



17 Essential Talking Points for the West Point Enthusiast

BY EMILY LEITHAUSER



1. The United States Military Academy is located in West Point, N.Y., a small town overlooking the Hudson River.
2. During the American Revolution, George Washington considered it to be the most strategic place in the nation. He thought it was useful in preventing the British from sailing upriver and dividing the colonies.
3. It also happens to be the place that Benedict Arnold tried to sell to the British.
4. The entire West Point facility covers approximately 25 square miles, making it slightly larger than Manhattan.
5. The population doesn't quite compare, though. About 8,000 people live in West Point, and 4,500 of those are cadets.
6. West Point does have one big-city advantage, however; it's one of the few places in America that has a McDonald's that delivers.
7. And those Golden Arches aren't the only treasure in town. West Point is also considered the "Fort Knox of Silver." The depository houses much of the country's silver, and the vaults also hold more than \$100 billion worth of gold.
8. Edgar Allan Poe was not a fan of his West Point education. He once tried to get expelled by attending a parade where gloves and a belt were required. He showed up wearing those two things and nothing else.

9. General George S. Patton struggled at West Point, too. Because of his dismal math grades, it took Patton an extra year to graduate.

10. (Even then, he graduated at the bottom of his class!)

11. On the other side of the spectrum, the Class of 1915 is referred to as "the Class the Stars Fell On." It produced both a future president, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, and General Omar Nelson Bradley, the highest-ranking military man in American history next to George Washington.
12. According to West Point lore, if a cadet is failing a class, the night before the final exam he should put on full dress uniform and go to the statue of Civil War General John Sedgwick. At the stroke of midnight, the cadet should spin the spurs of the General's boots for luck.
13. Normally, being out after midnight is against the rules, but for the sake of this ritual, authorities look the other way.
14. Speaking of traditions, West Point also started the idea of class rings in the 1830s.
15. Only one class since then has strayed from the custom. The Class of 1879 opted for class cuff links, instead.
16. To date, the Academy has produced two presidents (Grant and Eisenhower), as well as several other notable grads, including astronaut Buzz Aldrin, painter James McNeill Whistler, and the current CEO of Wendy's and Arby's, Roland Smith.
17. Oh, and Richard Hatch from *Survivor*? He went there.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Cowboys of the Wild West would risk bruises and blood to satisfy a sweet tooth. They physically fought each other for the stick of peppermint candy that came in coffee tins.