

Great destinations:

Haunted Vacations

By Adam Tripp

For those of us that are Halloween enthusiasts, a great scary vacation could include some of the country's most haunted places that provide haunted tours. There are plenty of sites around for you to choose from.

Key West is famous for its beautiful sunsets and colorful people, but it has a dark past of its own, filled with ship wreckers, pirates, murderers and necrophilia. Key West Ghost Tour takes you inside fifteen of the most haunted places in Key West for a look at some of the most disturbing stories from the past of this tropical paradise. Investigate Robert the Enchanted Doll and hear an interview with an employee at the museum that now houses this possessed doll. Walk through the 160-year-old cemetery and a fort where Civil War soldiers still carry out their duties. From small bed and breakfast inns to the largest church on the island, Key West Ghost Tour will fascinate and entertain. Some of the most haunted spots in Key West are the Key West Cemetery, Audubon House, Captain Tony's Saloon and the Eaton Street Theater, established in 1847.

Whenever one walks into the Key West Cemetery, negative energy is instantly felt. Feelings of depression, anger and unrest are overwhelming. This cemetery is a horribly morbid place. It is so overcrowded that much of it is totally without order, with graves so close to one another that when you are looking at one and glance down, you realize you're standing on another. The majority of the cemetery is in a state of disrepair, with some of the older cement crypts slowly raising out of the ground and breaking apart or settling deeper into the earth and cracking open revealing the remains of the deceased beneath the deteriorating cement. Many of the graves treated disrespectfully by vandals. It is no wonder that there are rumors amongst the locals in Key West of strange voices and sightings of apparitions walking through the cemetery after dark because they cannot rest in peace. Tour this horrible yet amazing place.

Another haunted spot is Audubon House, built in 1830. In the 19th century the morbid practice of having an artist paint a death portrait from viewing the deceased was very popular, especially when children were involved. The death portrait was then a family keepsake. Such a painting is located in the children's room, the only room in the Audubon House that is roped off. This death portrait is so haunted and possessed that it has been facing the wall, undisturbed for years. In the interest of making the Key West Ghost Tour more interesting, someone climbed over the barricades into the haunted room, turned the death portrait around and filmed it. Take the Key West Ghost Tour and go into the haunted children's room to see this forbidden death portrait for yourselves.

At Tony's Saloon, you will see a hanging tree growing through the roof. Seventy-five people were hanged from this tree. One of the executed can be seen frequenting the bar, wearing the same nightgown in which she was hanged.

Eaton Street Theater was built on the site of a Baptist church, built in 1849, which burned to the ground in 1866 under mysterious circumstances. Hear a horrifying story of adultery and murder. This is the most active place for ghost-sightings on the island, a multi-million dollar property that has sat empty and closed for years.

Seeking more excitement? Join one of three ghost tours presented by Ghost Tours of St. Augustine. After a large meal, join in on a guided walking tour of downtown St. Augustine. Hear the haunted tales of St. Augustine's past. A licensed professional guide in period dress will light your way with a lantern and tell you haunted tales as he guides you through time. If you enjoy the water, set sail on the "Freedom." The "Freedom" is a 72-foot schooner that sails along the bay for a one-hour tour. The boat is U.S. Coast Guard-certified for 49 passengers and is a replica of the blockade-runners that once cruised these waters in the 19th century. While on board, hear haunted tales of the Matanzas Inlet, sing songs and interact with the crew. The tour offers beer, wine and champagne. You can get to the tour near the Bridge of Lions at the City Marina. St. Augustine is also known for its historic lighthouse. Lighthouses have always been a guiding light for ships at sea. You can discover sea spirits under the beacon of the St. Augustine Lighthouse. Hear the tales about the former residents of the old neighborhood at the lighthouse, the pier at Salt Run, and the Keeper's House. Tours are every night starting at 8:00 p.m. in front of the Keeper's House.

So if you want a fright this season, check out these two Florida haunted destinations and have the scare of your life!