

10 U.S. Ghost Tours

These frightful outings are spook-tacular!

by Penny Musco, **AARP**, September 29, 2016



Don Ryan/AP Photo

Unnerving Underground

Keep **Portland** weird? Oregon's biggest city does just that in its **Shanghai Tunnels**, forgotten grottoes of despair that you can tour as a guest of the nonprofit Cascade Geographic Society. More than just the cool air down here will send chills up your spine. You can almost sense the eerie presence of 19th-century press gangs, who drugged unsuspecting men in waterfront bars and stashed them in these catacombs before forcing them to crew vessels bound for Asia. Regular tours are held Wednesday through Sunday evenings; ghost tours usually occur only on Fridays and Saturday the 13th and 14th, but special Halloween excursions run from October through early November.



Yorktown Ghost Tours

Spectral Ship

Accounts of history and heroism — to say nothing of certain unexplained anomalies — abound aboard the aircraft carrier **USS Yorktown** in **Charleston, South Carolina**. Initially named the *Bon Homme Richard* in December 1941, the flattop was retitled the *Yorktown* in September 1942, just three months after the original *Yorktown* was sent to the bottom in the Battle of Midway. And those “anomalies”? Supposedly, cryptic noises have been heard below the waterline, and long-gone sailors spotted pacing the deck above. A ghost tour takes you to areas not normally open to the public — and urges you to watch for paranormal phenomena.



Kerrick James/ALAMY

Stage for Scandal

Do Wild West spirits still tread the boards of the **Bird Cage Theatre** in **Tombstone, Arizona**? The ghost tour here may persuade you they do, transporting you back to a time (the 1880s) when both Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday patronized this former saloon, bordello and gambling den. Keep your wits about you if the lights go out: You might just observe a ghostly manifestation glide across the stage, sense the perfume of an invisible shady lady or hear a departed pianist tickling the ivories. (The early-evening tour is family-friendly; the later one is strictly for adults.)



Pictorial Press LTD/ALAMY

Creepy Community

If wronged souls from the past have a right to haunt the streets of any town, it might well be **Salem, Massachusetts** — site of the infamous 1692 witchcraft trials. The **Haunted Footsteps** ghost tour is held by lantern light every weeknight of the year; additional tours are added in October. (Wondering whether goblins emerge by day? Try the afternoon tour.)



I. Glory/ALAMY

Perilous Prison

You can visit Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary in broad daylight, but the infamous — and supposedly inescapable — lockup in the middle of **San Francisco Bay** is even more unsettling once the sun goes down. Leave Fisherman’s Wharf by ferry in the late afternoon Thursdays through Mondays for **Alcatraz by Night**, a self-guided evening audio tour of The Rock that is far less crowded than those conducted during the day. (And do let us know if you encounter any phantoms resembling famous former inmates Al Capone, Robert “Birdman” Stroud or George “Machine Gun” Kelly.)



John W. Penney

Terrifying Trolley

Restless haints must really find their ease in **Savannah, Georgia**; why else would so many city tours here go searching for ghosts like “Laura,” reputed to hang out in Perkins & Sons Ship Chandlery? To keep your feet from haunting you the next day, board the Trolley of the Doomed for the **Ghosts & Gravestones Frightseeing Tour**. Along the route is the Andrew Low House, where Girl Scouts founder Juliette Gordon Low died of breast cancer at age 66 in 1927. Its current inhabitants are rumored to be banshees from days gone by, so stifle your puns about “ghoul scout cookies.”



Mike Briner/ALAMY

Bloodcurdling Battlefield

The three-day Battle of **Gettysburg, Pennsylvania** in 1863 was the bloodiest clash of the Civil War, inflicting a total of more than 50,000 casualties on the two sides. A natural spot, then, for post-mortem sightings of the principals? Ghosts of Gettysburg hosts several walking tours that visit buildings where shades may dwell. Its new **West Confederate Tour**, for example, ambles down streets once briefly — or is it permanently? — occupied by Confederate soldiers. Seminary Ridge will give anyone the willies, guided commentary or no. And at nearby Cashtown Inn or Farnsworth House, it's conjectured some late lamented guests never checked out.



Carol M. Highsmith/Library of Congress

Diabolical District

Might vampires lurk in the shadowy recesses of New Orleans? Do unavenged victims wander the Vieux Carré at night, seeking retribution? Decide for yourself on the twice-nightly (and occasional afternoon) **French Quarter Ghosts & Legends Tour**, which departs from Rev. Zombie's Voodoo Shop. The two-hour tour delves deep into the macabre: unsolved crimes, the dark arts, the undead. There's even a stop along the way at a "haunted" bar — but really, aren't they all?



Carol M. Highsmith/Library of Congress

Horror Hotel

In a disclaimer to his 1977 horror masterpiece *The Shining*, Stephen King threw the Colorado tourism industry a bone: “Some of the most beautiful resort hotels in the world are located in Colorado, but the hotel in these pages is based on none of them.” But diehard King fans soon agreed: The master’s fright-filled Overlook Hotel had been inspired by the **Stanley Hotel** in **Estes Park**. Now the place unabashedly capitalizes on its eldritch reputation, offering a **Night Ghost Tour** and a **Ghost Adventure Package**. In October the inn stages “Twin Terror Weekends” — a costume ball and a Halloween masquerade party (rubber axes sold separately).



Carol M. Highsmith/Library of Congress

Mysterious Museum

The **National Building Museum** in **Washington, D.C.** boasts one of the grandest interiors this side of the Blue Mosque, but the place may give you the heebie-jeebies. Because it once housed the Pension Bureau, previous visitors — thousands of Civil War vets seeking recompense — wore down the stone stairs inside to almost nothing. And then there's that curious collection of shoes historians found beneath the foundation, and the time a staffer apparently vanished into thin air, only to reappear the next day with no recall of the episode. The museum's ghost tour runs twice nightly from the end of September through October.