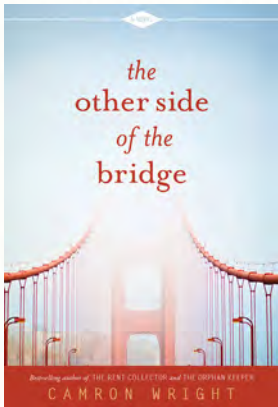


# Amazing Golden Gate Bridge Facts



## The Numbers

The Golden Gate Bridge is **8,981 feet long** (1.7 miles) and has towers that stand **746 feet above the water**.

The bridge contains approximately **88,000 tons of steel** and a total weight of 887,000 tons.

The two main cables that drape across the towers are **36**

**3/8 inches in diameter**. They were spun from **80,000 miles of galvanized steel wire**, a process that took just **over 6 months**.

The bridge is **90 feet wide** with six driving lanes and two sidewalks.

Construction on the bridge began on January 5, 1933. **It took four years to build** and was finished in 1937, ahead of schedule and **a million dollars under budget**.

## The Naysayers

Not everyone was happy about the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge. In 1930, as many as 2,300 lawsuits were filed against the bridge. One was filed by the Southern Pacific Railroad, the company that owned 51% of the ferry company taking commuters and their cars between San Francisco and Marin County. They were understandably concerned about losing business.

Ansel Adams and the Sierra Club also who opposed the bridge fearing it would destroy the natural beauty of the area. By the time the bridge was complete, Adams had changed his mind.

In the end, it took two favorable court rulings, two federal hearings, a guarantee that local workers would be hired first, and a complete boycott of the ferry services to finally get the bridge approved.

## The Cost

The Golden Gate Bridge cost of \$27 million to build, which is the equivalent of \$1.5 billion today. Local citizens put their own properties up as collateral to finance construction. Very little federal or state money was used as most of the financing came from bonds sold by the Golden Gate Bridge and Highway District. Despite being in the midst of the Great Depression, voters in the district's six counties approved a \$35 million bond by a three-to-one margin, reflecting the faith of local citizens in the long-term economic benefit of the project. The bonds were retired in 1971.

## The Color

The U.S. War Department wanted the bridge painted with black and yellow stripes to make it easier to see. The Army wanted it striped with a red and white candy-cane combination to make it more noticeable from the air. Instead, when the steel arrived in San Francisco, it was coated in a burnt red and orange shade of primer to protect it. Consulting architect Irving Morrow preferred the vivid color to more conventional choices since it was not only visible in the fog, but it complemented the surrounding hills. The color is named **International Orange**.

## The Design

The bridge's original design, produced by chief engineer Joseph Strauss in 1921, was a clunky hybrid of a cantilever and suspension bridge that according to one critic resembled "an upside-down rat trap." It was functional, but far from elegant and was universally rejected. Strauss agreed to scrap the design, and later brought in rival engineers to produce a more graceful suspension bridge design.





## The Poetry

In honor of the bridge's completion, chief engineer Joseph Strauss wrote a poem entitled The Mighty Task is Done.

Here is an excerpt:

*At last the mighty task is done;  
Resplendent in the western sun  
The Bridge looms mountain high;  
Its titan piers grip ocean floor,  
Its great steel arms link shore with shore,  
Its towers pierce the sky...*

## The Suicides

Nearly 2,000 people have committed suicide by jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge, giving it the notorious title of being the most popular place to commit suicide in the United States (second in the World behind the Aokigahara Forest in Japan).

In August 1937, three months after the Golden Gate Bridge opened, H.B. Wobber strolled casually across the span alongside a tourist before he turned to his new friend and said, "This is where I get off. I'm going to jump." Despite attempts to stop him, Wobber threw himself over the side and four seconds later hit the surface of San Francisco Bay at 75 miles per hour, becoming the first to commit suicide by jumping from the bridge.

In 2011, a 17-year-old boy named Luhe 'Otter' Vilagomez, who it's thought was trying to impress classmates, jumped off the bridge and miraculously survived, walking away with just minor bruising. He was lucky, considering 98% of jumpers die and of those who lived, only a handful ever walked again.

In 2017, installation of a suicide prevention system (nets that span the length of the bridge) was started.

## The Movies

The Golden Gate Bridge has played a part in numerous movies. The most popular include: Rise of the Planet of the Apes (2011), Star Trek (2009), X-Men: The Last Stand (2006), The Rock (1996), Interview with a Vampire (1994), Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country (1991), Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home (1986), A View to a Kill (1985), Superman (1978) and The Maltese Falcon (1941).

## The Records

The highest ever number of vehicles to cross the bridge in one day can be blamed on an earthquake. On October 17, 1989, the Loma Prieta Earthquake shook the Bay Area with tremors measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale. Unlike the San Francisco/Oakland Bay Bridge that could not handle the pressure, the Golden Gate Bridge remained undamaged and was the main line of commute with an all-time record of 162,414 vehicles crossing the bridge that day.

## The Myths

One of the most famous myths says that the bridge is repainted from end to end every year, but this is not the case. Painting is actually an ongoing task, but paint is applied as needed to protect the steel from the high salt content in the air.

Regardless of the fact that the Golden Gate Bridge is not completely repainted end to end every year, a whopping 5,000 to 10,000 gallons of paint are still used each year to repaint sections.

Facts courtesy of [goldengatebridge.org](http://goldengatebridge.org), [www.history.com](http://www.history.com), and [facts.net](http://facts.net)

