

pipe dream

See also: **pipedream**

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English

Alternative forms

- pipedream

Etymology

From the fantasies experienced when smoking an opium pipe. First attested in the 1800s; surely not a direct reflex of Old English *pīpdrēam* (“the sound or music of a pipe”).

Pronunciation

- Audio (AU) (file)

Noun

pipe dream (*plural* pipe dreams)

1. (*idiomatic*) A plan, desire, or idea that will not likely work; a near impossibility.

Synonyms: castle in the air, pie in the sky

*I think that his plan to become a professional athlete is a **pipe dream** and that he should stay in school.*

- **1962** December, "Dr. Beeching previews the plan for British Railways", in *Modern Railways*, page 376:

Only a year ago it would have needed a "super-Micawber" to be optimistic that the railways would once again pay their way. But it was no longer a **pipe dream** that B.R. could make a profit, the way to do it was now clear.

Translations

near impossibility

- Afrikaans: lugkasteel (*air castle*), wensdroom (*wishful dream*)
- Armenian: անիրականալի երազանք (*anirakanali erazank´*), ցնորք (*hy*) (*c´nork´*)
- Bashkir: бош (*boş*) хыял (*xyyal*)
- Bulgarian: празна надежда *f* (*prazna nadežda*), въздушна мечта (*vǎzdušna mečta*)
- Catalan: entelèquia (*ca*) *f*
- Chinese:

Mandarin: 妄想 (*zh*) (*wàngxiǎng*)

- Czech: vzdušné zámky *m. pl* (*air castles*)
- Danish: ønskedrøm *c*, luftkastel *n*
- Dutch: luchtkasteel (*nl*) *n* (*air castle*), wensdroom (*nl*) *m*.
- Esperanto: aerkastelo, ĥimero
- Finnish: pilvilinna (*fi*)
- French: rêve chimérique *m*, chimère (*fr*) *f*
- German: Luftschloss (*de*) *n* (*air castle*), Schnapsidee (*de*) *n* (*booze idea*), Wunschtraum (*de*) *m*.
- Greek: ὄνειροπόληση *f* (*oneiropólēsē*), ονειροφαντασία (*el*) *f* (*oneirofantasía*)
- Hebrew: (*formally, dreaming of Spain*) הַלּוּמוֹת בְּאַסְפִּינְיָה (*he*) *m. pl* (*ħalomót be aspáyya*), (*formally, tower flying in air*) מִגְדָּל פּוֹרֵחַ בְּאֵוֵר (*he*) *m* (*migdál poréah baavír*)
- Hungarian: légvár (*hu*), vágyálom (*hu*), ábránd (*hu*)
- Japanese: 夢物語 (*ゆめものがたり*, *yumemonogatari*)
- Maori: waitara
- Norwegian: luftslott (*no*) *n*, ønskedrøm *m*.
- Polish: mrzonka (*pl*) *f*, miraż (*pl*) *m*, marzenie ściętej głowy (*pl*) *n*
- Portuguese: quimera (*pt*) *f*
- Russian: несбыточная мечта *f* (*nesbýtočnaja mečtá*) (*unrealizable dream*), воздушные зámки *m. pl* (*vozdúšnyje zámki*) (*air castles*)
- Spanish: quimera (*es*) *f*, entelequia (*es*) *f*, castillo en el aire *m*, sueño guajiro (*es*)
- Swedish: luftslott (*sv*) *n*, önskedröm (*sv*)
- Turkish: boş hayal (*tr*), hülya (*tr*)
- Welsh: breuddwyd gwrach (*cy*) *m*.

References

- “pipe dream (https://web.archive.org/www.lexico.com/definition/pipe_dream)”, in *Lexico, Dictionary.com*; Oxford University Press, 2019–2022.

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