Scots (Scotland)

When Mary, Queen of Scots arrived in Scotland in 1561 from France, where she had been raised in exile, she expected eventually to assume the throne that was her birthright. But in 1567, during a rebellion of Scottish nobles, she was imprisoned in remote Lochleven Castle. Though Mary begged in letters to Queen Elizabeth and the Queen of France for help in getting free, she was unable to interest anyone in her cause. Before long, she began plotting her escape.

In her first attempt in March 1568, Mary disguised herself as a laundress and tried to escape from the castle by boat. But when the boatmen she attempted to hire noticed her pristine hands and beautiful face, her identity was revealed and her plan foiled (though remarkably, she did manage to return to her cell without the castle's guards learning of her ploy). Determined to succeed, Mary fled the prison again on May 2, 1568. With the help of an orphan she befriended at the castle, she was able to get out of the castle, across by boat to the mainland, and successfully away on a horse stolen from her captors' stables.



The Tower of London is now a museum. EnlargePhoto credit: © Royalty-Free/Corbis

Tower of London (England)

The Tower of London has served as a royal palace, arsenal, royal mint, menagerie, and public records office. But its best-known role, which lasted for 850 years, was as a dark, dank, and bone-numbingly cold political prison. Dozens of accused spies, traitors, and prisoners of war imprisoned therein made bids for freedom over the centuries, and a lucky and wily few succeeded.

In 1597, a Jesuit priest named John Gerard made a hair-raising escape. After hacking away at the stones around the door to his cell, Gerard sneaked past the guards in the corridors one night and reached a high wall overlooking the moat. Down below, a boat he had arranged through a sympathetic prison warden

waited in the darkness. The boatmen tossed him a rope, which Gerard tied to a nearby cannon. When he received a signal that his accomplices had tied off the other end of the rope across the moat, Gerard slid down the rope to freedom. He was never recaptured.

The Earl of Nithsdale, who was jailed in the Tower in 1715 for his role in the Jacobite Rebellion, made a less physically demanding exit. During a visit by his wife and her three ladies-in-waiting, Nithsdale donned the clothes of one of the ladies-in-waiting, a Mrs. Mills, and simply walked out with the other three. (Mrs. Mills, now wearing another set of clothes she had brought with her, left separately before the alarm was raised.) Safely away from the Tower, Nithsdale bribed a boatman to carry him and his wife out of the country; they eventually settled in Rome.

The final escape in the Tower of London's reign as a prison revealed security so lax it is perhaps best that the Tower soon thereafter became a British national monument and museum. A British soldier taken into custody during World War I for writing phony checks became bored one night, even though he was allowed as many visitors to his cell as he wanted. Leaving his unlocked cell, he made his way past the guards by nonchalantly strolling past them wrapped in an overcoat. They took him to be just another visitor, and he headed out for some nighttime fun in central London. Curiously, he returned to the Tower later that night and attempted to reimprison himself.



Venice's picturesque Bridge of Sighs connects the Palazzo Ducale (left) and the erstwhile Leads prison. EnlargePhoto credit: © Dennis Degnan/Corbis

Giacomo Casanova (Italy)

In 1755, Giacomo Casanova was sentenced to five years in Venice's famously forbidding prison, "the Leads," for repeatedly committing adultery. A determined escape artist in both marriage and prison, Casanova began plotting his exit not long after he arrived at the Leads, which was named for the lead that coated its walls and roof. As he later put it, "It has always been my opinion that when a man sets himself

determinedly to do something and thinks of nought but his design, he must succeed despite all the difficulties in his path...."

Casanova found an iron rod in the prison yard and fashioned it into a digging tool. For several months, he secretly worked on a tunnel that would take him out of his cell. His hopes were dashed, however, when he was suddenly forced to move to another cell. Realizing the guards would carefully watch him in his new cell, Casanova gave his iron tool, which he had managed to retain, to the prisoner in the next cell, a monk named Balbi, and begged him to dig one tunnel joining their cells and another between the monk's cell and the outside. Balbi agreed, and when he had completed the tunnels, both prisoners crawled out of Balbi's cell and managed to escape from the Leads using the iron tool to force open doors and gates in their way. Once they arrived in central Venice, Balbi and Casanova split up. The police searched for them everywhere to no avail.



Henry "Box" Brown rises out of a shipping crate amid men from the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. EnlargePhoto credit: © Bettman/Corbis

Henry "Box" Brown (North Carolina)

Escape stories abound about runaway slaves, many of whom used the Underground Railroad to reach the freedom of the North. Less common are stories about slaves who successfully escaped on their own. One of the most audacious escapes was that of Henry Brown, who was born as a slave in 1816. After his owner suddenly sold Brown's wife and children to a new owner in another state, Brown made an agonizing solo escape to freedom on March 19, 1849.

Brown had a sympathetic carpenter build a box three feet long and two feet wide. After writing "right side up with care" on the outside of the box, two friends mailed the box, with Brown squeezed inside of it, from North Carolina to the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia. The journey lasted over 27 hours. Brown had water and ventilation holes, but for several hours, despite the box's label, he remained upside down. He made it, however, and later became an active member in Philadelphia's abolitionist community.



Buffalo Bill Cody EnlargePhoto credit: © Lake County Museum/Corbis

William F. Cody (Colorado)

Popularly known as Buffalo Bill, William F. Cody was a buffalo hunter, U.S. Army Scout, and Indian fighter who helped create the myth of the Wild West with his traveling variety show, the melodramatic "Wild West Congress of Rough Riders of the World." Known for his accurate marksmanship, courage, endurance, and brutal fights with Indians, Cody made one of the most fearless escapes in American history.

In the early 1860s, Indians captured Cody near Fort Larned, Colorado. Knowing that his captors' supply of meat was low, Cody convinced them to let him lead them to a nearby herd of cattle he knew of. Though a large group surrounded him as they traveled, Cody, who was allowed to ride in front, eventually broke free and urged his mule into a brisk canter. For six miles, the Indians pursued Cody, who never had more than a half-mile lead. Though the Indians shot arrows at him and tried to knock him off his mule, Cody prevailed, eventually slipping unnoticed into a Fort Larned bar and escaping.



Bertram "Jimmy" James, left, and Sydney Dowse display a reproduction of a World War II POW notice on the 60th anniversary of their escape from Stalag Luft III, March 16, 2004. EnlargePhoto credit: © Stephen Hird/Reuters/Corbis

The Great Escape (Germany)

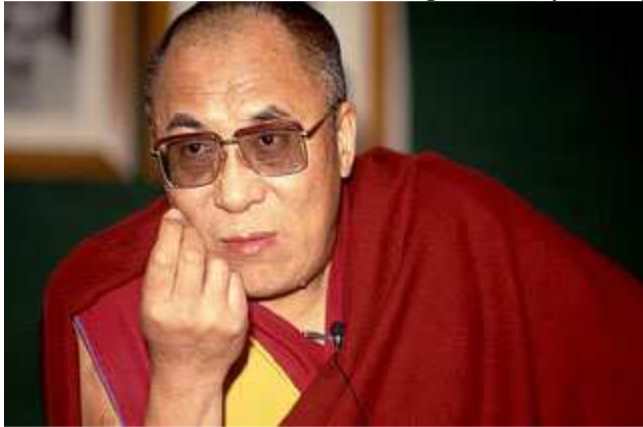
Nazi authorities took great pains to guard against the escape of their prisoners during World War II at both their horrifying civilian concentration camps and at prisons for captured members of the Allied forces. At one of the largest prisons for Allied airmen, Stalag Luft III, the Germans planted seismographs in the ground every 33 feet so that they could detect the sounds of tunneling. They also raised the prison huts off the ground on stilts so that they could observe suspicious digging activity and built a huge trench around the entire prison to form yet another barrier between the prisoners and freedom. Despite all these measures, Stalag Luft III saw one of the biggest mass escapes of all time.

The Germans set the stage for a massive getaway when they chose to put nearly 10,000 strong, militarily trained men in Stalag Luft III together. Free to move about the prison, these men had nothing better to do than put their collective brainpower and might towards an escape plan. Among the inmates in 1944 were scores of talented miners, carpenters, engineers, even physicists and geologists, all of whom were willing to help execute an escape.

The Escape Committee was run by a South African airman named Roger Bushell, who devised a plan in 1943 to dig three tunnels, "Tom," "Dick," and "Harry." Fully 30 feet deep, each tunnel would lie beyond the reach of the listening devices (see The Nazi Prison Escape Tunnel). As they dug, the prisoners removed tunnel dirt by trolley, concealed it in the legs of their pants, and later dumped it inconspicuously around the prison grounds. Groups of prisoners took turns guarding the tunnels from the watchful eyes of the Germans and covering for "missing" prisoners when they were underground.

On the 24th of March, 1944, 76 men were able to escape through Harry. Unfortunately, only three of them reached safety (see Escaping a Nazi Prison Camp). Fifteen were captured and returned to the prison. Eight were sent to a concentration camp (though they ultimately survived the war). The remaining 50, Bushell among them, were rounded up and shot on orders from Hitler himself, who was embarrassed and

infuriated by the mass escape. Hoping to deter any further prison breaks, Hitler ordered the ashes of the 50 murdered men scattered at Stalag Luft III by other prisoners.



The Dalai Lama at his home in exile, Dharamsala, India EnlargePhoto credit: © Alison Wright/Corbis

Dalai Lama XIV (Tibet)

When they gained control of China in 1949, the Communists under Mao Tse Tung vowed to erase religion in China and regain economic and political power of the country's so-called "autonomous regions." Tibet, with its rich natural resources and friendly, pious inhabitants, became an immediate target. In 1959, as Communist armies stormed the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual and political leader, decided he had to try to escape from his homeland in hopes that he could lead his people from a safer perch in exile.

While huge crowds of Tibetans swarmed around the Dalai Lama's summer palace in an attempt to protect him from advancing troops, the Dalai Lama disguised himself in work clothes and crept unnoticed through the crowds and out of the city. "For the first time I was truly afraid," he wrote later, "for if I was caught all would be lost." When he reached the Kyichu River outside the city, he boarded a waiting boat and took it safely across. Eventually, the Dalai Lama, his brother, and a few loyal servants crossed through the Himalayas over the 16,000-foot Che La Pass and into the safety of India, where he has lived ever since.



Choppy San Francisco Bay surrounds Alcatraz. Did the escapees drown trying to get away? EnlargePhoto credit: © Royalty-Free/Corbis

Alcatraz (California)

When Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay opened its doors as a federal prison in 1934, becoming home to the most violent criminals in the United States, its guards and overseers were confident that it was escape-proof. Alcatraz lay more than a mile from the mainland, in the midst of chilly waters surging with currents. The prison bristled with electric wires, fences, bars, and gun towers, and it had hidden microphones designed to detect even the faintest ping of a tunnel under construction.

Despite these obstacles, Alcatraz was the setting for several daring escapes, one of which, in 1962, remains one of the most notorious prison breaks in history. Frank Morris and the brothers Clarence and John Anglin spent six months chipping away at the concrete around the air shafts in their cells, trying to create enough space to climb inside and wiggle their way through Alcatraz's mazelike ventilation system and out to freedom. Using a range of makeshift digging implements, including nail clippers, spoons, and a drill made from a fan, the three men bore through concrete and cut through steel bars. Each night they hid their progress by filling in the missing chunks of wall with a paste made from wet newspaper.

On June 11, they snuck through the ventilation system and out of the prison, then set themselves adrift on a raft made out of barrels, mesh wire, and old raincoats. The next morning, after finding dummies in the men's beds, Alcatraz guards searched in vain for the inmates in the waters around the prison. No trace of the men was ever found, and many assume they drowned in San Francisco Bay.



A sign in Russian, English, and French near the Berlin Wall warned "You are leaving the American sector." The east side of Berlin can be seen over the top of the Wall. EnlargePhoto credit: © Owen Franken/Corbis

Berlin Wall (Germany)

During the 26 years when the Berlin Wall separated East and West Berlin, and in the years since it tumbled in 1989, the wall has been a symbol of the ruthless determination of Communist leaders to keep their people behind the Iron Curtain. The wall also symbolized the passionate desire of many people to

free themselves from a repressive system. Risking life and limb, hundreds of people were able to escape over the years through concrete, steel, and barbed wire, and past land mines, guard dogs, and sentries armed with automatic rifles and under strict orders to shoot to kill.

One of the cleverest forms of escape, used numerous times with success, involved passing through one of the Wall's many checkpoints hidden inside a car. Couriers with a legal right to pass through ferried countless refugees into West Berlin this way. Horst Breistoffer, a somewhat professional organizer of escapes, was a master of this method. Knowing that the East German guards carefully examined large cars and trucks for stowaways as they drove through the checkpoints, Breistoffer bought a miniscule car, a 1964 Italian Isetta, hoping the guards would forgo searching it. After spending more than two months modifying its structure to make room for an escapee, Breistoffer safely shuttled nine people over the border curled up in the space once taken up by the battery and heating system. (While transporting the tenth, he was caught.)

Tunneling beneath the Wall was another popular means of escape. Tunnel builders included professional gangs, which charged refugees extortionate rates to use them, and idealistic students, who hoped to help large groups of people cross the border at once. In 1964, Wolfgang Fuchs built one of the most important tunnels, which enabled more than 100 East Germans to reach the West. Fuchs spent seven months digging and orchestrating the 140-yard tunnel, which ran from a bathroom in the East to a basement in the West. A similarly successful tunnel began in an East Berlin graveyard. "Mourners" brought flowers to a grave and then disappeared underground. This escape route worked well until Communist officers discovered a baby carriage left by the "grave" and sealed the tunnel.

One of the most daring escapes involved two East German families, who worked together to create a homemade hot-air balloon. For months, Peter Strelzyk and Guenter Wetzel collaborated in their basements on a flamethrower and gas burner powerful enough to propel them out of Communist East Berlin using a 65-foot-wide, 75-foot-high balloon their wives stitched together from curtains, bedsheets, and random scraps. On the night of September 15, 1979, the Strelzyks and the Wetzels launched their contraption. They had just enough fuel to make it over the wall and land, whereupon they ran to freedom.



Arriving in New York on October 24, 1975 after his five-year ordeal in the Turkish prison system, Billy Hayes displays the new passport that the American embassy in Athens, Greece issued him. EnlargePhoto credit: © Bettman/Corbis

Billy Hayes (Turkey)

In 1970, Turkish authorities sentenced Billy Hayes, a 22-year-old American caught trying to carry four pounds of hashish out of Turkey, to serve 30 years for smuggling, and threw him into a notoriously brutal prison in Istanbul called Sagmalicar. After over a year of beatings and a steady loss of hope, Hayes was transferred to a prison on an island in the Sea of Marmara, where he was allowed to spend his days unloading cargo from ships. Six months of plotting and waiting yielded an escape plan for Hayes, whose story later became the subject of a book and subsequent movie entitled *Midnight Express*.

Hayes snuck out of the prison, stole a rowboat, and made it to shore. Hoping to reach Greece, Hayes dyed his blond hair black and began travelling towards the border. Barefoot, exhausted, and lacking a passport, he swam across a river and walked for miles. When he finally came upon an armed soldier, he thought that he had lost his bid for freedom, but the soldier yelled at him in Greek. Hayes eventually made it back to the U.S. safely.

11 Incredible and Unbelievable Prison Break Attempts

Over the centuries thousands of prisoners attempted to break the prison. They engineered brilliant plans to dodge the high security of the jails. Some luckily succeeded whereas some lost their lives. They tunneled, dug, disguised themselves, swam through the violent ocean waves and traveled through the drain pipes in order to escape. This list comprises of 10 such real prison break attempts.

11. Clovis, New Mexico Jail Break



Seven Clovis Escapees

8 inmates escaped from the Curry County Adult Detention Center on August 24, 2008. The escape began with a key accidentally left in a door lock by the guards doing the plumbing repairs. They gained access to the pipes by using this key. After several days of planning and seven hours of continuous efforts, they broke out of the Clovis, New Mexico jail by climbing up plumbing pipes in a narrow space inside a wall and using handmade instruments to cut a hole in the roof near a skylight. 3 were recaptured the very next day and a 4th escapee was caught on August 28. This prison break was the topic of September 6th's episode of America's Most Wanted.

10. Berlin Escape Via a Hot Air Balloon



The Berlin Wall Balloon

Barbed wires, dogs, guard towers, and execution if you were caught escaping made the entire East Berlin a prison during the Soviet occupation. Many attempted escape. Some were successful whereas some were not. Some built tunnels or crammed themselves into tiny compartments of cars. The Wetzel and Strlzyck families chose a very interesting option. They bought nylon cloth in small batches and constructed their own hot air balloon. It took them several months to create a balloon which led to their rescue. The balloon successfully flew them over the wall and landed in West Berlin. After this the Soviets made it impossible for the locals to purchase lightweight cloth in East Berlin.

9. Pascal Payet



Pascal Payet

Pascal Payet escaped twice from the prison using a hijacked helicopter. He also organized the escape of three prisoners again using a helicopter. Payet was sentenced to a 30 year jail term in France's Luynes prison for a murder committed during the robbery of a security van. He made his first prison break in 2001 via a helicopter which took him from the yard of the prison. After being recaptured in 2003, he escaped from Grasse prison for the second time using a helicopter that was hijacked by four of his friends from Cannes-Mandelieu airport. This time his prison was changed every 3 month to avoid escape. Payet was re-captured on September 21, 2007, in Mataró, Spain, about 18 miles northeast of Barcelona. He had undergone cosmetic surgery, but was still identified by Spanish police.

8. The Texas Seven



Garcia



Halprin



Harper



Murphy



Newbury



Rivas



Rodriguez

The Texas Seven

On December 13, 2000, 7 prisoners known as “The Texas Seven” escaped from a maximum security prison near the southern Texas town of Kennedy. They derived an elaborate plan to escape from the prison. The seven overpowered and restrained nine civilian maintenance supervisors, four correctional officers and three uninvolved inmates. They subdued them and wore their clothes. They stole their credit cards and identification. All this was done at lunch time. Three wore civilian’s dress and pretended to be there to install video monitors. They raided the guard tower and stole numerous weapons. In the end, they stole a prison maintenance pick-up truck, which drove them away from the prison. A year later they were caught, as a direct result of the television show America’s Most Wanted.

7. John Dillinger

WANTED



**JOHN HERBERT
DILLINGER**

On June 27, 1934, HUGH S. CROSBY, Attorney General of the United States, under the authority vested in him by an Act of Congress approved June 8, 1934, offered a reward of

\$10,000.00

for the capture of John Herbert Dillinger or a reward of

\$5,000.00

For information leading to the arrest of John Herbert Dillinger.



John Dillinger

The inspiration of the famous film “Public Enemies”, John Dillinger was a bank robber in America’s Midwest during the early 1930s. He robbed at least two dozen banks and four police stations and escaped from jail twice. His first prison break was in 1933 when he and his gang engineered a daring escape from a prison in Lima, Ohio after they used smuggled rifles and gunned down two guards. His most famous escape of all came in 1934, after he was arrested on the heels of a number of famous bank heists. He was put in the “escape-proof” Lake County Jail, a prison that was guarded by an army of policeman and National Guard troops. He invented his own way of prison escape involving no digging or tunneling, climbing or going through drain pipes. He designed a phony gun out of a bar of soap and shoe polish and used it to force his way out of the jail on March 3, 1934. He then stole the Sheriff’s brand new Ford and made his escape to Illinois.

6. 150 Prisoners Escaped From a Prison in New Mexico



Prison in New Mexico

Nearly 150 prisoners escaped from a state prison on the border of the northern Mexican city of Nuevo Laredo either late on Thursday night or on the morning of Friday, 17th December 2010. This massive prison break remained unnoticed until a routine headcount on Friday. The area is suffering from serious drug smuggling and trafficking. Based on preliminary investigations, it is believed that they were helped by prison staff and a prison warden is now listed as missing. The public safety department of Tamaulipas state, Texas, said 141 inmates got out through a service entrance used by vehicles, "presumably with the assistance of the prison staff." Eighty-three of the prisoners were being held for trial, while 58 were being held on federal charges, which include weapons possession and drug trafficking. Investigations are in process.