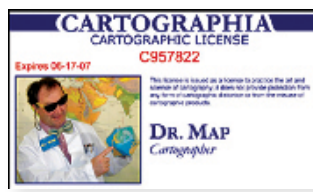


Ask Dr. Map!

price of gas & more



Dear Dr. Map:

Q: How does the price of gas vary over the United States?

A: There are many sources of local information about communities and cities that show where to buy the cheapest gas. Nationally, there are map sources on the web, updated frequently, that show national variation in the price of gasoline. For example: http://www.gasbuddy.com/gb_gas-temperaturemap.aspx has an interactive map for the U.S. by state and County, and equivalent maps for Canada. The map even allows you to zoom in by zip code. In terms of geography, the prices are generally highest in the West and in New York, with another peak in south Florida. Del Norte County, California, and Humboldt County, Nevada, seem to have the highest prices. The entire South and Midwest are lows, with the absolute lows in Missouri for a state and Des Moines for a city. Dr. Map notes a curious gasoline price fault line, following the eastern borders of Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. A supply region, or a price conspiracy?

Q: What is the world's worst map?

A: A tough question. There are two meanings, "worst world map," or "world's worst map." There are many maps that show the "worst" of something, such as natural disasters. This topic is of surprising interest on the Internet, but almost entirely in terms of the fictitious maps used in video games, with

the critics being the games users. After careful examination of the candidates, and there are many, Dr. Map selects the map of the lower 39 or so United States contributed to www.cartotalk.com by "chicarto" on Feb 16 2006. The author states: "Here's one of my all-time favorites, showing North Idahotana, Calizona, New Yorkachusetts, Georgabama, Kansarado, and almost unnoticed, Tennelina." Dr. Map is pleased to confer on this specimen the title "world's worst map."

Q: Where is Quare, Wiltshire, England?

A: In the period before the invention of lithographic printing, about 1500-1800 (and even later), maps were printed from copper plates. Copper is expensive, and copper engraving hard to do (it has to be done in reverse, for example), so once made, copper plates were greatly valued and guarded. This meant that they were also often stolen and copied. An excellent example of outright map theft from this era involved John Speed's map of Wiltshire in England. British counties were first mapped by Christopher Saxton in the 1570s. The village of North Burcomb, Wiltshire, however, was left off of Saxton's map. When John Speed updated the county map in 1610-11, he noticed the village with no name and wrote a note to himself by writing the word "Quare," Latin for "query" and the equivalent of today writing a question mark, with a line pointing to the village site, which is curiously found just across the river and to the north of South Burcomb. Somehow, the engraver simply

copied his editorial statement onto the copper plate, and the misnamed village gained a new identity. Robin Morden's shamelessly plagiarized copy of Speed's map in 1685 removed the line, and solidly mislabeled the village as "Quare." Years later, cartographers were still copying the name over by rote, until the Ordinance Survey put the right name on the map at last. Anyone who wants the whole story, and a peek at the maps, can read "Tales from the Map Room: Fact and Fiction about Maps and their Makers," by Peter Barber and Christopher Board. A delightful read for Dr. Map regulars, and highly recommended.

[Editor's note: Dr. Map has a Ph.D. and a cartographic license. Send questions to DR. Map at ask-drmap@cox.net, or visit him on the web at <http://www.drmap.info>.]

NASA looks to the future with an eye on the past