Every superhero has a rogue's gallery of supervillains, and every superhero needs somewhere to put those bad guys when they're caught. For Batman, that place is Arkham Asylum, the most famous psychiatric hospital in all of comics (though it often functions as a standard prison).

As a major fixture of Batman lore, Arkham is present in nearly every single iteration of the Batman mythos. Appearing in every medium, from the comic panel to animation, from live action to video games, it's so permeated into Batman's mythos that it's almost as important to the character of Batman as Gotham City itself.

Despite its prominence, Arkham is still a very mysterious place, and there're a lot of elements that even long-time fans might not be familiar with. Here are 15 things you didn't know about Arkham Asylum.

15 ARKHAM'S FIRST APPEARANCE

Batman and the Joker might share over 75 years of history since their first appearance in DC Comics, but one of the most central elements to any Batman/Joker story—Arkham—wasn't actually introduced until the Caped Crusader and the Clown Prince of Crime had been on comic book pages for over 35 years.

Arkham Asylum made its first appearance in October 1974 issue #258 of Batman, written by Dennis O’Neil, and drawn by Irv Novick. Originally just
called “Arkham Hospital” and described as an asylum for the criminally insane, the first appearance would be rather telling, as the story was about Two-Face breaking out of Arkham and going on a crime spree. It was established pretty early on that just about anyone can escape from Arkham.

Much of the actual backstory for Arkham wouldn’t come around until Len Wein’s *Who’s Who in the DC Universe #1*, and it was expanded on by Grant Morrison in *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on Serious Earth* in 1989.

14 LOVECRAFTIAN INSPIRATIONS

There’s even an “Arkham Sanitorium” featured in the short story *The Thing on the Doorstep*—which was unfortunately one of Lovecraft’s less well-received works.

Arkham’s inmates, and much of Batman’s lore, can actually be linked back to elements of the philosophy of Cthulu in Lovecraft’s work, where the existence of ancient and powerful evils are used to show the nearly arbitrary plight of mankind in light of these ancient deities. This is a concept very much paralleled by Batman’s eternal struggle against the force of evil in Gotham City, the evil he tries to lock away in Arkham Asylum.

A single quote from Lovecraft’s *Call of Cthulu* could even be said to be the foundational philosophy behind Arkham Asylum, and especially characters like the Joker: "The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents."

13 THE INMATES ARE ALWAYS ESCAPING (ESPECIALLY JOKER)

Unfortunately, the walls of Arkham aren’t very good at containing the criminals Batman puts there. The fact that Arkham’s very first appearance features Two-Face’s escape is quite prophetic for Arkham’s story in Batman continuity for years to come.
There doesn't appear to be any single fatal flaw in the facility's security, either, as the inmates/patients seem to find a new way out every time. The worst offender—the Joker—may even have his own private entrance/exit, as he appears to come and go as he pleases, only staying in his cell if he actually wants to be there.

With Arkham and Joker both making an appearance in *Suicide Squad*, it’s clear that Jared Leto’s Joker has a similar history with the institution. Since it’s unlikely he would ever be released for good behavior, odds are the new live-action Joker will prove to be just as much of an Arkham escape artist as his comic book counterpart.

**12 ARKHAM’S EMPLOYEE SCREENING PROCESS IS INEFFECTIVE**

In addition to their inability to keep psychopathic criminals locked up, Arkham has a long history of terrible employee hiring, with multiple villains having spent time working on Arkham’s staff. From the groundskeeper turned serial killer named Spider all the way up to Director Alyce Sinner—who killed her own family and has an obsession with the seven deadly sins—Arkham's employee directory is full of past, present, and future criminals.

The prevalence of Batman villains that were one-time Arkham doctors goes as far as to indicate the asylum is working in reverse. Instead of the psychiatrists working to stabilize the inmates, the inmates are driving the staff over to their side of the sanity fence. Many noted former Arkham psychiatrists have become a part of Batman’s rogue’s gallery. The most obvious is Harley Quinn, but Hugo Strange and Jonathan Crane/Scarecrow have also been placed on Arkham’s staff in various incarnations.

Even several lesser known characters have succumbed to this effect. Alex Montez was an Arkham Research Scientist before he becomes possessed by Eclipso, the former Angel of Vengeance. Benjamin Stoner was Arkham’s Chief Medical Authority before getting possessed by Typhon, the Lord of Chaos, and many other guards and orderlies are manipulated by inmates, particularly the Joker, into assisting in some sort of scheme or escape plan.

And that doesn’t even cover the Arkham family themselves...
If it sounds like the employees and inmates are crazy, the Arkham family gives them both a run for their money. Amadeus Arkham, the founder of the facility, killed his own mentally ill mother. He spent years repressing the memory, eventually convincing himself that she had actually committed suicide. As the only remaining heir of the Arkham family, Amadeus determined to transform Arkham manor into a mental hospital to treat others.

When one of his former patients, Martin "Mad Dog" Hawkins, breaks into his home to rape and murder his wife and daughter, Amadeus starts to embrace occult rituals and begins a slow descent into madness, ending with his own incarceration in his own asylum.

The madness apparently travels in the Arkham family bloodline, also affecting Amadeus's heir, his nephew, Jeremiah Arkham. Jeremiah rebuilds Arkham Asylum from the ground up, retooling it to better house the likes of the kind of super-criminals that would eventually make his facility famous. Jeremiah would eventually go on to adopt the mantle of the new Black Mask, embodying the same kind of criminal his asylum is supposed to rehabilitate.

Amadeus Arkham’s madness had him seeing visions of a giant bat, the same visions that drove his mother mad—eventually causing him to kill her. He believes this bat haunts the Arkham estate, which is a driving force in him turning to the occult as he seeks the means to bind the specter of the bat.

The torment of this vision was so strong that he actually designed the floorplan of the asylum to take the shape of various runes in an attempt to keep the bat at bay. His tormenting visions never subsided, and eventually, once he’s locked
away in his own cell, he begins scratching symbols into the very walls of the institute.

Ironically (or not), Amadeus’s tormented visions of a bat would eventually become a real-life vision for many of the inmates of Arkham Asylum, tormented by the Batman that would repeatedly return them to Arkham’s confinement.

9 **BATMAN HAD A SECRET BATCAVE IN ARKHAM**

The Caped Crusader has always been known as a hero who plans ahead. Batman doesn’t go into any situation without a backup plan, and he never puts all his eggs in one basket. It’s the same case for the Batcave. While the Batcave is famous for being situated below the grounds of Wayne Manor, that’s only the main Batcave. Throughout the events of various Batman arcs, such as No Man’s Land, and Batman Inc., it is revealed that Batman has spare Batcaves all over the place, including one beneath Arkham Asylum.

Known as Northwest Batcave, this alternate secret hideout is built into the lower sub basements of the mental institution, and it’s stocked with all the Bat-gadgets and other equipment Batman might need when he doesn’t have access to his primary hideout. This strategic location ensures that Batman will have access to anything he needs should there ever be a riot, a prison break, or if he himself gets locked up in Arkham—all of which have been known to happen.

8 **IT’S BEEN DESTROYED MULTIPLE TIMES**

Even though it’s a longstanding element of Batman lore, Arkham itself hasn’t necessarily been longstanding, as it’s been demolished or severely damaged on multiple occasions. The first instance was by Jeremiah Arkham, when he tears down the Arkham family estate to make way for the new and improved Arkham
Asylum. It’s been destroyed several times since then, but never with the intent of rebuilding or improving it in any way.

The most famous example of Arkham’s destruction comes during the events of *Knightfall*, when Bane blows up most of the facility in order to allow the inmates to all escape. It would be destroyed several more times, though, once by Jeremiah Arkham, as Black Mask, and again by the Spectre during the events of *Batman Eternal*.

At this point, Arkham Asylum is like a character unto itself, and like any comic book character (except Uncle Ben), expect it to be destroyed and remade on a regular basis.

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7 WAYNE MANOR BECAME ARKHAM ASYLUM

After a portal to hell is opened inside Arkham Asylum, the Bat family has its hands full with demons. Eventually, the Spectre shows up to close the portal and stop the passage of these creatures, but this act destroys all of Arkham Asylum, leaving the mental hospital in complete ruin.

At the same time, Hush has been detonating Batman’s weapons caches around Gotham, causing the police to draw a connection between Batman’s munitions and Wayne Enterprises. The government steps in to assume control of Wayne Enterprises, seizing Bruce’s company, and freezing all his assets.

Since Arkham Asylum is destroyed, and the government possesses Wayne Manor, the mansion is refitted to house all the former inmates, making it the new Arkham Asylum. Alfred initially makes plans to contest the ownership of the estate, but after Bruce infiltrates his old home to solve the case of a string of murdered inmates, he realizes that he may be better off just letting the asylum stay in Wayne Manor, since his intimate familiarity with the building (and proximity to the main Batcave) provide a real strategic advantage.
6 INMATES HAVE TAKEN OVER ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS

It may already sound like a classic case of the inmates running the asylum, but that’s actually literally the case in several comic arcs. One of the most defining Arkham stories, Grant Morrison’s *Arkham: A Serious House on Serious Earth*, is about just that. Inspired mostly by Len Wein’s work in *Who’s Who #1*, Morrison’s work on Arkham Asylum is largely used as the definitive origin story of the facility. In the story, Batman is called in for assistance when the villains housed by Arkham begin to riot, only to find that Arkham has been overrun by the supervillains it houses.

During the events of *Forever Evil*, all of Gotham was actually taken over by Batman’s rogues. Naming himself mayor, Penguin divides Gotham up, assigning different neighborhoods to former Arkham inmates. Looking to challenge him for the rule of the city, Scarecrow sets himself up at Arkham with some other rogues and a small army of man-bats.

5 BATMAN HAS BEEN COMMITTED MORE THAN ONCE

Sure, Arkham was designed to hold the worst of Batman’s rogue’s gallery, but they’re not the only ones that have done time in the institution. The Dark Knight himself has been incarcerated in Arkham on a number of occasions—although he’s usually there voluntarily.

The first occasion occurred right after Director Jeremiah Arkham had the asylum rebuilt for the purpose of housing super-criminals. Desiring to test the functionality of the facility, Batman has himself admitted as a patient. Since Jeremiah Arkham was a little crazy himself, he began to release criminals, forcing Batman to participate in a literal cage match.

Another time Batman played a psych patient at Arkham was after the facility had been moved to Wayne Manor. Assuming the identity of a dead homeless
veteran, Jack Shaw, he gets admitted to Arkham Manor to get to the bottom of the deaths of several inmates. This is the investigation that convinces him that there’s value in having his old home serve as the new asylum, suggesting this won’t be the last time he pretends to be a patient in the facility.

### 4 Inmates Are Rarely Actually Rehabilitated

While Arkham Asylum seems to function primarily as a super prison, its main purpose is supposed to be the rehabilitation of the criminally insane. Over the years, some directors (such as Jeremiah Arkham) were of the opinion that it was possible to “heal” some of these inmates, allowing them to re-enter society.

The Elseworlds story of *The Dark Knight Returns* actually presents an Arkham Asylum in later years that seems to be focused on this almost exclusively. The name is even changed to "Arkham Home for the Emotionally Troubled," suggesting the guilt and stigma surrounding the horrific crimes of most of the patients have been mostly dismissed and blamed on their mental condition. One psychiatrist, Bartholemew Wolper, even goes as far as to say Batman is responsible for Joker's madness.

Wolper would never get to see his patient rehabilitated, of course. He was amongst the victims when his attempt to reintroduce the Joker to the world during a late-night talk show results in the killer clown killing everyone in attendance.

### 3 Lex Luthor Is There in the DCEU

One of the chief complaints from *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*’s detractors regards Lex Luthor's personality. Many said it was more reminiscent of Joker or the Riddler than it was of the traditional Lex Luthor. While that suggestion might be a bit of a stretch, it seems like Lex’s apparent grip on sanity at the end of the movie was loose enough for him to garner similar treatment as those other DC baddies whenever they’re caught.
It wasn't specified in the theatrical cut, but additional dialogue in the Ultimate Edition reveals that Batman pulled some strings to have Luthor transferred to Arkham Asylum. While incarcerated there, Jesse Eisenberg’s Luthor will no doubt rub shoulders with many of Batman’s rogues, possibly even Jared Leto’s Joker. It's entirely possible this experience will harden Luthor, making him more cold and calculating like the comics version many are more familiar with. Regardless, his incarceration in Arkham puts him in a position that could allow him to turn up in multiple future properties, and Jesse has already confirmed that he’s slated to film scenes for Justice League.

2 AN ALTERNATE JASON TODD STORY

The classic death of the second Robin, Jason Todd, is told through the A Death in the Family comic arc. It sees the Joker kidnapping Robin while the dynamic duo is in the Middle East. The Clown Prince of Crime beats Jason within an inch of his life with a crowbar before setting off explosives, bringing the warehouse down on top of the Boy Wonder. Years later, a revived Jason Todd, angered by Batman’s refusal to end the lives of his more violent rogues, especially Joker, dons the mantle of the Red Hood and begins finishing off Gotham’s criminal element once and for all.

This story was reimagined for the Arkhamverse videogames in Arkham Knight. This new version has the Joker lock Jason Todd up deep in an abandoned section of Arkham Asylum, torturing him for a full year. After Joker reveals that Batman has forgotten about him and taken on Tim Drake as a new Robin, Jason turns on his former mentor. Joker releases him, and he goes to South America where he takes on the mantle of “Arkham Knight,” and raises an army with plans to invade Gotham.

This new focus on Arkham Asylum takes one of the more personal stories in Batman mythos and takes it even closer to home, revealing that not only was Jason right under Batman’s nose the whole time, but that his torture occurred in the very asylum that was meant to lock up Batman’s greatest villains.
Arkham Asylum has only garnered a brief mention in the *BvS: Ultimate Edition*, but some rumors suggest it will be very prominently featured down the road, specifically in Ben Affleck’s solo *Batman* movie. After multiple reports that the Batfleck solo outing would feature a number of Batman’s most famous rogues, it was suggested that one great way of making that happen is by having Batman locked up in Arkham Asylum, as seen in *Arkham: A Serious House on Serious Earth*, *Batman: The Last Arkham*, or the first *Arkham Asylum* game.

Such a story would be completely new territory for Batman movies, as the confines of the Asylum would present a much more intimate setting, limiting the use of massive set pieces, and focusing on the World’s Greatest Detective’s deductive skills and visceral close-quarters combat.

Regardless, even if the movie doesn’t take place entirely in the asylum, it’s more than likely that Arkham will play a significant role in DC movies for years to come.