

PEERLESS PRAGUE

and its Alchemical Magic

THE "SPIRITED" FALL ISSUE:

Ghosts, Witches, And Spooky
Historic Haunts — plus Q&A with
Ghost Investigator Patrick Burns

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT:

NY Times Bestselling Fiona Davis —
The Mistress of Masterpieces

WELCOME TO THE HISTORIC TRAVELER MAGAZINE FALL 2025 ISSUE!

Let's just say this issue is Spirited!

We have a real treat in store for you this time! We've gone far and wide to find the metaphysical, the ghostly and the mysterious destinations that will delight and tingle your senses. Yes, Halloween inspired us, but there is more to see—or not see—then spooks!

Our cover story is on Prague, the city that gathered and celebrated alchemists, astrologists and astronomers in its medieval heyday, a city built on energetic leylines by its fascinating ruler, Emperor Rudolph II. Today, you can still see evidence of its metaphysical roots. But its beauty and its stunning spires are what are really to alchemy that keeps visitors coming back.

You'll also find America's witchiest city, Salem. But let's not forget this town is an historic treasure from its years as a maritime gateway to world markets. You'll see both reflected in our American By-Ways story.

We've got ghost museums, ghost tours and even a noted ghost hunter!

In our third edition of **The Historic Traveler Magazine** we continue our theme with an interview in our Destinations section with Ghost Guide Patrick Burns who tours us to historic hauntings. And in our Media section, we are proud to bring you an interview with the incomparable Fiona Davis, whose internationally sensational, bestselling dual-time novels always center around one of New York City's historic landmark buildings. You won't want to miss these!

May you peacefully rest while reading this edition---as opposed, of course, to resting in peace as many of these ghostly souls haven't!

To Your Spooky and Mysterious Historic Traveling!



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Panoramic View of Prague and Cathedral

PROWLING PEERLESS PRAGUE AND ITS ALCHEMICAL MAGIC

It begins with a whisper along the cobblestones of the Golden Lane, a shimmer in the air above Charles Bridge at dawn, a strange sense that time bends ever so slightly in Prague. This is no ordinary historic city. Prague is a city of mirrors and mysteries, a sacred geometry etched into a medieval heart, where saints walked, emperors schemed, and alchemists whispered to the stars.

Forged in a Crucible

Founded in the 9th century, Prague grew from the fortified castle of Vyšehrad. Prague's fortunes often mirrored the great tides of European change. In the 15th century, it became the cradle of the Hussite Wars, a series of fierce religious uprisings sparked by the reformist preacher Jan Hus, who was burned at the stake in 1415. His martyrdom ignited a national movement that would forever define Czech identity and religious independence.



Wenceslas Square

Another figure that looms large in Prague's early history is Duke Wenceslas I of Bohemia, known to many simply as Good King Wenceslas. (Yes, as in the Christmas carol!) Born in the early 10th century and ruling from Prague Castle, Wenceslas was a pious and learned leader whose Christian faith often clashed with the paganism and political violence of his time. He championed education, brought in clerics from Bavaria, and worked to spread Christianity throughout Bohemia. But his noble ideals—and refusal to adopt harsher feudal tactics—led to his assassination by his own brother Boleslav in 935. Martyred and later canonized, Wenceslas became the patron saint of the Czech lands. His remains now lie enshrined in the Chapel of St. Wenceslas within St. Vitus Cathedral, where pilgrims still come to kneel.

In the centuries that followed, Prague weathered the turbulence of the Thirty Years' War, witnessed the rise and suppression of Czech nationalism, and eventually fell under Habsburg rule. Even during periods of repression, its intellectual life thrived: universities, secret salons, and scientific societies buzzed with subversive thought. In the 19th century, the Czech National Revival reignited interest in Bohemian language and culture, reshaping Prague as not just a capital of a kingdom, but as the beating heart of a cultural renaissance.

Prague weathered the turbulence of the Thirty Years' War, witnessed the rise and suppression of Czech nationalism, and eventually fell under Habsburg rule.

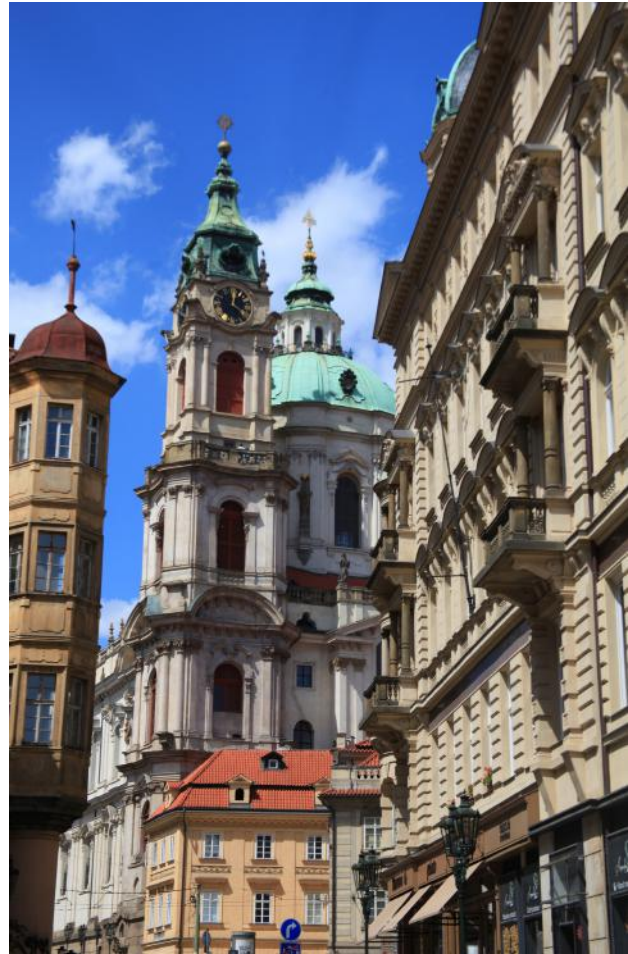
The Golden Years

Prague's zenith was when it was the capital of the Kingdom of Bohemia and later the seat of the Holy Roman Empire under the reign of Emperor Charles IV. But it was under Emperor Rudolf II (1576–1612) that Prague became not just a political and artistic capital, but the mystical heart of Europe.

Rudolf was more than a patron of the arts and sciences; he was obsessed with unlocking the secrets of the universe. His court welcomed astrologers, magicians, and alchemists like John Dee and Edward Kelley, who turned the city into a cauldron of esoteric thought and experiment. In fact, many of the streets in Prague were laid out along energetic ley lines by Rudolph to maximize the power and prosperity of the city. During his reign, Prague was less an imperial capital than a metaphysical one—a place where arcane knowledge and human ambition danced dangerously close.

Prowling Prague

Bisected by the Vltava River, the best way to visit this city of stunning views, is to split your time between Prague's Upper Town and Lower Town on the West side of the river and Old Town Square on the East side.



Lower Town Square

The Upper Town/Castle District (Hradčany):

Perched high above the Vltava, the Upper Town—Hradčany—is the crown of Prague, home to the majestic Prague Castle and its sweeping courtyards. This elevated quarter was historically the seat of monarchs, churchmen, and courtiers, exuding a stillness that feels ceremonial. Its cobbled lanes wind past noble **palaces**, including **the Schwarzenberg** and the **Archbishop's Palace**, their facades etched with Renaissance sgraffito or gilded trim. The neighborhood's quiet grandeur is punctuated by the stately Loreto pilgrimage site with its melodic carillon and the **Strahov Monastery**, whose Philosophical Hall—lined floor to frescoed ceiling with ancient tomes—is enough to make a historian weep. Hradčany is a world unto itself: noble, contemplative, and imbued with imperial echoes.

The Lower Town (Malá Strana):

Tumbling down the castle hill to the banks of the Vltava, Malá Strana is where the mystical heart of Prague begins to beat louder. Once home to artisans, Jesuits, and visiting dignitaries, this baroque jewel box still brims with secrets. Lavish 17th-century townhouses flank lantern-lit alleys that open suddenly into hidden gardens or mossy stairwells. You'll find the **Church of St. Nicholas** here—its green dome and interior frescos a triumph of High Baroque—as well as the **Wallenstein Palace** with its roaming peacocks and mannerist grottos. This is also the quarter of the alchemists, where legends say gold was pursued and angels consulted in smoky cellars. To walk Malá Strana is to trace the unseen geometry of Prague's metaphysical soul.

What To See in the Castle District

Wander through the castle district and the air seems thick with whispers from the past. Here are the key historic landmarks that carry Prague's rich legacy:

Prague Castle (Pražský hrad): The largest ancient castle complex in the world, dating from the 9th century, it has been rebuilt and expanded through Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance periods. Explore the Old Royal Palace, with its vaulted Vladislav Hall used for banquets and jousts. Don't miss the Story of Prague Castle exhibit, which traces the city's royal lineage.

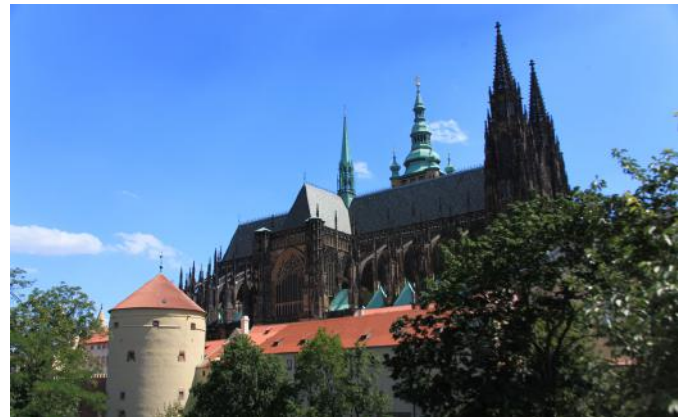
St. Vitus Cathedral: Towering within the castle complex, this Gothic masterpiece took over 600 years to complete. It houses the tombs of Bohemian kings, the Chapel of St. Wenceslas with its jewel-encrusted walls, and breathtaking stained glass by Alfons Mucha. Climb the bell tower for panoramic city views.

Old Royal Palace: Originally constructed in the 12th century, it features the stunning Vladislav Hall, an architectural marvel with its ribbed vaults and Gothic grandeur. The hall was used for knightly tournaments indoors—a testament to Bohemian flair.

Basilica of St. George: The oldest surviving church building in the castle complex, Romanesque in structure with stark, solemn beauty and a powerful sense of age. Founded in 920, it holds the tomb of Ludmila of Bohemia.

Golden Lane (Zlatá ulička): This fairy-tale row of tiny houses once sheltered goldsmiths, castle guards, and, by legend, alchemists. House No. 22 is where Kafka's sister lived—and where Kafka himself briefly worked.

Lobkovicz Palace: The only privately owned building in the castle grounds, home to the remarkable Lobkovicz collections of art, weaponry, and manuscripts—including a Beethoven original score.



St. Vitus Cathedral



Church of Saint Nicholas in the Old Town Square



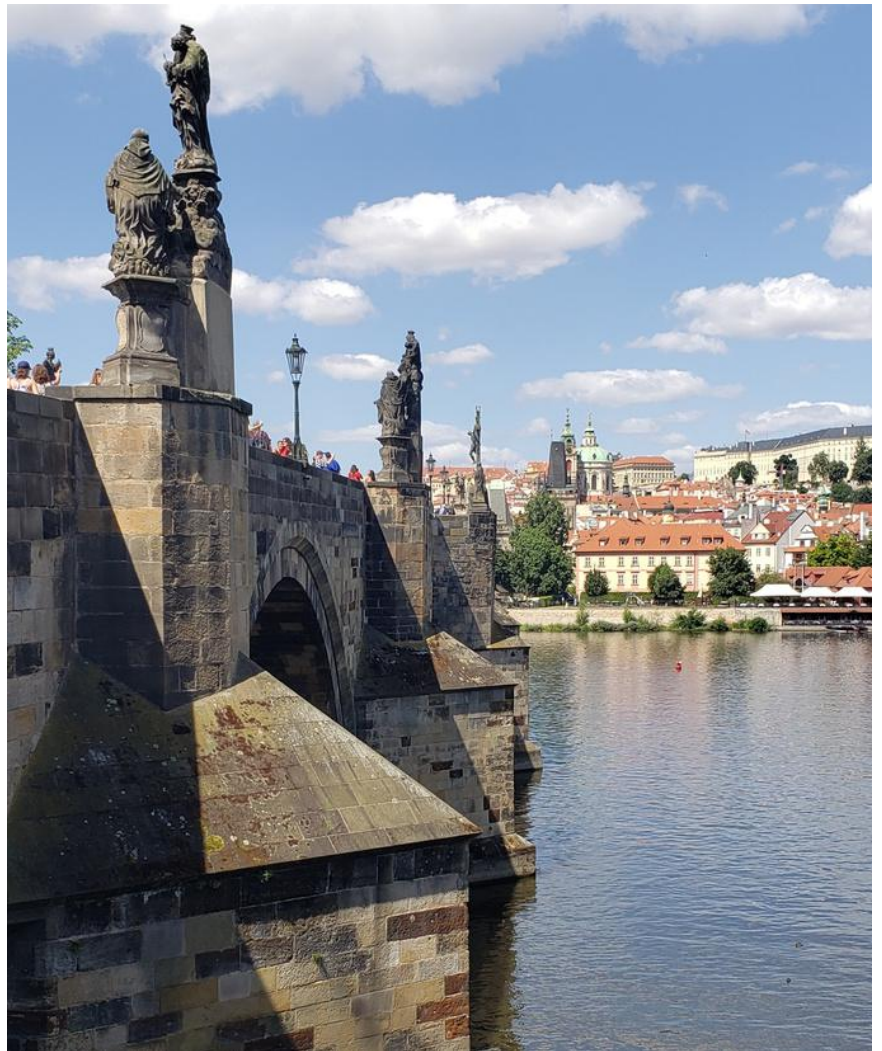
Golden Lane

Bridging the Castle District and Old Town

Spanning the Vltava is one of Europe's most impressive bridges! The **Charles Bridge** is a 14th-century stone marvel commissioned by Charles IV and lined with 30 Baroque statues. The bridge was built upon the foundation of sacred numbers—legend has it the cornerstone was laid at exactly 5:31 a.m. on July 9, 1357 for astrological harmony (1357 9 7 5:31). The most venerated of the bridge's saints is **St. John of Nepomuk**. It is chronicled that he was thrown into the Vltava River for refusing to divulge the queen's confession to King Wenceslas IV. Touch the relief at the base of the statue to ensure your return to Prague.

A Visit to The Old Town

Step into Prague's Old Town and you're not just walking through a city—you're slipping into a living tapestry of centuries. By day, sunlight glints off Gothic finials and Baroque domes, casting long, antique shadows across stone arcades and amber-lit doorways. The air smells faintly of beeswax and roasted chestnuts, punctuated by the soft toll of distant bells. Cobblestones uneven with age lead you through a labyrinth of alleys that seem to rearrange themselves with each turn, like a city in conversation with your curiosity. And when dusk falls, the gas lamps flicker to life, transforming the square into a sepia-toned dream where the silhouettes of saints,



Charles Bridge, Side View



Old Town Square


rebels, and astronomers still seem to loiter. Here, among market stalls and arcane signs, you may begin to suspect that Prague is less a place and more a spell that you've accidentally stepped into.


And don't forget that Prague is known as **"The City of a Hundred Spires,"** Though the moniker was first coined in the 19th century by Czech mathematician and philosopher Bernard Bolzano, "The City of a Hundred Spires" is a modest understatement. Today, Prague boasts more than 500 spires—each one a finger pointing skyward in stone prayer, marking time, power, or divine devotion. From the Gothic daggers of the Church of Our Lady before Týn to the Baroque domes of St. Nicholas and the elegant steeples of countless cloisters, towers rise and shimmer in the ever-changing Bohemian light. **Stand on Petřín Hill or atop the Old Town Bridge Tower,** and you'll witness a sea of copper roofs and spires unfurling into the mist—an urban forest of faith, ambition, and centuries of architectural storytelling. In Prague, the skyline itself is a manuscript.

What to See in Old Town

Astronomical Clock (Orloj): Affixed to the Old Town Hall since 1410, it is the third-oldest astronomical clock in the world and the oldest still in operation. Each hour, animated figures—including Death, Vanity, and a parade of apostles—delight onlookers in Old Town Square. I had long yearned to see this historical marvel and it doesn't disappoint. But don't pass up a chance to tour the **Old Town Hall** with Prague's historic council chambers.

Old Town Square (Staroměstské náměstí): The city's central civic space since the 12th century, it is encircled by Gothic and Baroque buildings, including:

 **Church of Our Lady before Týn:** With its twin Gothic spires, this church dominates the square. Once a stronghold for the Hussites, it contains a richly decorated interior and the tomb of astronomer Tycho Brahe.

 **St. Nicholas Church:** This is a High Baroque masterpiece known for its grand organ and dramatic light.

 **The Square's Charming Cafes and Shops, as well as Adjacent Cobblestoned Streets:** Many of the restaurants, cafés, and boutique shops you now find tucked into the lanes of Prague's Old Town were once elegant private residences. These townhouses belonged to wealthy burghers, guildmasters, and



Astronomical Clock



Church of Our Lady before Týn

merchants during the city's medieval and Renaissance golden ages. Built in a mixture of Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque styles, their vaulted ceilings, thick stone cellars, and intricately painted facades have been lovingly preserved. In many cases, you can still see the original beams, frescoes, or family crests carved above arched doorways. Today, these once-private homes open their doors to the public as wine bars, literary cafés, and candlelit bistros—yet retain the intimate ambiance of their domestic pasts. Dining in one feels less like entering a restaurant, and more like being invited to supper in a nobleman's parlor from centuries ago.




Clementinum

Clementinum: Once a Jesuit college, it is now home to the National Library. The Baroque library hall, filled with globes, celestial instruments, and dark wood galleries, is among the most beautiful in the world. Don't miss a trip to see this gorgeous repository and step back into the world of great thinkers. Continue on up to The Astronomical Tower, where Jesuits and brilliant astronomers observed the skies. From the rooftop or the tower window you have one of the best views of those 500 spires! Prague's astronomers Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler charged our knowledge of the cosmos. At the Clementinum, you can actually see the book that Tycho Brahe wrote to convince Rudolph II to become his patron.




Jubilee Synagogue

The Jewish Quarter (Josefov): Experience a poignant walk through centuries of Jewish life—largely wiped out by the Holocaust. You can still visit:

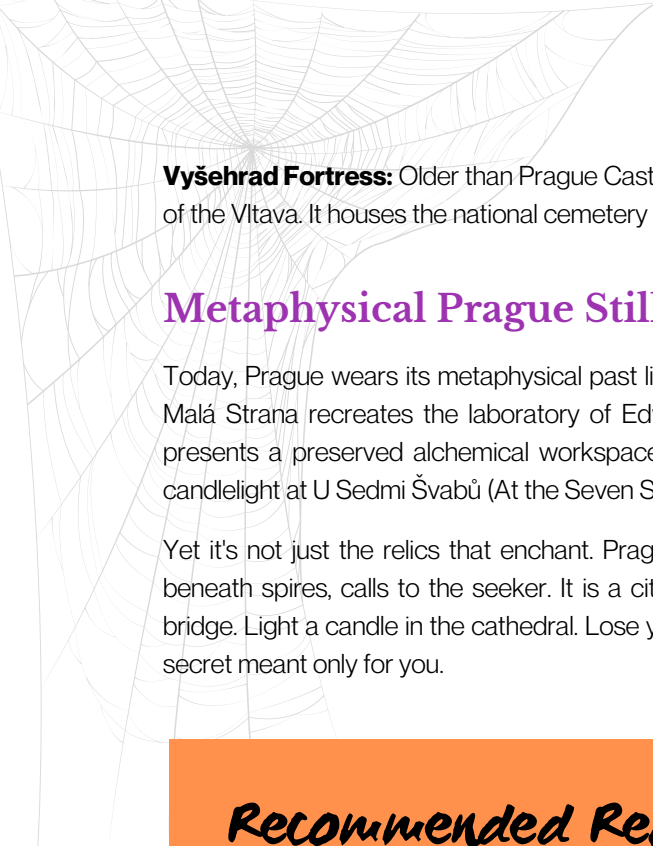
 **The Old-New Synagogue (Altneuschul):** Europe's oldest active synagogue, built in 1270, associated with the Golem legend.

 **The Old Jewish Cemetery:** An uneven patchwork of gravestones laid one atop another through centuries, hauntingly beautiful.

 **Jubilee Synagogue:** Lavishly decorated in Moorish Revival style, housing exhibits on Jewish culture.



Old Jewish Cemetery



Vyšehrad Fortress: Older than Prague Castle, this hilltop citadel offers legends of Princess Libuše and a sweeping view of the Vltava. It houses the national cemetery and the Basilica of St. Peter and Paul with vibrant art nouveau interiors.

Metaphysical Prague Still Prevails

Today, Prague wears its metaphysical past like a perfume. The Museum of Alchemists and Magicians of Old Prague in Malá Strana recreates the laboratory of Edward Kelley. The Speculum Alchemiae, unearthed after the 2002 floods, presents a preserved alchemical workspace below a discreet house near Old Town Square. You can even dine by candlelight at U Sedmi Švabů (At the Seven Swabians), a cellar tavern themed with medieval and mystical décor.

Yet it's not just the relics that enchant. Prague invites introspection. Something in its rhythm, its reverberating silence beneath spires, calls to the seeker. It is a city where the veil between the worlds is ever so thin. So come. Cross the bridge. Light a candle in the cathedral. Lose yourself in a crooked alley. Prague is waiting—as it always has—to reveal a secret meant only for you.

Recommended Reading:

1. ***The Secret of Secrets* by Dan Brown** — a fast-paced, thought-provoking thriller that blends history, science, and symbology into an exploration of hidden knowledge and the mysteries of human consciousness.
2. ***Alchemy* by S. J. Parris** — A gripping historical thriller featuring spies, sorcery, and philosophical intrigue set in the charged atmosphere of Elizabethan Europe.
3. ***The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho** — While not set in Prague, it captures the spiritual quest that echoes in the city.
4. ***The Book of Almas* by Anna Fodorova** — A novel where Prague becomes the stage for metaphysical inquiry and emotional truth.
5. ***The Golem* by Gustav Meyrink** — A dark, atmospheric tale steeped in Prague's Jewish mysticism.
6. ***The Prague Cemetery* by Umberto Eco** — A masterfully twisted tale of political intrigue and occultism, mingling real 19th-century conspiracies with dark fiction.

Nonfiction:

1. ***Prague: A Cultural and Literary History* by Richard D. E. Burton** — A deeply nuanced exploration of Prague's layered identity.
2. ***Rudolf II and His World* by R. J. W. Evans** — A non-fiction dive into the eccentric ruler who made Prague his laboratory of the cosmos.
3. ***Magic Prague* by Angelo Maria Ripellino** — An intoxicating literary and historical meditation on Prague's mystical heart, from Gothic shadows to surrealist echoes.
4. ***The Thirty Years War* by C. V. Wedgwood** — Essential context for understanding the spiritual and political upheavals that shaped Prague's destiny.
5. ***Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler: The Unlikely Partnership That Forever Changed Our Understanding of the Heavens* by Kitty Ferguson** — A compelling dual biography that illuminates their Prague years under Rudolf II's patronage.



American Byways

SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS:

A City of Shadows, Sorcery, and Spirited Revival

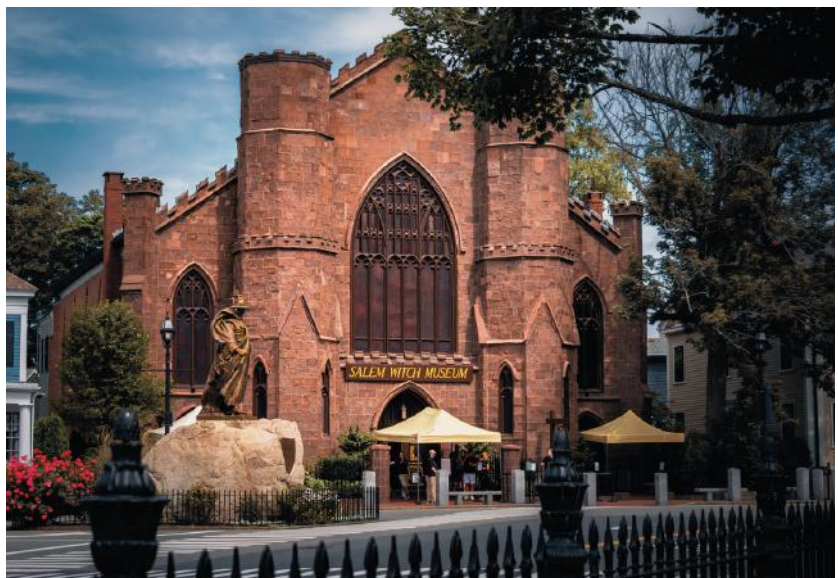
It begins with a whisper. The scent of salt and woodsmoke carried on an Atlantic breeze. Cobblestones beneath your feet, weathered timber homes leaning in, as if still eavesdropping on secrets never meant to reach our century. Salem is a city that listens. And if you listen back, you might just hear them—the voices of judges and midwives, merchants and mourners, rebels and refugees—whose footsteps still echo down Derby Street. In Salem, history isn't a backdrop. It is the story.

Puritan Arrival

Originally home to the Naumkeag tribe, the North Shore attracted the English Puritans who established Salem in 1626, among the earliest settlements in Massachusetts Bay Colony. Named after the Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, the town would see anything but during its most infamous chapter. While Salem became a prosperous seaport in the 17th and 18th centuries—thriving on codfish, fur, and exotic trade routes stretching to China and the East Indies—it is forever tethered to the year 1692, when fear and fervor collided in a wave of accusations now known as the Salem Witch Trials.



Witch House, Photo Credit Ben Rekemeyer



Witch Museum, Photo Credit Ben Rekemeyer

Over that fevered year, more than 200 people were accused of witchcraft. Nineteen were hanged, one pressed to death with stones, and five perished in jail. The causes were complex—religious extremism, local politics, personal vendettas, and a rigid worldview that conflated the unknown with the unholy. The spectral evidence used in court was intangible; girls claimed they saw the accused's spirits tormenting them.

Hysteria fed on itself, leaving a long shadow over New England jurisprudence.

Yet Salem's story did not end there. In the centuries since, the city has reckoned, reimagined, and rebuilt. Maritime riches gave rise to elegant Federalist mansions and cultural institutions, many now preserved for public admiration. Salem played a pivotal role in shaping early American commerce, literature (Nathaniel Hawthorne was born here), and even museum culture—home to the venerable Peabody Essex Museum, one of the oldest in the country.

A Thriving Seaport

Wander Salem's historic districts and you step into a canvas painted in ironwork, brick, and widow's walks. Chestnut Street, once called "the street of millionaires," still exudes maritime elegance. **Derby Wharf**, with its crimson **Customs House** where Hawthorne once worked, leads down to **Salem Harbor**, where masts and maritime flags still flutter in salute to the city's seafaring past.

There are four historic districts in Salem—Derby, McIntire, Lafayette and Washington Square. Many of the buildings bear placards on their exteriors, celebrating the original builders and inhabitants, dating back to the mid 1700s. Derby especially evokes the era of sea captains, shipwrights and sailmakers. That's evident in port-side Derby, where narrow lanes, colonial architecture and carriage bars still hold sway.



The Most Haunted Spots in Salem

Cemeteries & Historical Sites

- **Old Burying Point Cemetery** (Charter St.): Dating to 1637, this ancient graveyard holds the remains of key figures from the Witch Trials. Visitors report ghostly faces in photos and odd chills.
- **Howard Street Cemetery:** Believed to be the site of Giles Corey's crushing during the trials, this shadowed plot is frequently cited among Salem's most haunted hauntings.

Haunted Homes

- **Witch House** (Jonathan Corwin House): The sole remaining structure with direct ties to the 1692 trials. It's said to harbor a heavy, oppressive atmosphere.
- **House of the Seven Gables:** This literary landmark stoops under stories of lingering presences, drifting footsteps, and cold gusts.
- **Joshua Ward House:** Once a boarding house, many visitors swear they've encountered unexplained noises and shifting shadows here.
- **Ropes Mansion:** Featured in *Hocus Pocus*, tales include sightings of a woman engulfed in flames and sudden blazes appearing on-site.
- **Pickman House:** Visible by appointment only—but from the outside, many report phantasmal figures looming behind its darkened windows.
- **Grimshawe House:** Thought to inspire Nathaniel Hawthorne, this stately residence is said to be host to multiple spectral beings.





Derby Wharf Lighthouse, Photo Credit Jonathan Berk

Most Notable Historic Sites in Salem

1. The Witch House (Judge Jonathan Corwin House)

The only structure still standing in Salem with direct ties to the witch trials. Judge Corwin presided over many of the hearings, and his 17th-century home, with its steep gables and dark timber, remains a haunting window into Puritan domestic life and judicial legacy.

2. The Old Burying Point Cemetery (Charter Street Cemetery)

Established in 1637, this is one of the oldest cemeteries in the United States. Among its moss-covered headstones lie magistrates from the witch trials, including Judge Hathorne (ancestor of Nathaniel Hawthorne). It abuts the **Witch Trials Memorial**, a contemplative stone installation honoring the 20 victims.

3. Proctor's Ledge Memorial (2016 Located Execution Site)

After centuries of speculation, historians and scholars confirmed in 2016 that the executions of the accused witches occurred at Proctor's Ledge, not Gallows Hill. Today, a respectful, minimalist memorial of granite slabs marks the site where nineteen were hanged, shaded by trees above a quiet neighborhood on Pope Street.

What to Conjure Up Some Fun on Your Journey.. Try These Shops!

If you are looking for a little Witchery in Salem, you can find it in these shops!

Crow Haven Corner

The **oldest witch shop in Salem**, Crow Haven Corner is run by Lorelei, Salem's famed "Love Witch," and has been enchanting visitors for over 40 years. Expect spell kits, crystals, tarot readings, and lively readings at their in-store altar

Enchanted of Salem (Official Witch Shoppe)

Located on Pickering Wharf, this magical boutique is associated with Laurie Cabot (**Salem's Official Witch**) and offers herbal blends, candles, handcrafted tools, psychic readings, and frequent workshops. I met Laurie many years ago. She has led the renaissance of the modern-day practice of Wicca in Salem.

The Coven's Cottage

A cozy downtown shop specializing in Norse, Celtic, and Germanic pagan traditions. They carry crystals, herbs, ritual tools, runes, and regularly host classes and gatherings

Hex: Old World Witchery

Currently the **largest witchcraft shop in Salem**, formed from the merger of Hex and Omen. You'll find spell kits, oils, incense, divination tools, psychic readings, and a working witches' altar on the Essex Street Ped Mall.

HausWitch Home & Healing

This modern metaphysical lifestyle boutique blends earth magic with home decor. It features crystals, aura photography, tarot decks, workshops, and inclusive events through its "ClubHaus."

The Cauldron Black

A socially conscious occult shop at 65 Wharf Street offering ethically sourced ritual items, spiritual consultations, classes, and a sacred Chapel of Maria Padilha—aimed at community empowerment.



4. Salem Common

An 8-acre park centrally located in the Washington Square District; the Salem Common was the location of the founding of the American military. In April 1637, the National Guard mustered its first soldiers here. Flanked by historic homes and iron-fenced elegance, it remains a public gathering place and the heart of many seasonal celebrations

5. The House of the Seven Gables (Turner-Ingersoll Mansion)

Built in 1668, this colonial mansion inspired Nathaniel Hawthorne's famous novel. Visitors can tour the gables, hidden staircases, and period gardens while exploring Salem's maritime elite and literary legacy.



The House of the Seven Gables Photo Credit 7gables.org

6. Salem Maritime National Historic Site

The first National Historic Site in the U.S., this area preserves the city's maritime glory. Stroll Derby Wharf to see the Custom House (where Hawthorne worked), the replica tall ship *Friendship*, and the 1819 Hawkes House. The scent of salt and sailcloth lingers.

7. Peabody Essex Museum (PEM)

One of the country's oldest continuously operating museums, PEM traces Salem's global trade connections and houses treasures from Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Its collections include 18th-century maritime art, Chinese export porcelain, and Native American artifacts. Don't miss the historic Yin Yu Tang Chinese house in the museum's courtyard. This museum showcases 850,000 works of international art!

Ascend (Metaphysical & Crystal Shop)

A newer arrival at 192 Essex Street, Ascend is beloved for its well-curated crystal collection, aura photography, tarot and mediumship sessions, and warm, welcoming staff.

Artemisia Botanicals

A dedicated herbal apothecary on Hawthorne Boulevard featuring over 400 herbs, 100 teas, essential oils, soaps, and teachings like the Green Witch School of Herbalism.

Emporium 32

A compact occult emporium carrying crystals, books, tarot, and private readings.

Pentagram

Supplies, candles, psychic readings in a friendly modern pagan space.

Witch Pix

Choose from more than 400 costumes and many enchanting stage settings to have your image immortalized in bewitching fashion. Your Instagram followers will love you!





Salem Maritime National Historic Site Photo Credit npshistory.com

8. Hamilton Hall

An elegant Federal-style assembly hall built in 1805 by master builder Samuel McIntire. Once a center for Salem's elite social life, it still hosts events and lectures today under its grand chandeliers and ornate ceilings.

9. Ropes Mansion

Built around 1727 and lovingly preserved by the Peabody Essex Museum, this Georgian beauty was home to three generations of the prominent Ropes family. With its heirloom gardens and costumed interpreters, it offers an intimate glimpse into upper-class colonial life. This is where the Disney film *Hocus Pocus* with Bette Midler, Sarah Jessica Parker, and Kathy Najimy was filmed.

10. Fort Pickering

Tucked on Winter Island, this coastal defense structure dates to 1643, though its visible stonework is mostly from 1814 and the Civil War era. Wander the grassy ramparts where Salem once readied itself against pirates and Redcoats. Winter Island was the site of a military base from 1643 to 1972!

11. Fort Lee

Fort Lee was built in 1776 to deter British aggression.

12. Salem Custom House

Overlooking Derby Wharf, this redbrick landmark served as the hub of maritime regulation and taxation in the early 19th century. Nathaniel Hawthorne's old desk still sits beneath the eagle-topped pediment.

Haunted Restaurants & Bars

- **Rockafellas** (formerly Salem's First Church): Built atop church tunnels, guests say they hear whispers, shuffling, and glasses falling on their own.
- **The Merchant**: A boutique hotel and restaurant, this property is steeped in Trial-era energy and frequent ghostly activity.
- **Salem Inn**: Multiple guests have awakened to mysterious footsteps, cold breezes, and phantom figures in their rooms.
- **Bunghole Liquors**: Once a funeral parlor on Lowell St., patrons have reported cold spots, strange noises, and eerie sightings.

Haunted Hotels & Former Taverns

- **Hawthorne Hotel**: Visitors sometimes refuse to sleep on the upper floors, claiming restless spirits and disembodied voices roam the halls.
- **Murphy's Restaurant & Pub** (defunct): Now closed, this former haunt was said to be inhabited by spirits of those accused during the Trials.

Other Notable Haunts

- **Gallows Hill**: Though likely misidentified, this wooded hill is still associated with hanging lore and spectral sightings.
- **Old Salem Jail**: Formerly a detention house, now repurposed, some say the anguished echoes of past inmates still linger in its cell rooms.
- **Wicked Good Books**: Among the city's most haunted retail spots—strange occurrences began during renovations: books falling, odd voices, and cold



13. Nathaniel Hawthorne Birthplace

Located on the same grounds as the House of the Seven Gables, this modest 1804 home was the birthplace of Salem's literary son. It offers a simple tour but is deeply moving for lovers of American Gothic fiction.

Historic Hostelries

You can even experience Salem history in your choices of places to stay:

-  **The Merchant Salem** – Sleep in the same room as George Washington did in 1789.
-  **The Daniels House Inn** – Build in 1667 by a sea captain, its red door beckons guests.
-  **The Hawthorne Hotel** – This 93-room hotel opened in 1925 is the largest in the city and evokes its Art Deco era beginnings.

Pulsing Past to Peaceful Present

Today, Salem embraces its past while shaping its identity anew. It is a city of scholars and skeptics, artists and occultists, descendants and newcomers. The witch trials have become a lens through which the town examines justice, identity, and moral courage. Memorials to the victims offer solemn spaces for reflection, while museums and walking tours balance education with entertainment.

Sites like the Salem Witch Museum, the Witch House (home of Judge Jonathan Corwin), and the Old Burying Point Cemetery root visitors in the 17th century. Meanwhile, Salem's modern witch community brings living traditions of Wicca and paganism to the fore, especially around Samhain and Halloween, when the city draws nearly a million visitors. But Salem isn't all black hats and broomsticks. It is also a vibrant hub of contemporary art, indie bookstores, and LGBTQ+ inclusivity—a haven for the curious and kindred.



Witch Trials Documents, Photo Credit Kate Fox



Salem Witch Memorial, Photo Credit Jess Shada



Essex Street, Photo Credit Jonathan Berk

So come. Walk where they walked. Listen where they listened. Wonder where they wondered. Salem does not forget, and it does not let you forget, either. It is a city where history lingers in alleyways and whispers through museum walls. Where legends flicker in candlelight and truths emerge like low tide treasures. If you believe that the past is not past, Salem welcomes you. Be ready to remember.



Recommended Reading:

Nonfiction:

1. ***The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane*** by Katherine Howe
2. ***The House of the Seven Gables*** by Nathaniel Hawthorne
3. ***The Salem Belle; a tale of 1692*** by Pauline Bradford Mackie
4. ***Hour of the Witch*** by Chris Bohjalian
5. ***The Armed Ship America; When We Sailed from Salem*** by James Otis

Nonfiction:

1. ***In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692*** by Mary Beth Norton
2. ***A Storm of Witchcraft: The Salem Trials and the American Experience*** by Emerson W. Baker
3. ***Six Women of Salem: The Untold Story of the Accused and Their Accusers in the Salem Witch Trials*** by Marilynne K. Roach
4. ***Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*** by Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum
5. ***A Salem Shipmaster and Merchant: The Autobiography of George Nichols*** by George Nichols
6. ***Death of an Empire: The Rise and Murderous Fall of Salem, America's Richest City*** by Robert Booth



Room With a View -- on History

THE HAUNTING ELEGANCE OF THE HOTEL DEL CORONADO



Hotel del Coronado, Front Porch, Photo Credit Hotel del Coronado

If you walk the shores of Coronado Island just after sunset, when the Pacific is wrapped in lavender fog and the grand wooden turret of the Hotel del Coronado begins to glow amber under gaslight, you may feel it—a shiver of history, a flicker of something just beyond sight. Perhaps it's the ocean breeze. Or perhaps it's **Kate Morgan**, the hotel's most famous ghost, still pacing the corridors where she waited... and never left.

Red Shingled Grandeur

When the Hotel del Coronado first opened its red-shingled gables to the sea in **1888**, it was nothing short of a marvel—California's answer to Newport grandeur, built in the Queen Anne Revival style on a stretch of wild, windblown sand. Designed by architect James W. Reid and financed by Elisha Babcock and H.L. Story, "The Del" was the largest resort hotel in the world at the time, lit by one of the earliest commercial power plants and graced with modern plumbing and elevators—true luxuries of the Gilded Age.



But it was also built on ambition and sheer invention. Thousands of laborers were ferried over from San Diego by barge. Timber arrived from British Columbia. Glass panes, custom tile, and cast iron were carted in by rail. And yet within a year, a palace stood—a seaside fantasy of wood and whimsy, ready to receive presidents, princes, and literary minds from across the world.



Shore House Oceanfront Veranda



Beach Village Pool

The Queen of Seaside Whimsy

The Hotel del Coronado isn't merely historic—it's theatrical. A wooden fantasy of red-roofed gables and curling verandas, **it's the largest surviving example of Queen Anne Revival beach architecture in the United States**, and one of the very few all-wooden resorts of its scale still standing anywhere in the world.

What immediately draws the eye, both then and now, is the **enormous round turret rising like a wedding cake spire from the southeast corner**, trimmed with white fretwork and capped with a flared conical roof. It's both the literal and emotional centerpiece of the hotel's design—a beacon visible from the sea and a motif that would become emblematic of American Victorian seaside resorts.

Built on what was then a barren sand spit, the hotel was constructed using wood salvaged and shipped from as far away as British Columbia and Oregon. Its builders used 37 miles of piping for plumbing and 2,500,000 feet of lumber to create what was, in its day, a technological marvel. The design favored asymmetry, ornate porches, and whimsical details—turrets, towers, dormers, eyebrow windows, and scroll-sawn balustrades.



Aerial Turret



Serea Exterior

Crowning Glory of the Crown Room

The **Crown Room** is a particular triumph of design: its ceiling, constructed entirely without nails, resembles the inverted hull of a ship—an homage to nautical craftsmanship. Giant peacock-feather chandeliers (attributed by lore to *Wizard of Oz* author L. Frank Baum) hang from the ceiling beams, casting golden light over the polished wood floors below.

From above, the hotel's layout spreads in scalloped wings from the central turret, wrapping around palm-lined courtyards and leading visitors from grand entrances to the glassy sparkle of the beach. The building seems to invite wandering—not just in space, but in time.

Even today, the Del's silhouette evokes both romance and mystery—its whorls of red shingle and whitewashed trim as fanciful as a carousel and just as timeless. It feels less like something built and more like something imagined, conjured, perhaps, from a dream of elegance perched at the edge of the Pacific.



Crown Room

Imagine President William Taft dining beneath the wagon-wheel chandeliers of the **Crown Room**, or the whisper of gowns swirling during lavish Edwardian balls. The **caged birdcage elevator**, still manually operated, gently rattles its way up to rooms once occupied by Wallis Simpson, Charlie Chaplin, and L. Frank Baum, who wrote *The Wizard of Oz* while staying here.

Wander the lush gardens or stroll the famous Silver Strand beachfront, and you'll find the original Victorian wing still lovingly preserved amid the resort's modern wings. Don't miss the Dragon Tree, planted in 1888 and still thriving—its gnarled branches a perfect symbol of the hotel itself: elegant, enduring, and just a touch otherworldly.

National Treasure

“The Del”, a National Historic Landmark, is a dreamy collision of old-world charm and contemporary indulgence. A recent \$550 million restoration effort continues to maintain its original architecture, and guided history tours provide guests with intimate glimpses into the hotel’s opulent past. The hotel’s 700-piece stained glass Coronation Window has now been brought back to its original glory.

Even a little film history was made here, including the legendary *Some Like It Hot* with Marilyn Monroe, Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon and *The Stunt Man* with Peter O’Toole.



Old Photo of the Hotel

Today, the Hotel sports a 938-room property over a two-mile stretch of private beach, including the exclusive Shore House at The Del, a collection of 75 ocean front suites and villas with a dedicated cabana-fringed pool, a private restaurant and concierge service.



Original Kate Morgan

HOTEL DEL CORONADO,
ABCOCK, Manager. Coronado, Ca

id other valuable Packages, must be placed in the Safe in the office, otherwi
will not be responsible for any loss.

NAMES.	RESIDENCE.
<i>Thursday Nov. 24th 1892</i>	
<i>K. S. Williams</i>	<i>N. Y. City</i>
<i>Perin</i>	<i>Panama City R. 9</i>
<i>H. Gage</i>	<i>Panama City R. 9</i>
<i>E. French</i>	<i>Panama City R. 9</i>
<i>W. Neitz</i>	<i>Detroit Mich</i>
<i>J. Brown</i>	<i>Denver Colo</i>
<i>W. Brown</i>	<i>Denver Colo</i>
<i>Lottie A. Bernard</i>	<i>Detroit</i>
<i>J. W. Clark</i>	<i>Boston</i>
<i>Clark & wife</i>	<i>Coronado</i>
<i>W. B. Clark</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Moore</i>	<i>New Mex</i>

Guest Registry



Walking in Bedroom



Old Photo of Hotel, Beach Front

The Haunting of Room 3327 (formerly 302):

The most enduring tale is that of **Kate Morgan**, a young woman who checked in under an assumed name in 1892—and never checked out. Described as "beautiful but melancholy," she spent five days waiting for a man who never arrived. On the morning of Thanksgiving, she was found dead on the hotel's steps, a gunshot wound to the head. The case was ruled a suicide, but whispers of foul play—and spectral return—began almost immediately.

Guests who stay in her former room, **Room 3327**, report flickering lights, footsteps, cold spots, and an uncanny sensation of being watched. Staff and visitors alike tell of **disappearing items**, doors that open and close on their own, and the image of a woman in black drifting through the halls or pausing on the staircase.

The hotel has leaned gently into its haunted legacy—not with kitsch, but with a nod to mystery. The **Haunted Happenings Tour** is a must-do for the curious, weaving together history and legend beneath the glow of the chandeliers and the hush of the sea.



Cars with Porte Cochere

Photo Credits: Hotel del Coronado



Photo Credit Hotel del Coronado



Recommended Reading:

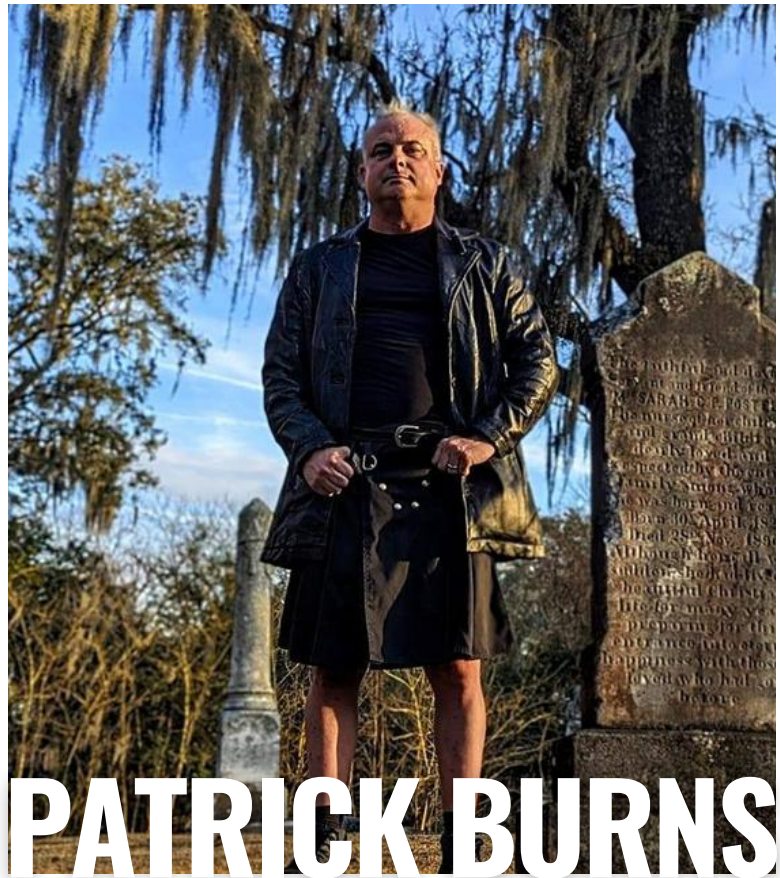
1. **Beautiful Stranger: The Ghost of Kate Morgan and the Hotel del Coronado by Terry Girardot** – A deep dive into the life, death, and afterlife of the Del's most famous guest.
2. **Haunted Hotels of the California Coast by Brian Clune** – Includes fascinating accounts of the Del and its spectral residents.
3. **The Del Chronicles: A Story of Hotel del Coronado by Christine Donovan** – A richly illustrated history from a former hotel historian.
4. **For fiction lovers: Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet by Jamie Ford** offers a similar haunting atmosphere—though not set at the Del, it captures the kind of timeless, memory-soaked feeling that lingers in such historic places.



The Historic Traveler Interview

GHOST INVESTIGATOR PATRICK BURNS

In keeping with our “Spirited Fall” theme, our expert this time is **Ghost Investigator Patrick Burns**. Patrick, who hosts an acclaimed [ghost tour in Savannah, GA](#) as The Guy in The Kilt honoring his Celtic origins, was also one of the cohosts of the show *Haunting Evidence* for three seasons on truTV and Court TV.



He has spent much of his life seeking to understand and record the paranormal. Therefore, we thought it would be fun to have him give us a tour of some of the leading haunts in historic places in the US and the UK. Then stick around for a quick round-up of 20 leading historic haunts in more international locations!

Jackie: Patrick, tell me about your youth and your passion for unexplained phenomena—ghosts, hauntings, the paranormal. How did all of this begin for you? What sparked it early on?

Patrick: I had a pretty normal childhood. I was the youngest of four boys, so naturally, my older brothers liked to tease me. Ghosts were one of their favorite tools. They’d say, “Patrick, the ghost is going to get you,” or “There’s a ghost in your closet.” My parents meant well and assured me there was no such thing, but that’s how it started.

I didn’t have any encounters of my own as a kid. What really changed everything was the death of my brother Billy. He died in 1985, when I was 16 and he was 22. Billy’s death launched me into this lifelong search. I needed something to reaffirm my own beliefs—something spiritual, something that told me this isn’t all there is. I wanted to know, even if the odds were remote, that I might be reunited with him and others I’ve loved and lost. That was the beginning of it all: my quest to understand the paranormal, our place in the universe, and the mystery of life itself.

Jackie: How did that quest take shape? What did you do to pursue it?

Patrick: I started reading everything I could about the paranormal—ghosts, hauntings, UFOs, cryptids, Bigfoot. Anything that dealt with unexplained phenomena.



As a teenager, I didn't have any personal encounters, but I did visit supposedly haunted sites and read obsessively. My first real experiences didn't start until I was about 20. That's when I began encountering things that made me say, "Okay, something is happening here. We don't have answers for all of it."

Jackie: And what kinds of manifestations have you personally encountered?

Patrick: You name it, I've probably experienced it. I've seen full-bodied apparitions. I've interacted physically with people who were there—and then gone. I've heard phantom voices when no one else was around, and others with me heard them too. I've smelled things that weren't there, felt touches on my skin or in my hair.

It never happens the same way twice. I don't claim to be psychic or clairvoyant. Sometimes I'll have a couple of experiences in a week, and then nothing for years. I can't pinpoint a pattern. But I suspect that, because I go looking, whatever's out there knows I'm seeking it. And maybe it waits until I let my guard down, until I'm not ready with a camera, and then—boom. Something happens in a flash. It's gone just as fast, and you're left trying to make sense of it.

Jackie: So when was your first ghost encounter?

Patrick: That would've been about a year and a half after Billy passed. I was at my friend Gene's house. He had a few people over and they were using a Ouija board and crystals. I was skeptical—open-minded, but not convinced.

They were asking questions, getting what they thought were answers, and then Gene suggested we take the board to these old farm ruins nearby. The legend was that a man had murdered his family there in the 1800s. The house was gone, but the ruins were still visible in the woods.

So we went. Everyone was in that heightened state of "woo woo" energy. I wasn't buying it. I wandered off, about 40 or 50 feet away, and I started hearing rustling in the trees. Not animal sounds—steady movement.

Then I saw the branches part, and there was a face. White skin, black eyes, black features. Just standing there, staring at me.

We held eye contact for several seconds. I was frozen. Then I broke the gaze, screamed, and ran. Gene later said he saw it too—not with his eyes, but in his mind. Back at the house, he sketched the face. It was exactly what I'd seen. That was the moment I realized—this is real. I needed to be more careful. I was entering unknown territory.

Jackie: Yet you continued. How did this evolve into a career—one that blends science and respect for the spirits?

Patrick: It has become my full-time work. But it has never been about the money. I was a cast member on *Haunting Evidence* for three seasons on truTV and Court TV. That's how I began making a name for myself.

My wife and I co-authored a book about the paranormal about 15 years ago. And about 20 years ago, I visited Savannah, Georgia for the first time. I fell in love with it and moved here 11 years ago. No regrets—one of the smartest decisions I've ever made.

What's ironic is that I am scared of this stuff. But my curiosity always wins out. I want to understand it. That drive overrides the fear. My instinct isn't fight or flight—it's to stay, to observe. And that keeps pulling me back in.

Jackie: What kind of equipment do you typically use?

Patrick: I used to go by "Ghost Geek" online. I was obsessed with tech—any tool that could document or measure environmental variables. Not just EMF meters, but anything that tracked temperature, light levels, humidity, air pressure.

Jackie: Do you have a theory about why some spirits linger in a particular place?

Patrick: Yes, and it's something I talk about often during my tours. First, we have to define what we mean by "ghost." To me, a spirit is the essence of who we are—our soul, our consciousness, our identity. That energy doesn't just disappear when the body dies.

According to the first law of thermodynamics, energy can't be destroyed. It transforms. So, something survives physical death.

Now, ideally, that energy levels up. It moves on to what I call the next dimension—whether that's heaven, nirvana, the light, whatever you believe. That's a free spirit. Those who have crossed over properly can still visit us, communicate subtly, send signs. But they've moved on.

A ghost, on the other hand, is a spirit that hasn't crossed over. It's stuck—trapped between life and death. Why? Maybe they fear judgment for what they did in life. Maybe they don't even realize they're dead, especially if their death was sudden or traumatic. Or maybe they've got unfinished

20 of the Leading Hauntings in Historic Buildings Outside of the U.S.

1. Tower of London (1078, London, England) — A symbol of royal power, betrayal, and bloodshed, this fortress has hosted monarchs, prisoners, and executions. Most famously, Anne Boleyn is said to haunt the grounds, drifting near the site of her beheading, clutching her head beneath her arm.

2. Edinburgh Castle (12th century, Edinburgh, Scotland) — Perched atop an ancient volcanic plug, this iconic Scottish stronghold has seen sieges, executions, and imprisonment. The ghostly echoes of a headless drummer and shadowy figures are reported in its stone vaults and winding corridors.

3. Château de Brissac (11th century, Brissac-Quincé, France) — This towering Loire Valley château hides a tragic past. The "Green Lady," believed to be the spirit of a noblewoman murdered by her husband, roams the halls in a flowing green gown, her face contorted and hollow-eyed.

4. Poveglia Island Asylum (18th century ruins, Venice Lagoon, Italy) — Once a quarantine island and later an asylum, this is now one of the most feared places in Italy. Said to be cursed by plague victims and tormented souls, it remains abandoned and shrouded in dread.

5. Banff Springs Hotel (1888, Alberta, Canada) — Built in the grand Scottish baronial style in the Canadian Rockies, this historic hotel is home to spectral guests: a bride who fell down the staircase and a ghostly bellhop who checks guests into rooms that don't exist.

6. The Ancient Ram Inn (1145, Wotton-under-Edge, England) — This timber-framed inn was built atop pagan burial grounds and a former gallows. Guests have reported physical attacks, spectral sightings, and a chilling atmosphere said to stem from centuries-old unrest.

business, like Patrick Swayze's character in the movie *Ghost*, where he stayed to solve his own murder. Whatever the reason, being stuck like that—remaining earthbound—is a kind of spiritual limbo. And I believe that's what creates a haunting.

Jackie: Let's turn to some of the haunted historic sites you've encountered across the U.S. Tell me about a few that stand out—and the spirits tied to those places. I will guide you through based on the list you previously supplied me.

Patrick: Absolutely. Let's start on the West Coast. The *Queen Mary* in Long Beach is extraordinary. She began as a luxury ocean liner in the 1930s, then became a troop transport in WWII, nicknamed the "Grey Ghost." She carried thousands of soldiers—and some never made it across.

After it was decommissioned in 1968, Long Beach bought it, cut the engines, and turned it into a hotel and convention center. I've done several investigations on the ship and had some of the most compelling experiences of my life there. Cold spots, disembodied voices, unexplained footsteps—you name it.



The Queen Mary, Photo Credit Queen Mary

People talk about a little girl named Jackie haunting the first-class pool. She never existed in the logs, but something—something—is playing that role. There are stewards still seen walking the halls in 1930s attire, and the most famous haunting is the engine room. A crew member was crushed during a watertight door drill. They say he survived for a time, trapped. I once investigated the engine room alone. I heard voices—one yelling, "Hey!"—but each time I followed the sound, no one was there. That ship holds stories we'll never fully uncover.

7. Dragsholm Castle (1215, Zealand, Denmark) — Denmark's most haunted fortress boasts over 100 resident ghosts, including the "White Lady," whose skeleton was found walled inside the castle, and the spectral horse of James Hepburn, seen galloping through the grounds.

8. Monte Cristo Homestead (1885, Junee, New South Wales, Australia) — Australia's most haunted house was home to a prosperous family touched by tragic deaths. Apparitions, mysterious lights, and violent poltergeist activity plague this otherwise stately mansion.

9. Himeji Castle (1333, Himeji, Japan) — This elegant white fortress hides a tale of sorrow: Okiku, a servant falsely accused of theft, was thrown into a well. Her ghost is said to rise nightly, counting dishes before unleashing a scream that curdles the blood.

10. Raynham Hall (1620, Norfolk, England) — Famous for the spectral "Brown Lady," captured in a 1936 photograph descending the grand staircase. She's believed to be Lady Dorothy Walpole, doomed to an eternal twilight walk through her ancestral home.

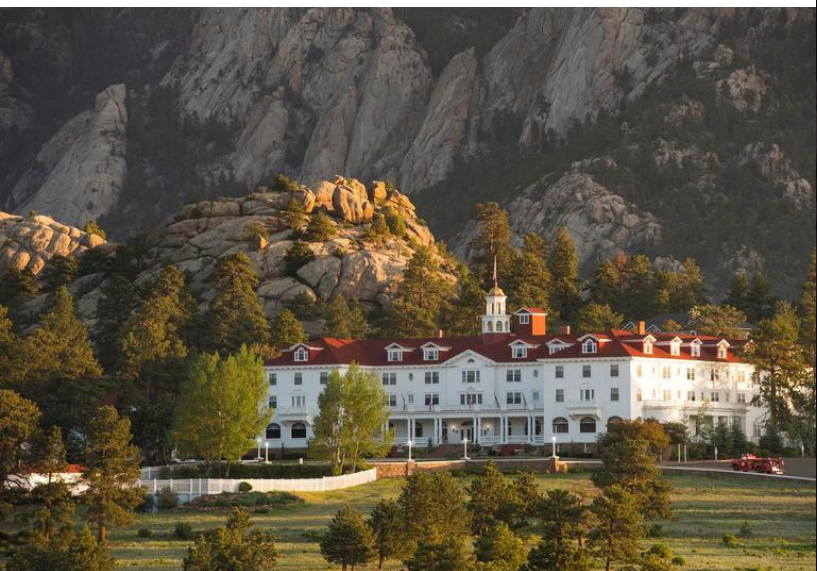
11. Akershus Fortress (1299, Oslo, Norway) — A former royal residence, military base, and Nazi prison. Ghostly encounters include a faceless woman in black, echoing footsteps, and Malcanisen, a phantom hound said to appear before death strikes.

12. Bhangarh Fort (17th century, Rajasthan, India) — Often called the most haunted place in India. Legend holds that a cursed love affair caused the city's fall. Today, it's abandoned—entry is forbidden after dusk, under threat of danger or madness.

13. Hell Fire Club (1725, Dublin Mountains, Ireland) — Built with stones from an ancient passage tomb, this isolated hunting lodge became a den of occult ritual. Visitors still report guttural voices, cloven-hoofed shadows, and a lingering scent of sulfur.

Jackie: The Stanley Hotel in Colorado is legendary. Tell me about that.

Patrick: It's the inspiration for *The Shining*. Stephen King stayed there, experienced something he couldn't explain, and the rest is literary history. The hotel's music hall is famously haunted—you can hear phantom orchestras. Ironically, that's where I met my wife Marley at a paranormal conference. Some say the land's Native American roots contribute to the activity. Others cite the high mineral content of the soil. Whatever the cause, The Stanley is a beautiful, eerie place.



The Stanley Hotel, Estes Colorado, Photo Credit The Stanley

Jackie: Let's head to the Old West—Virginia City and the Washoe Club.

Patrick: That place is fantastic. Once a Millionaire's Club and saloon, it's mostly abandoned above the ground floor. During my investigation, I heard music—saloon-style piano—and the unmistakable murmur of voices, like a party or poker game was underway. There's no specific ghost tied to it, just a lingering energy from its days as a booming mining town. But the activity is constant. It's one of the most vivid Old West haunts I've experienced.

14. Fort George (1749, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada) — A star-shaped bastion known for spectral soldiers and eerie phenomena in its tunnels. Apparitions are often seen pacing the walls, and disembodied voices echo after hours in locked barracks.

15. Crumlin Road Gaol (1846, Belfast, Northern Ireland) — This grim prison housed political prisoners and was the site of multiple executions. Paranormal investigators have documented moans, shadows, and an oppressive chill in the execution chamber.

16. Ballygally Castle (1625, County Antrim, Northern Ireland) — Lady Isobel Shaw, locked in a tower by her husband, is said to gently knock on guest room doors in this charming seaside castle-turned-hotel. Her spirit remains benevolent, but unmistakable.

17. La Recoleta Cemetery (1822, Buenos Aires, Argentina) — This lavish necropolis is home to Argentina's elite—and their restless spirits. Most famously, Rufina Cambaceres, said to have been buried alive, is rumored to roam in her elegant white dress.

18. Château de Veauce (15th century, Allier, France) — Lucie, a maid who died of heartbreak, is often seen near the castle's spiral stair. Her apparition—pale, sorrowful, and silent—is said to appear only to those who walk alone in the early hours.

19. Moosham Castle (13th century, Salzburg, Austria) — Nicknamed "Witches' Castle" for its grim role in 17th-century witch trials. Moosham's halls echo with the sobs of the condemned, and many report being followed by cold drafts and unseen presences.

20. Carlsten Fortress (1658, Marstrand, Sweden) — This granite fortress once imprisoned Lasse-Maja, a flamboyant thief who lived part of his life disguised as a woman. Laughter and footsteps in empty corridors are attributed to his irrepressible spirit.

Jackie: What about Bodie, the ghost town?

Patrick: Bodie is preserved in “arrested decay”—not restored, but not allowed to deteriorate further. It’s completely uninhabited. I went during off-season with a small group, and we had the entire town to ourselves. We conducted EVP sessions there—recording electronic voice phenomena— and at one point asked, “Do you understand the nature of your condition?” A voice came through—clear as day—saying, “A ghost.” It was so direct, so self-aware. That moment has stayed with me. There’s an eerie, sacred stillness to Bodie. I could spend a week there easily.

Jackie: Now let’s swing down to Charleston. The Old Jail?

Patrick: That place is Gothic, inside and out. I was there for a radio contest event, leading a group of 50. While alone in the restroom beforehand, I heard doors opening and closing—but no one else was there. Later, during our tour, a heavy iron cage door moved—sliding visibly along the wall. Everyone screamed. I saw the scuff marks myself. Half the group left on the spot. It’s as haunted a jail as any I’ve ever visited.

Jackie: Give me a haunting from your home city—Savannah.

Patrick: Savannah is a paranormal goldmine. It’s a city built on its dead. Literally. The sidewalks and squares cover old burial grounds—some marked, many not. It’s a beautiful place, full of Spanish moss and Southern charm, but beneath that charm is a deep, layered history of war, disease, and slavery.

One of the most haunted places I’ve investigated here is the Sorrel-Weed House. People report apparitions, disembodied screams, and inexplicable sensations of dread. There’s a story that the original owner’s wife committed suicide after discovering his affair with a young enslaved woman—and both women are said to haunt the house today.



Washoe Club, Virginia City



Bodie, Photo Credit Mono County California



Old City Jail, Photo Credit Discover South Carolina



Old Sorrel Weed House, Photo Savannah For 91 Days

I've recorded EVP there that still gives me chills. Savannah is one of those places where you don't have to go looking for the paranormal. It finds you.

When we moved here in 2014, we found a dream apartment—1500 square feet, vaulted ceilings, exposed brick, hardwood floors... and way underpriced. We later found out why. Doors opened and closed on their own. We heard heavy boots crossing the floor. Our cats would track invisible shapes across the room. Light bulbs exploded—literally burst. The clincher? Years earlier, construction workers discovered skeletal remains beneath the building. Savannah is a city built over the dead. That apartment has never kept tenants for long. I'm not surprised.

Jackie: Let's jump across the pond. Tell me about Leap Castle.

Patrick: Leap Castle is raw medieval history. There's a torture chamber, and a drop-shaft lined with iron spikes used to execute prisoners. Leap hides secrets of bloodshed within its "Bloody Chapel," where a priest was murdered during mass. The sinister "Elemental," a spirit said to emit the stench of death, has also made its presence known. During our investigation in the upstairs chapel, we picked up EVP—in French. Turns out, a French au pair once worked there. The current owner, Sean, was stunned. They rarely hear her spirit anymore, but she spoke to us that night. That was a goosebumps moment.

Jackie: And finally—give me one good story from Scotland.

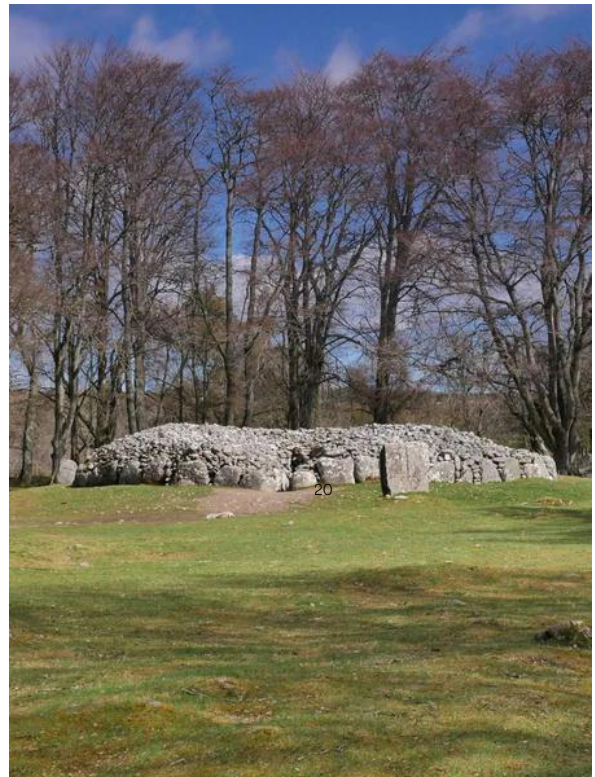
Patrick: In the Highlands, we visited the Clava Cairns—Neolithic stone circles near Culloden. Marley and I were both sick with the flu. Miserable. But when we stepped into the center of one of the circles... we stopped coughing. Completely. It was surreal. We stayed for several minutes, breathing clearly. The moment we stepped out of the circle, the coughing returned. We tried again—nothing. Just once. Whatever energy resides in those stones, it did something. That experience wasn't just paranormal—it was deeply spiritual.

Jackie: Thank you for spending this time with me.

For more information visit: guyinthekilt.com



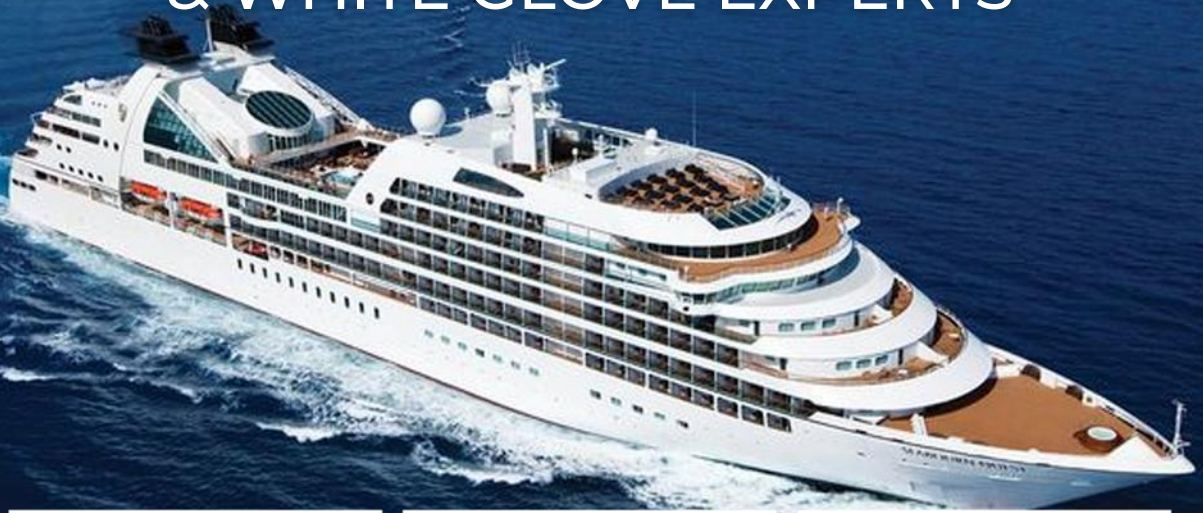
Bloody Chapel, Photo Credit Leap Castle



Clava Cairns Photo Credit Scotland's Wild



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Spotlight:

PHANTOMS, FOOTSTEPS & FLICKERING LANTERNS:

A Selection of Some of the World's Great Ghost Tours

What is it about the creak of an old floorboard, the hush of candlelit corridors, or the whisper of footsteps when no one's there? In every culture, and across every century, we've wrapped our fears, memories, and unfinished stories in ghostly garb. Some tales are mournful, others mischievous—many simply long to be remembered.

For history lovers, ghost tours offer more than a well-timed fright. They are immersive time machines, peeling back centuries to reveal the souls who once lived, labored, and lingered in the very places we now wander. Whether you're following a costumed guide through the misty alleys of Edinburgh, walking the ramparts of an old fort in Quebec, or descending into the eerie hush of the Paris Catacombs, these haunted journeys bring the past alive in ways both poignant and spine-tingling.

Across North America, stories echo in the crumbling corners of Gettysburg and the flickering gaslight of New Orleans' French Quarter. In Europe, legends are whispered among Venetian canals and murmured across London graveyards. Even far-flung outposts like Wellington, New Zealand or the wind-lashed battlements of a Scandinavian citadel have their specters to share.

This curated collection of two dozen remarkable ghost tours—spanning continents, centuries, and cultures—invites you into that shadowy space where the historical and the haunted overlap. Some unfold in the aftermath of war, others among whispered romances, shipwrecks, betrayals, or sudden tragedy. But each offers a way to walk alongside the past, rather than just look back at it.

So wrap a scarf around your neck and steady your lantern. These stories wait in the hush. And they're ready to be told.



International Ghost Tours

1. Paris Catacombs Tour – *Paris, France*

Descend into the eerie ossuary beneath the city's streets—home to the remains of over six million souls. A chilling, labyrinthine experience.

2. City of the Dead & Greyfriars Graveyard Tour – *Edinburgh, Scotland*

Venture through haunted cemeteries and underground vaults, with local guides unveiling centuries of chilling tales.

3. Venice Ghost Stories, Legends & Anecdotes Tour – *Venice, Italy*

Moonlit canals, Gothic palaces, and tragic Venetian lore come alive in this atmospheric evening walk.

4. Ghost Bus Tour of London – *London, England*

Travel by vintage Routemaster bus through Jack the Ripper's haunts, demonic barbers, and murder-laden alleyways

5. Prague Ghost & Legend of Old Town Walk – *Prague, Czech Republic*

Explore cobbled lanes and haunted squares, listening to legends that echo across centuries.

5. Prague Ghost & Legend of Old Town Walk – *Prague, Czech Republic*

Explore cobbled lanes and haunted squares, listening to legends that echo across centuries.

6. Stockholm Ghost Walk (Gamla Stan) – *Stockholm, Sweden*

A lantern-lit journey through medieval alleys, crypts, and the darker folklore of Sweden's capital.

7. The Original Ghost Tour of Killarney – *Killarney, Ireland*

A bus tour among castles and lakesides, featuring folklore, jumpscares, and Irish atmosphere.

8. Edinburgh Underground Ghost Tour – *Edinburgh, Scotland*

Delve into underground vaults and skulk the closes above ground—complete with costumed guides and spine-tingling enactments.

Catacombs in Paris



9. Poveglia Island Tour – Venice Lagoon, Italy

A bone-chilling boat trip to the infamous plague-island, nicknamed “the world’s most haunted,” often linked to ghost-hunting shows.

10. Napier Prison Night Tours – Napier, New Zealand

Haunting former prison cells where hangings occurred—renowned for ghostly sightings and intense paranormal atmosphere.

11. New Zealand Parliament Ghost Tour – Wellington, NZ

After-hours tours immerse you in tales of mysterious deaths, specters of ex-legislators, and eerie séances in Gothic halls.

12. Deadman’s Island Kayak Tour – Kent, England

Paddle to a 19th-century burial island—floating skulls, exposed coffins, and grim tales in the mist.

UNITED STATES

1. Salem: History & Hauntings Walking Tour – Salem, MA

Discover witch trial lore, haunted cemeteries, and chilling colonial-era stories on this crowd-favorite tour. Rated **Best of the Best** on Tripadvisor 2024.

2. New Orleans Haunted Ghost, Voodoo & Vampire Tour –

New Orleans, LA

Explore the French Quarter by gaslamp, weaving together ghost stories, voodoo mysteries, and vampire legends

3. Chicago Gangsters & Ghosts Tour – Chicago, IL

A walking tour through Prohibition-era mob sites and haunted history in the Loop.

4. Twilight Ghost Tour – Denver, CO

Get chills down your spine on an evening walk through Denver’s Capitol Hill neighborhood. Learn about some of the most haunted dwellings in the city.

5. Whaley House Tour – San Diego, CA

The “most haunted house” in America—still inhabited by Whaley family spirits.

6. Gettysburg Haunted Battlefield Ghost Tour

– Gettysburg, PA

Witness Civil War combat zones by night and hear the echoes of soldiers long past. Frequently noted among “unbelievable” ghost experiences.



7. Mount Dora Ghost Walk – Mount Dora, FL

A theatrical, lantern-lit event through historical streets and haunted halls. Named a top Orlando-area spooky attraction.

8. O' Be JoyFull Historical Ghost Tour – Harpers

Ferry, WV

An immersive walking tour of inexplicable tales and Civil War-era mysteries—running continuously for decades.

9. Lemp Mansion Tour – St. Louis, MO

Explore one of America's most haunted homes and former brewery sites, filled with tragic family history and paranormal legends.

10. St. Augustine Lighthouse Dark of the Moon Tour – St.

Augustine, FL

Paranormal exploration at night—keepers' murders, restless spirits, and cryptic keepers' house.

11. The Ghost Tour Est. 1989 – Williamsburg, VA

Stroll the candlelit streets of Colonial Williamsburg where 18th-century spirits are said to linger among the taverns, graveyards, and Georgian homes they once called their own.

12. Haunted Savannah Tour with the Guy in the Kilt –

Savannah, Georgia

Wander Savannah's moss-draped squares by lamplight with a kilted storyteller whose chilling tales of betrayal, burial, and restless spirits bring the city's haunted Southern past vividly to life.

St. Augustine Lighthouse





Winchester House

Grand Manors

WINCHESTER MYSTERY HOUSE

San Jose, CA

Imagine a house where staircases ascend into ceilings, doors swing open onto brick walls, and secret corridors defy logic at every turn. Perched on 4.5 acres in San José, the Winchester Mystery House is more than a Victorian mansion—it's the physical manifestation of grief, power, devotion, and perhaps a whisper of spectral counsel.

A Sorrowful Story of Loss

Sarah Lockwood Pardee Winchester (1839–1922), heiress to the **Winchester Repeating Arms fortune** and widow of William Wirt Winchester, carried both unimaginable wealth and unbearable loss. In 1866 her infant daughter died; just fifteen years later, her husband succumbed to tuberculosis. Devastated and introspective, Sarah inherited a controlling share of the Winchester fortune—estimated at more than \$20 million, the equivalent of nearly a half a billion today.

Legend claims that in her grief she sought spiritual guidance when a medium told her she was cursed. The spirits of those slain by Winchester rifles demanded an eternal house—or Sarah's own life would end. Heeding that warning, she moved west and purchased an eight-room farmhouse—Llanada Villa—in 1884 in the quiet lovely town of San Jose.

What followed was 38 years of nearly unbroken construction until her death in 1922. Building that was frequently nonsensical. Driven by the need to feverishly keep constructing, the Winchester House became more than a living place. It was a monument to one woman's obsession, grief and guilt.

Step Inside...

Stepping through the wrought-iron gates at 525 South Winchester Boulevard, you first sense the theatricality of the façade—an eclectic mash-up of Queen Anne revival, Gothic turrets, and baroque ornamentation. Inside, the grandeur is cloaked in disorientation: 160 rooms, 2,000 doors (many to nowhere), 10,000 windows, 47 stairways, and six kitchens spread across a labyrinthine 24,000sq ft.

Mind you, only one woman lived here with her servants (15 to 20 at the peak)—with only a niece Daisy who stayed a few years! However, many believe that Sarah was never truly alone. She was said to be in near-constant contact with the **spirits of those killed by Winchester rifles**, consulting them through séances conducted in her specially designed **Séance Room**—a windowless chamber with three exits, but only one entrance.

Now let's continue our tour...in the **Grand Ballroom**, light filters through stained glass depicting rifles and floral motifs. Ornamental gas lamps glimmer; the parquet floor once echoed with waltzing guests but now resonates with whispered awe. A spiral stair leads abruptly to a nonexistent second story; eerie reflections blur on the dusty mirror.



North Twin Dining Room



Grand Ballroom



Grand Mrs. Winchester's Main Bedroom



Witch's Cap

The Daisy Room, where Sarah slept during the devastating 1906 earthquake, remains both serene and eerie. When tremors collapsed the third floor, she sealed it off—rooms now entombed in history, accessible only in spirit.

In the **Witch's Cap**, a turret room with a sharply pitched roof, acoustics swirl strangely—ideal for those nightly séances Sarah reputedly held.

She is said to have received architectural instructions by spirit through her foreman, delivered the next morning in hushed tones.



Most Expensive Window

Everywhere stand handcrafted Tiffany stained-glass windows—some cracked, some boarded up after the quake—casting kaleidoscopic rainbows onto antique rugs and velvet draperies. One spider-web window delights with prisms of rainbow light at dusk; later hidden behind a wall, it remains a poetic gesture to a hidden grief.

Sarah's life, shrouded in mourning and mystery, fascinates our modern imagination. Despite her famous legacy and rumors of madness, records convey a witty, intelligent woman who spoke four languages, composed music, and embraced emerging technology—she installed forced-air heating, indoor plumbing, and even elevators to accommodate her arthritis. She refused architects, personally redrawing floor plans as her intuition (and perhaps restless spirits) demanded.

The Legacy

Upon her death in 1922, construction ceased; six months later the mansion was opened for public tours. Awarded both California Historical Landmark and National Register of Historic Places status in 1974, it remains one of America's most visited—and haunted—sites. Over 12 million visitors have wandered its halls since 1923.

In film, her story graced the 2018 thriller **Winchester**, starring Helen Mirren as a quietly steadfast and ingenious widow—not just the tormented eccentric of popular myth. Harry Houdini himself visited in 1924 and reportedly felt a chilling, undefinable presence within its walls.

Today, modern visitors may embark on guided day tours, ghost hunts, and seasonal Halloween experiences. Special events, like axe-throwing evenings, mix the macabre with merriment—all in tribute to Sarah's complex legacy.

Standing amid those impossible staircases and shuttered windows, one senses Sarah's profound yearnings—guilt and wonder, enchantment and loss—all carved into each hall she refused to complete. **The Winchester Mystery House** endures not merely as a curious architectural oddity, but as a testament to a woman's resilience and her haunting pursuit of solace. This is a widow who built a labyrinth not to hide, but perhaps to heal.

Photo Credits: Winchester Mystery House®



Recommended Reading:

1. **The Winchester Mystery House by William Wright** – A comprehensive architectural and historical exploration.
2. **Winchester: The House That Ghosts Built by Sarah Winchester House historians** – Illuminates construction mysteries and spiritual lore.
3. **Haunted San José” by Megan Herrity** – Includes rich storytelling about Sarah Winchester's spectral reputation.
4. **Eccentricity and Empire: American Women and the Investments of the 19th Century” by Jane Patterson** – Contextualizes Sarah within the broader landscape of affluent, independent women.
5. **Spiritualism and American Women in the Nineteenth Century” by Ann Braude** – Delves into how spiritualist beliefs shaped Sarah and others like her.



Houses of Worship

STONEHENGE: SECRETS IN THE STONE



An unknowable mystery that conjures visions of gowned druids and unfathomable rituals.

A Sanctuary Born in an Age of Hope

Stonehenge—a name so iconic it borders on the mythic. But this Neolithic monument in Wiltshire, England, has no need for legend to embellish its stature. Construction began around 3000 BCE with a circular earthwork enclosure and continued over a millennium in several stages, reaching its most recognizable form by approximately 1600 BCE. Some stones came from nearby Marlborough Downs; others—the distinctive bluestones—were hauled over 150 miles from the Preseli Hills in Wales, likely via waterways and rudimentary sled systems. This transportation feat reveals sophisticated planning, deep communal cooperation, and a reverence for sacred geographies. Who were its astonishing creators?

What history does confirm is that Stonehenge functioned as an evolving ceremonial center. Human remains dating from multiple centuries have been unearthed nearby, many showing signs of elite status or deliberate burial rites. The site aligns precisely with the solstices: at summer solstice, the sun rises behind the Heel Stone and rays shine into the heart of the circle. This celestial correspondence suggests a calendrical function—perhaps even a spiritual one.

Excavations led by archaeologist Mike Parker Pearson have revealed that Stonehenge was part of a much larger ritual landscape, including Durrington Walls—a nearby settlement and feasting complex—likely home to the builders. The archaeological evidence of pig bones, pottery, and tools paints a picture of great



Stonehenge



Stonehenge, Photo Credit Robert Anderson

seasonal gatherings. Stonehenge, then, was never an isolated monument. It was the sacred epicenter of a region-wide expression of community, death, and cosmology

Its standing stones, especially the towering sarsens arranged in a horseshoe of trilithons, are part of a wider European tradition of megalithic construction. Across the British Isles and western Europe, stone circles and alignments—such as Avebury, Callanish, Carnac, and the Ring of Brodgar—were raised from 4000 BCE onward. While each site has its own character, they share common themes: orientation to celestial bodies, placement near water, and association with burial. These structures speak of a cultural network that stretched across great distances and endured for centuries, transmitting knowledge without writing, and belief systems that shaped entire landscapes.

A Glimpse into the Ancestors of the Stones

While their names are lost to time, the people who built Stonehenge were no strangers to complexity, collaboration, and cosmology. Emerging from Britain's late Neolithic communities around 3000 BCE, these early agrarian societies were already skilled in engineering, astronomy, and ritual when they began constructing what would become one of the world's most iconic monuments.

They lived in timber longhouses or circular huts, gathered in kin-based groups, and organized their lives around seasonal rhythms. Their world was one of stone axes, polished flint tools, woven textiles, and domesticated livestock. They cultivated barley and wheat, raised pigs and cattle, and relied heavily on seasonal feasting as a way to mark time, unify communities, and perhaps honor their dead.

Recent discoveries at nearby Durrington Walls—a vast settlement just two miles from Stonehenge—suggest this area may have served as a living counterpart to Stonehenge's ritual dead. Archaeologists uncovered traces of hundreds of homes and the remains of enormous feasts, particularly pig bones from animals slaughtered in winter. This seasonal convergence points to a complex ritual calendar and highly organized ceremonial culture.

Burial practices in the region offer further insight. Long barrows—elongated earthen mounds—dot the landscape and often contain the bones of multiple individuals, possibly ancestors revered by the community. Over time, these burial mounds gave way to more individual or elite cremation burials. In the earliest phase of Stonehenge, cremated remains were placed within its surrounding ditch, making it one of Britain's largest Neolithic cremation cemeteries.

These ancient Britons were not building in isolation. Across the British Isles and Western Europe, similar traditions of megalithic architecture flourished. These communities shared knowledge across long distances, transmitting a sacred architectural language without writing—through memory, myth, and movement.

What they left behind in earth and stone speaks to a people profoundly connected to their environment, the cosmos, and the mystery of life and death. Their worldview is gone, but not erased. It whispers still through lintel and mound, inviting us to imagine, to honor, and to remember.

In the Mists...

Stand at Stonehenge at dawn, when the mist clings like old stories and the sheep still mumble in the dew. The great trilithons arc toward the rising sun like colossal parentheses in a sacred sentence. Touch the pitted surface of a sarsen stone—it is cold, grave, and uncompromising, yet strangely human. The air smells of wet chalk and wind-scoured lichen. And in the hush, you might hear a skylark burst into song, as if announcing an unseen procession.

The visitor's path encircles the stones, respectfully distant but close enough to awe. You walk, you linger, you listen. Interpretive signs provide theories.. Yet the monument remains aloof—familiar yet unknowable.

Stonehenge endures not just because it is old, but because it is unfinished. Not in structure, but in meaning. Each generation brings new tools, new hypotheses, new reverence. Whether you approach it through archaeology or astrology, via drone mapping or druid rites, it reflects back your own yearning for origin and order.

The surrounding landscape is now protected, but Stonehenge still faces modern pressures: tourism, traffic, and the delicate balance between preservation and access. And yet, in midsummer, people still gather to witness the solstice sun piercing the heart of the circle, as it has for four millennia. There is something beautifully human in that persistence.

Stonehenge does not offer easy answers, but it does offer a threshold. Come with your questions and your quiet. Walk the perimeter. Let time bend a little. In these ancient stones, there is no final chapter—only the invitation to keep reading the story etched in earth and sky.



Photo Credit Anthony Parkes

Recommended Reading:

1. **Stonehenge: A New Understanding by Mike Parker Pearson** – An accessible and compelling look at recent archaeological discoveries.
2. **Sarum by Edward Rutherfurd** – A sweeping novel that brings 10,000 years of Salisbury Plain to life, including the building of Stonehenge.
3. **The Druids by Ronald Hutton** – A measured history of the people often (wrongly) associated with Stonehenge.
4. **The Old Ways by Robert Macfarlane** – A lyrical meditation on ancient paths, including a haunting passage on Stonehenge.
5. **Circle of Days by Ken Follett** – an epic historical novel that explores the human drama, ambition, and mystery behind the creation of Stonehenge, weaving together ritual, vision, and the conflicts of divided communities.





Rudolph II

Sovereign

THE ALCHEMICAL EMPEROR:

Rudolph II's Metaphysical Court in Prague

Imagine a palace where the corridors smelled faintly of mercury and roses, where men in velvet robes whispered of angels, planetary metals, and the Philosopher's Stone. This wasn't fiction. This was the royal court of Holy Roman Emperor Rudolph II, perched atop the hill of Prague Castle, where mysticism reigned alongside mathematics—and alchemists stood shoulder to shoulder with astronomers.

Rudolph Rises

Rudolph II (1552–1612), son of Maximilian II and a scion of the Habsburg dynasty, was never meant to be ordinary—and indeed, he never was. Crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1576, Rudolph relocated his court from Vienna to Prague,

transforming the city into a teeming nerve center of science, philosophy, and the occult. In an age teetering between the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution, Rudolph took an unapologetically unorthodox path: he gathered astrologers, artists, and alchemists, elevating Prague to the metaphysical capital of Europe.

But behind the marbled halls and gilded reliquaries, Rudolph's rule was marked by volatility. His interest in politics waned as his obsession with the arcane deepened. He neglected imperial affairs, suffered increasingly from mental instability, and was ultimately deposed by his own brother. Yet during those luminous, esoteric decades, Rudolph's court shone brighter than any in Europe, filled with magic, madness—and brilliance.

The Cabinet of Marvels

The heart of Rudolph's mystical empire was *Prague Castle*, an ancient citadel that he expanded into a glittering compendium of curiosities. Here, the Emperor assembled his *Kunstkammer*—a “cabinet of wonders.” Within its stone corridors and Renaissance wings, the Castle held rooms stuffed with astronomical instruments, mechanical lions, celestial spheres, anatomical models, exotic animals, preserved botanical specimens, manuscripts bound in human skin art and by masters like Dürer and Arcimboldo. And somewhere beyond the glittering galleries, in hidden chambers and candlelit laboratories, men in fur-lined cloaks spoke in hushed tones of transmutation, resurrection, and astral prophecy.

It was here that **John Dee**, the famed English polymath and astrologer to Queen Elizabeth I, came to serve the Emperor's insatiable appetite for secret knowledge. Dee, along with his mysterious associate **Edward Kelley**, claimed to speak the Enochian language—the speech of angels. They sought to pierce the veil between the material and spiritual realms, using crystal balls, coded symbols, and intricate alchemical rituals.

Dee was more than a mystic—he was a mathematician, navigator, and one of the foremost thinkers of his day. Yet under Rudolph's roof, he was revered not for maps and geometry, but for the chance he might unlock celestial secrets from beyond the veil.

Rudolph's Other Luminaries

The court sparkled with other minds equally brilliant and strange. The Danish nobleman **Tycho Brahe**, with his golden nose prosthetic (a souvenir of a duel), maintained a dazzling observatory in Benátky nad Jizerou, not far from Prague. Brahe mapped the stars with unprecedented precision—using no telescope, only his instruments and naked eye.

After Brahe's death, his pupil Johannes Kepler took up the mantle, supported by Rudolph himself. It was in Prague, under imperial patronage, that Kepler discovered his three laws of planetary motion—revelations that would forever alter our understanding of the cosmos.

Also drifting through this glittering fog of genius was the controversial **Michael Maier**, physician, poet, and alchemist, whose *Atalanta Fugiens* remains one of the most beautiful alchemical works ever created—a hybrid of music, philosophy, and visual art. Maier believed that truth lay not in doctrine, but in symbols and harmonies, in the concord of opposites.

The atmosphere in the castle's halls was thick with speculation. The brilliant and blind Brahe calculated celestial charts in Rudolph's observatory. Johannes Kepler, his successor, used the Emperor's patronage to define the laws of planetary motion. Kelley, a supposed alchemist and spirit medium, promised to transmute base metals into gold—sometimes while speaking with angels.

Even Prague's alleys seemed infused with sorcery. The Golden Lane, a narrow, pastel-hued row of homes tucked inside the castle complex, once housed goldsmiths and, Rudolph's favored alchemists. Wander there today, and you can almost hear the clinking of alembics and smell the singed paper from ancient experiments gone awry.

Other Locales Favored by Rudolph

1. Belvedere Palace (The Royal Summer Palace)

Set within the manicured expanse of the Royal Gardens just north of Prague Castle, the Belvedere was one of Rudolph's favorite retreats. This elegant Renaissance villa, built by his grandfather Ferdinand I, was transformed into a space of delight and contemplation under Rudolph's eye. Here, surrounded by lemon trees and classical statuary, he entertained visiting scholars and diplomats—or escaped entirely, to read, meditate, or dream up celestial arrangements with his court astrologers. It was, in essence, his garden of earthly and unearthly delights.



Belvedere Palace



2. Benátky nad Jizerou Castle

Approximately 30 miles northeast of Prague lies this lesser-known but crucial estate. Benátky Castle was the residence of Tycho Brahe during his early years in Bohemia. Rudolph supported its use as an observatory—a quiet haven for Brahe’s exacting sky-watching. Rudolph himself is said to have visited occasionally to consult with Brahe, before the court astronomer moved into Prague proper. The site offered a rare blend of country air, quietude, and intellectual rigor—qualities the Emperor cherished.

3. The Clementinum

This sprawling Jesuit complex in Prague’s Old Town housed one of the largest and oldest libraries in Europe—and it became a focal point of Rudolph’s broader interest in sacred texts, esoteric knowledge, and scientific thought. Though operated by the Jesuits, who were often in tension with Rudolph’s eclectic beliefs, the Emperor endowed parts of the library and likely consulted its collections, which included works on astronomy, astrology, and classical philosophy. The baroque observatory and weather tower, added later, are fitting tributes to the era of Brahe and Kepler.

4. The Old Jewish Quarter (Josefov)

Though not an official patron of the Jewish community, Rudolph extended certain protections and privileges to Prague’s Jewish citizens during his reign—unusual in the context of 16th-century Europe. He met with Jewish scholars and physicians, some of whom contributed to his alchemical library. The legends of the Golem of Prague, said to have been created by Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel during Rudolph’s time, underscore the mystical reverberations of this relationship. The Emperor is even rumored in some tellings to have met with Rabbi Loew in secret, fascinated by the powers attributed to the sacred Hebrew alphabet.

5. Karlštejn Castle (occasional retreat)

Though built in the 14th century by Charles IV as a fortress for the crown jewels and holy relics, Karlštejn remained in royal use for centuries. While Rudolph rarely left Prague, he reportedly made several excursions to this dramatic Gothic outpost tucked into the wooded highlands southwest of the city. It offered rare seclusion from courtly burdens—and may have served, at times, as a place of refuge during his periods of melancholia and paranoia.



Benátky nad Jizerou Castle



The Old Jewish Quarter



The Declining Years

Rudolph II died on January 20, 1612, at the age of 59, in **Prague Castle**, the very place he had turned into his mystical sanctuary.

His final years were marked by decline—political, mental, and physical. Once the most powerful ruler in central Europe, Rudolph had become increasingly withdrawn, reclusive, and unstable. Paranoia haunted him. He trusted few, quarreled with his advisers, and refused to leave the castle grounds. His obsession with alchemy, astrology, and art consumed him, even as the empire around him frayed.

The critical blow came from within his own family. His younger brother, Archduke Matthias, deeply frustrated with Rudolph's erratic rule and inaction during rising religious conflicts, began to strip away his authority. In 1608, Matthias seized control of Hungary, Austria, and Moravia. By 1611, he had taken Bohemia as well. Isolated and powerless, Rudolph was forced to abdicate all remaining power to Matthias.

He died just over a year later, bitter, ill, and alone—but still surrounded by his beloved books, curiosities, and the haunting quiet of his alchemical dreams. He was buried in St. Vitus Cathedral, within Prague Castle—less as a triumphant emperor than as a tragic, visionary soul out of step with his age.

The Residue

Today, Prague wears its alchemical past proudly. You can tour the *Speculum Alchemiae*, a reconstructed 16th-century alchemy lab hidden beneath a baroque façade in the Old Town, complete with original flasks and furnaces. At the **Czech National Gallery**, Rudolph's love for Mannerist and surreal art endures in paintings that reflect both scientific rigor and spiritual awe.

Art treasures from The Emperor's private residence now reside in the **Lobkowitz Palace**, originally the home of the powerful Lobkowitz family, and the only private residence in the castle complex. They offer a feast of art and history. Meanwhile, *Prague Castle* itself—one of the largest in the world—continues to dominate the skyline, much as it did when Rudolph's alchemists looked to the heavens and dreamed of extracting gold from the stars.



Prague Castle



Czech National Gallery



Lobkowitz Palace, Photo Credit: House of Lobkowitz

Though the political consequences of Rudolph's eccentric reign were dire, his cultural and scientific legacy is profound. The very contradictions of his life—rational and irrational, enlightened and obsessed—mirror our own modern tensions between faith and fact, mystery and reason.

To walk in Rudolph's Prague is to embrace contradiction—to chase both reason and mystery, science and superstition. If you find yourself there, listen carefully. The old city doesn't just echo with history—it murmurs with secrets. And perhaps, if the stars are right, you might still hear the Emperor's whispered question: *What if the truth lies not in gold or power—but in wonder?*



Recommended Reading:

1. ***The Alchemy of Culture: Rudolph II and His World* by R.J.W. Evans** – A brilliant non-fiction dive into the Emperor's court.
2. ***The Magical Circle of Rudolph II* by Peter Marshall** – An intimate portrait of Prague as the metaphysical center of Europe.
3. ***The Alchemist* by Donna Boyd** – A historical fiction imagining the golden allure and dark reality of alchemy.
4. ***Tycho and Kepler: The Unlikely Partnership That Forever Changed Our Understanding of the Heavens* by Kitty Ferguson** – Essential for anyone intrigued by the stars above Rudolph's castle.
5. ***The Emperor and the Wolf* by William Boyd** – A sweeping historical novel that explores power, ambition, and obsession in Habsburg Europe.



Where in the world is Jackie?

(Or More Specifically...)

Where is she taking you this week in...

The HISTORIC TRAVELER

Don't miss out on the twice weekly explorations of historic localities around the world...and the books that make you feel you were there!

[CLICK HERE](#)  to get caught up!

But don't forget to **FOLLOW** us so you can enjoy each spotlight as it is posted.



Museum of the Month

A GLOBAL TOUR OF THE WORLD'S LEADING GHOSTLY MUSEUMS

Whether you seek the thrill of a haunted artifact, the solemn mystery of catacombs, or the cultural richness of supernatural folklore, ghost museums will getcha!

Our human fascination with the supernatural marries fascination with fear. Oftentimes, ghost stories are not mere fabrications; they are historical echoes—born from trauma, unrest, injustice, and mystery. Many of the world's most haunted sites are rooted in conflict: executions, plague, wrongful imprisonment, war. Ghost museums preserve not only the legends, but also the cultural and historical context that gave rise to them. In many cases, they are housed within the very walls that bore witness to those bygone horrors.

In keeping with our ghostly and ghastly theme of this issue, we thought we'd offer a quick tour of ten of the world's most evocative ghost museums. So go ahead: step inside. Listen. You might just hear history calling from the other side.

1. The Haunted Museum — Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Step through creaking doors into this 1938 mansion, where occult artifacts, cursed objects, and haunted dolls lurk in dim corners. Curated by paranormal investigator Zak Bagans, the museum invites you to enter rooms dedicated to everything from demonic possession to unsolved murders.

2. Museo de las Momias — Guanajuato, Mexico

Here the dead stare back. These naturally mummified bodies, exhumed due to unpaid cemetery taxes in the 19th century, are displayed in open cases. Some grimace, others appear mid-scream—fueling legends of premature burials and restless souls.

3. The Ghost Museum — Penang, Malaysia

A kaleidoscope of cultural lore, this museum offers life-size dioramas of Southeast Asian specters: the Pontianak, the Toyol, and the Penanggalan. Each room envelops you in myth, incense, and eerie lighting, inviting contemplation on how we interpret fear across cultures.

5. The Salem Witch Museum — Salem, Massachusetts, USA

Set in a Gothic Revival church, this museum charts the hysteria and injustice of the 1692 witch trials. Narrated tableaux, historic documents, and immersive exhibits delve into the psychology of persecution and the women who never got justice.



The Haunted Museum, Photo Credit The Haunted Museum



Photo Credit: Museo De Las Momias de Guanajuato

6. The Torture and Ghost Museum — Prague, Czech Republic

Housed in an atmospheric medieval building, this museum presents gruesome implements of torture—many said to still echo with pain. Legends abound of spectral prisoners, with cold drafts and flickering lights often noted by visitors.

7. South Bridge Vaults — Adelaide, South Australia

Beneath the city's lively pubs and colonial architecture lie these haunted tunnels, once used as opium dens, black-market clinics, and makeshift housing for the desperate. Today, ghost tours share chilling tales of children's laughter, shadowy figures, and rooms colder than the rest of the vaults.

8. Ghostly Voices Museum — York, England

York, often called the most haunted city in Europe, offers this audio museum where disembodied voices recorded at local sites are paired with artifacts. From Roman soldiers to Victorian maids, the past speaks in unsettling tones.

9. Hellfire Caves — West Wycombe, England

Once a meeting place for the scandalous Hellfire Club, these chalk tunnels were the stage for bacchanals, rituals, and rumored devil worship. Today, shadowy corners and chilling temperatures suggest that revelers may still linger beyond death.

These museums underscore the universal nature of ghost stories: every culture, every country, every city has its tales. And we are the witnesses to their enduring lore.



Photo Credit: Hellfire Caves



Recommended Reading:

1. ***Ghostland: An American History in Haunted Places*** by Colin Dickey
2. ***The Ghost: A Cultural History*** by Susan Owens
3. ***The Little Stranger*** by Sarah Waters (fictional haunting meets postwar decay)
4. ***The Woman in Black*** by Susan Hill (classic English ghost story)
5. ***Mexican Gothic*** by Silvia Moreno-Garcia (a spectral tale steeped in Mexico's eerie landscape)

Adaptive Re-Use

ALL ABOARD: 6 GRAND TRAIN STATIONS TURNED GLORIOUS HOTELS

They once echoed with the hiss of steam engines, the bustle of travelers, and the clipped commands of stationmasters. Today, these cathedrals of transportation — once the crown jewels of their cities — have been lovingly revived as opulent hotels. Step through their arched doors, and you'll still feel the hum of history beneath the hum of modern hospitality. Welcome to the world where timetables have given way to turndown service — where historic train stations now offer you a plush pillow instead of a platform.

We applaud these enterprising visionaries who saw the value in saving these incredible institutions and making them havens for travelers still.

Station Recovery

The train station, in its golden age from the late 19th to early 20th century, was more than mere infrastructure. These were civic statements — often styled in Beaux-Arts grandeur or Romanesque heft — built to embody the promise of progress. Architects filled their lobbies with barrel-vaulted ceilings, gleaming marble, stained glass, and murals that whispered of industrial might and cosmopolitan dreams.

But with the mid-century rise of the automobile and the airplane, these transportation hubs saw their ridership decline — and their marble halls go quiet. What remained, however, was architecture too majestic to demolish, and too sentimental to forget.



Enter adaptive reuse: the artful act of breathing new life into old bones. These six historic stations are living proof that preservation doesn't have to be precious — it can be pleasurable.

Hop On for An Experience

1. St. Louis Union Station Hotel — St. Louis, Missouri (Curio Collection by Hilton)

Once the largest train station in the world, this 1894 architectural marvel wears its legacy on its sleeve. Walk into the Grand Hall, and your eyes will lift — inevitably — to the 65-foot-high barrel-vaulted ceiling, swirling with art nouveau mosaics. A 70-foot marble bar now stands where weary travelers once queued. And don't miss the Tiffany stained-glass window of the “maidens of the American rail,” classical goddesses in repose — a tribute to New York, St. Louis, and San Francisco. The modern hotel offers rooms even inside its original clock tower, and the Grand Hall glows each night in a light show that transforms the station into a kaleidoscope of storybook fantasy.



St. Louis Union Station Hotel, Curio Collection by Hilton

2. Crowne Plaza Indianapolis Downtown Union Station — Indianapolis, Indiana (Crowne Plaza)

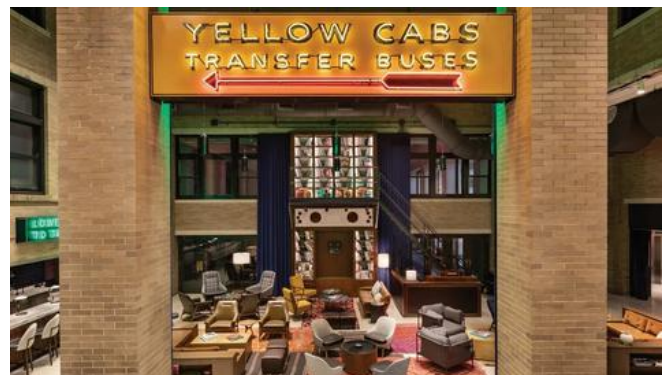
Here's your chance to sleep in a Pullman car — without leaving the station. The 1913 brick-and-stone Union Station, with its Gothic cathedral-inspired windows and National Register status, now houses a hotel where 13 historic railcars serve as guest rooms. The sleeping quarters retain their narrow windows and romantic vintage allure, but with modern conveniences tucked inside. It's nostalgia meets comfort, and the sense of departure still lingers — even when you're standing still.



Crowne Plaza Indianapolis Downtown Union Station, Photo Credit: Crowne Plaza

3. The Central Station Memphis — Memphis, Tennessee (Curio Collection by Hilton)

Originally built in 1914 and still an active Amtrak stop, this station now sings a different tune — literally. Its mid-century modern reincarnation includes a vinyl record library in the hotel bar, curated with local Memphis musicians. With its neoclassical façade, sweeping columns, and Mississippi River views, the station evokes both the solemnity of old-world travel and the soul of its city. It's a place where you can toast to B.B. King while sleeping beneath carved cornices.



The Central Station Memphis, Curio Collection by Hilton

4. The Crawford Hotel at Denver Union Station — Denver, Colorado

With Beaux-Arts bones and Rocky Mountain soul, the Crawford Hotel inhabits one of America's most elegant transit hubs. Originally opened in 1881, then rebuilt in 1914 after a fire, this station bustled with 50,000 passengers a day during WWII. Today, you can sip a bourbon where the ticket window once stood, in the wood-paneled Terminal Bar. The Pullman-style rooms nod to vintage sleeper cars with Deco touches and custom art. Amtrak still pulls in, but these days, so do cocktail carts.



The Crawford Hotel at Denver Union Station — Denver, CO

5. Radisson Lackawanna Station Hotel — Scranton, Pennsylvania (Radisson)

Built in 1908 in grand French Renaissance style, this station was once the pride of coal country. After closing in 1970, it was reborn with gleaming marble columns, working fountains, and its signature Tiffany stained-glass ceiling still overhead. The lobby feels like a scene from a Gilded Age opera, with gray and gold hues that would have made Edith Wharton swoon. And right outside? Scranton's beloved trolley museum and excursion trains — a playground for rail romantics.



Radisson Lackawanna Station Hotel, Photo Credit: Radisson

6. Union Station Hotel Nashville Yards — Nashville, Tennessee (Marriott's Autograph Collection)

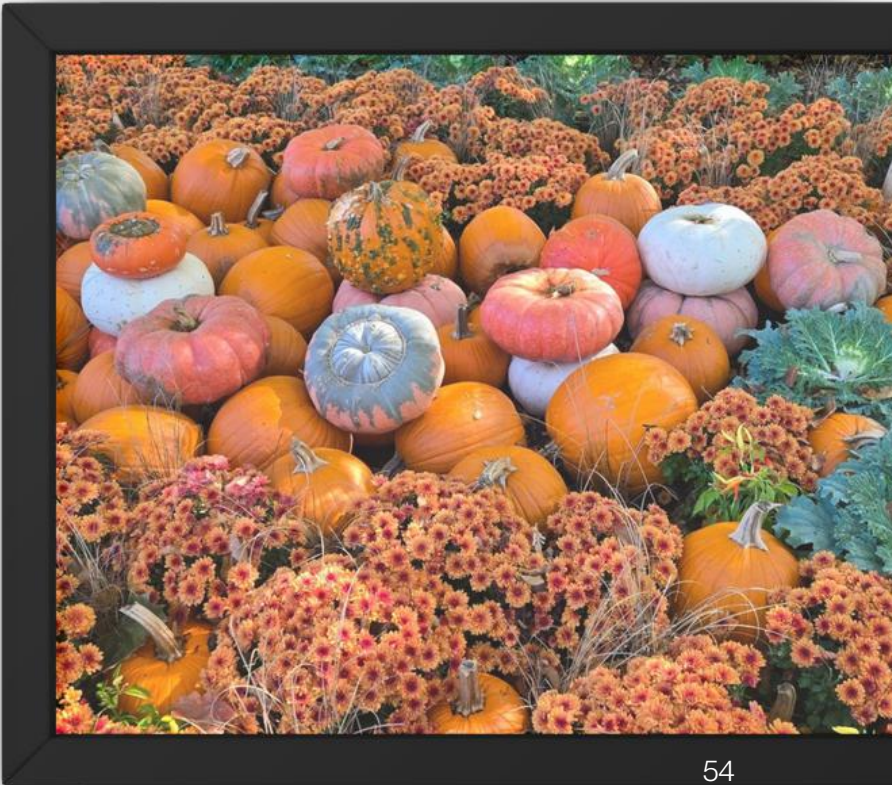
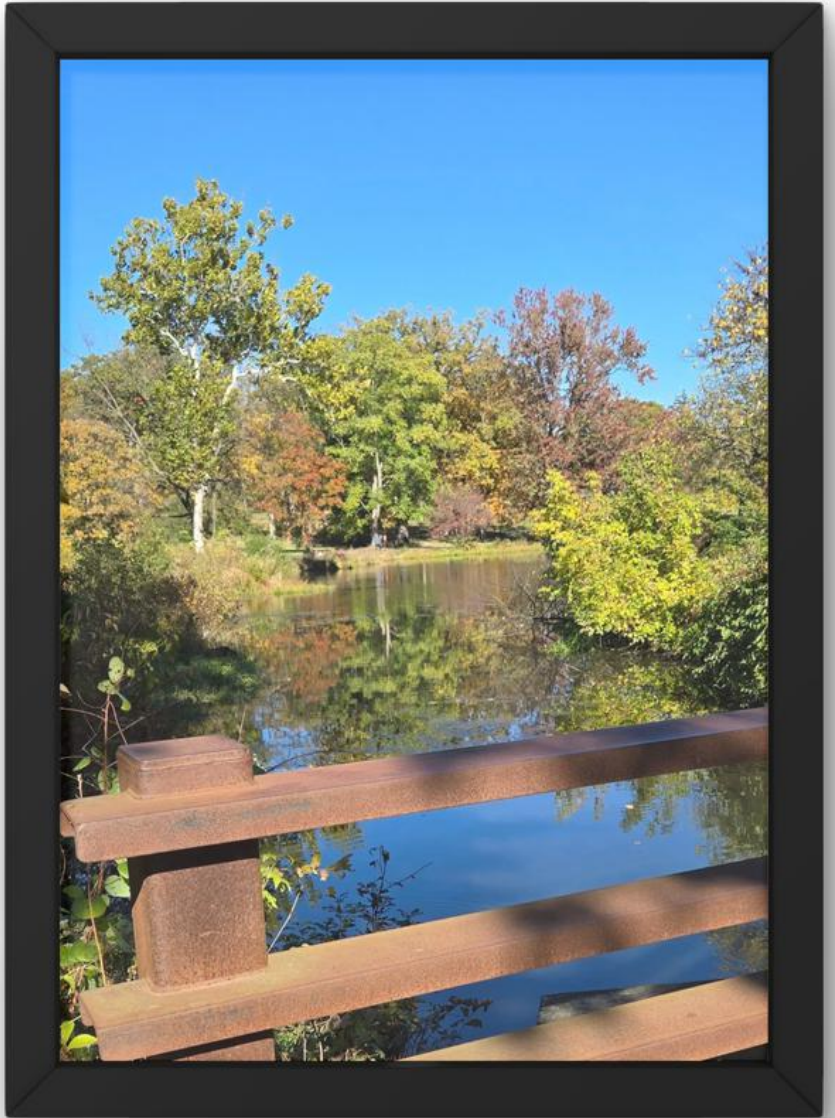
If Music City ever needed a temple, it found one in this 1900 Romanesque Revival station. With its castle-like turrets, 65-foot-stained glass ceiling, and nightly live music in the marble-and-mahogany lobby, the station is both stately and spirited. The hotel serves as a living memory to Nashville's rail era — while inviting you to relax to the tune of a jazz quartet. Perhaps, in the most poetic sense, it's still keeping time.

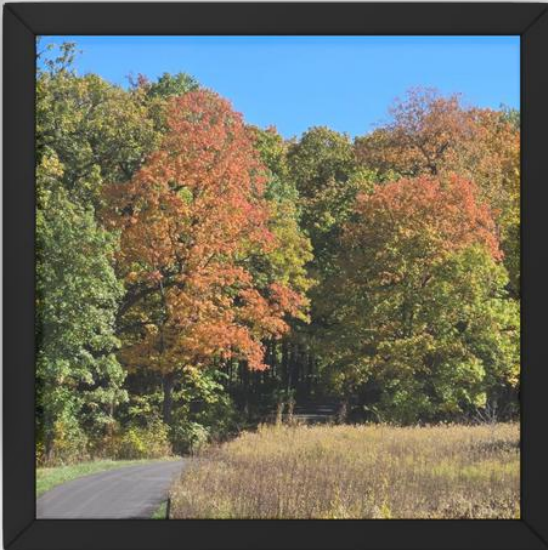
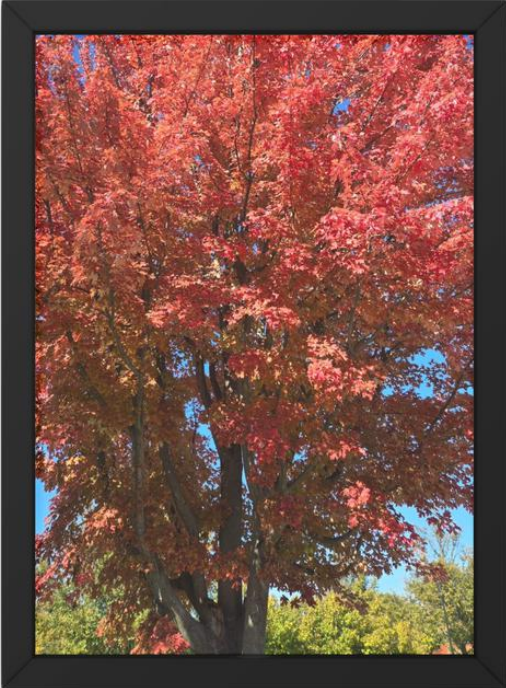
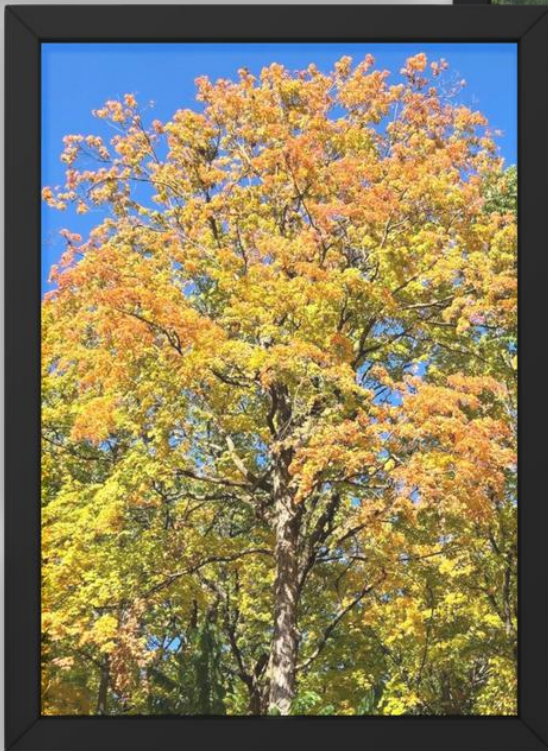
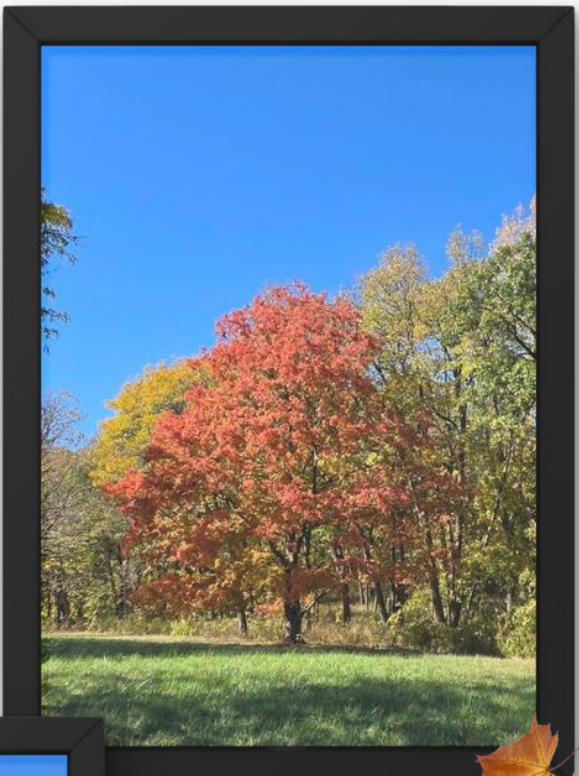


Union Station Hotel Nashville Yards, Marriott's Autograph Collection

These restorations go far beyond mere aesthetics. They are part of a broader movement to preserve the architectural icons of America's industrial past — by giving them purpose in the present. Adaptive reuse not only salvages craftsmanship impossible to replicate today, but also honors the labor, pride, and civic vision these stations once represented. In repurposing their spaces for leisure rather than logistics, these hotels keep history in motion — inviting us not just to remember, but to stay.

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It's on this page, as well, that you will hear from me about interviews with experts, online parties and holiday celebrations, special offers from our partners, news about the travel industry, additional resources we discover, influencers to follow. I'll give you recaps from my latest trips! Shout outs to great tour guides you might want to request. Even give away some prizes!...and more. It's our news source for you!

See our Monthly Calendar to Connect with the Virtual Meetings and events-- or Pop into the Chat, **Right Here!**

LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING YOU, MY FELLOW HISTORIC TRAVEL LOVER, IN VIRTUE PERSON!

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ROYAL ROULETTE

A Quiz to Test Your Knowledge of Royal Rulers

- 1.** What flamboyant French King was so obsessive about his fashion, and love of his young male courtiers called “mignons,” that he developed a reputation for being so fanatical about his appearance that he neglected his realm.
- 2.** What King defeated the Vikings in battle, created a lasting peace and united England under one banner?
- 3.** What Spanish Queen was known to be deeply depressed and emotionally unbalanced -- and finally so distraught at the loss of her husband that she refused to leave his body after his death—earned the nickname “The Mad?”
- 4.** What King came to his throne at the height of the religious wars between Protestant and Catholic, tamed both parties, and created two decades of peace by allowing free worship and tolerance for both.
- 5.** What Prince brought seafaring leaders to his palace to create a type of navigation school and funded exploration from the Iberian Peninsula all the way around the Cape of Good Hope to the trading ports of India and Asia?
- 6.** What “Queen” reigned for only six months--was never actually crowned—and then given as a going away prize eight of the most posh palaces and properties in the kingdom?
- 7.** What King who was a Roman was a major builder in Judea—even the rebuilding of the Second Temple—while also being a Jew?
- 8.** What Queen led an Army, with her husband at her side, and drove the Moors from her lands?
- 9.** What English King actually became a Catholic saint?
- 10.** Who was considered the first monarch of Scotland, but never actually crowned? Technically, he was the King of the Picts.

See answers on page 74



GOING SOMEWHERE?

If you are planning a trip, why not select a guide that not only provides for your sightseeing, lodging and dining needs, but one that excels in illuminating the history--and the culture that developed from that historical context?

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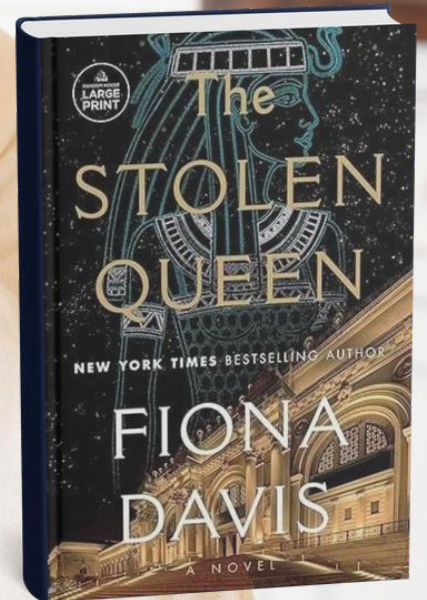
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The HISTORIC TRAVELER *Media*

FIONA DAVIS

The Mistress of the Masterpiece,
International Bestselling Author



Featured In This Issue:

Series: Discovery of Witches

Famous Figures: America's First Daughter

Non-Fiction Focus: Bill Bryson's At Home

Master Revisited: Michener's The Source

TV Series: PBS

Special Feature: Literary Tourism



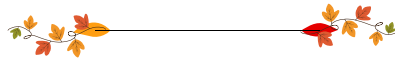
Author Interview

FIONA DAVIS

The Mistress of the Masterpiece

In New York City, there are innumerable historic masterpiece buildings. Internationally bestselling sensation **Fiona Davis** has made eight of them the cornerstones of her incredibly immersive dual-timeline novels that portray the struggles, triumphs and destinies of women in two eras, tangentially connected through the buildings where the stories take place.

This unique focus on NYC's historic landmarks has provided a tremendous momentum to her career and made her individual books stand out in the vast field of historic novels. Having a **GMA Book Selection** and *NY Times* bestseller status have demonstrated the huge appeal of her books. Her books, like the buildings, can be considered modern day masterpieces. In fact, she has one book called *The Masterpiece*. Fiona is probably best known for *The Lions of Fifth Avenue*, which takes place in New York Public Library, and her newest book *The Stolen Queen*, set at the New York Metropolitan Museum and 1930s Egypt.



Jackie: Your life has been a series of transformations—much like your heroines. You moved around as a child, became an actress after college, then a graduate student in journalism, and finally an author. Give us a quick journey through those changes—and I love that a Myers-Briggs test played a life-defining role.

Fiona: Yes! I always say it's a good idea to change careers every ten years—you might end up with something you truly love. I was born to English parents, so we traveled to England often, and lived all over the U.S.—Utah, New Jersey, Texas. Growing up, I never quite knew where I was or even what accent to use. That kind of constant relocation makes you alert to what's different in a room—the mood-- which helps as both an actress and an author.

I went to William & Mary for college, which was great fun down in Virginia, then moved to New York to work as an actress for about ten years—Broadway, Off-Broadway, regional theater, commercials, you name it-- whatever I could get.

Jackie: What was the biggest production you were in?

Fiona: Probably the most surprising one to make it to Broadway: *Wilder, Wilder, Wilder* by Thornton Wilder. We started Off-Broadway with the small theater company I worked for, Willow Cabin. We all did everything—hung lights, sold tickets—and then we went to Broadway and were nominated for a Tony, which was really, really exciting. That was a high point.

Jackie: And then?

Fiona: In my late twenties, I realized things change as you get older as an actress. As a woman, the industry's focus is on youth—especially that was true in the '90s. It meant I didn't want to keep doing this forever. I craved stability and hated not knowing where I'd be next week. Though I love the people I'm working with, it's just not all that fulfilling. I'm more of a homebody, so that didn't really suit my nature. So I went down to NYU, where they have this career services center. There I took a Myers-Briggs test. The next day, they told me I should be either a journalist or a cop. Easy choice! I applied to Columbia Journalism School, was accepted to the master's program, spending an intense, but wonderful year learning to write and report. It was very challenging. I'd never written before. I didn't know how to write a lead for an article.



After graduating, I worked briefly in TV, then for a theater magazine, and freelanced in health, culture, and the arts. And then I got the idea for my first book about the Barbizon Hotel for women, which had been a very storied hotel here in New York City and later became a luxury condo. I first thought it would be a good article, but the women who lived there were very private at that time and wouldn't grant interviews, but I just couldn't shake it. And I started thinking maybe I could write a book -- because then you can make things up and then it's so much easier. *It's not!* Writing a book is so hard. And then on top of that, I decided that I love dual timelines where you go back and forth between periods. I thought--I'll do that because that'll be really fun! And again, I had no idea how hard it is to make a dual timeline work so that one timeline is just as interesting as the other. There's an element of mystery. You want to keep people turning the pages. It's really hard, but I just didn't know what I didn't know. I wrote that book and that eventually became *The Dollhouse*.

Jackie: So tell us a little bit more about how the story emerged for you.

Fiona: When the Barbizon became condos in 2005, a dozen women in their eighties and nineties—residents since the '40s and '50s—still lived there. They'd seen the building evolve from a women's hotel to co-ed to luxury condos. They'd been there when Joan Didion was there and so many other famous women...Joan Crawford, I think was one of them, just incredible people. These older residents watched it change over time. And when the condos were completed, the management moved the remaining women into studio apartments on the fourth floor with kitchenettes. They paid something like \$100+ month. And meanwhile, someone else was living in the \$17 million penthouse! I just thought, what's it like when those two people meet in the elevator? What an interesting mix -- showing how the city, the building, and the residents have changed over time. I thought that would be a good story to tell.

Jackie: After that, you knew something clicked there, and then subsequently you wrote *The Address* (set at The Dakota), *The Masterpiece* (Grand Central Terminal), *The Chelsea Girls* (Chelsea Hotel), *The Lions of Fifth Avenue* (New York Public Library), *The Magnolia Palace* (Frick Collection), *The Spectacular* (Radio City Music Hall), and your latest, *The Stolen Queen* (The Met). Did you consciously decide to focus on landmarks? Or did you just have a love of New York history. How did this really become “a thing” beyond your first book?

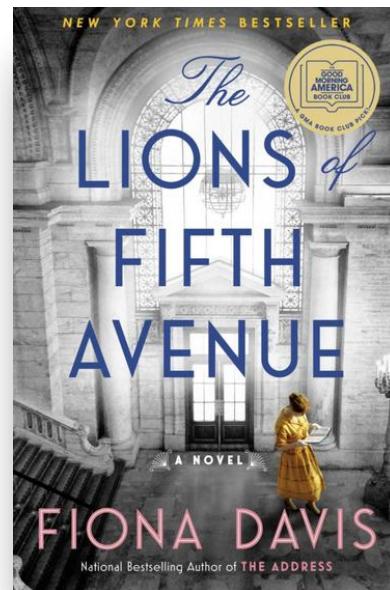
Fiona: Not at first. I just loved researching the Barbizon. Then, while that manuscript was in production, I walked past The Dakota bathed in sunlight—it seemed to say, “Choose me.” And I thought--I love that building. Wouldn't it be great to get inside? It would be so much fun to write about that building! That's when I realized I might be onto something. That's where the first idea came to me of, this could be “a thing” about buildings. It was just a natural progression. Eventually, I noticed no one else was doing this kind of landmark-based historical fiction.

At first, I just want to know more. I thought the Dakota was incredible. But I didn't know anyone who lived there, so I wasn't sure how to research it, how to get inside. And eventually I did get inside by going on a tour of Lauren Bacall apartment, which was having an estate sale. It was beautiful. It had all of the original millwork, the fireplaces-- you really felt like you stepped back in time!

I just love walking around and imagining what the building was like 20 or even 100 years ago. To me, that's fascinating. Who are the ghosts who live there? Who are the generations of people who endured here? That's what I'm trying to do. I'm just trying to go back in time to imagine what it was like in the 50s or the 1880s or whatever--regardless of what I'm working on.

Jackie: So tell us about discoveries you've made, about the buildings in your books that really spark these inspirations.

Fiona: So whenever I'm doing the research, I'm looking for the surprises. Exactly what you said. What sparks inspiration, what jumps out at me as I'm doing the research. Because I think, like a lot of New Yorkers, we feel like we know these buildings pretty well. So, you have to dig a little deeper to find something really interesting. For example, with Grand Central, I discovered that in the 1920s, the painter John Singer Sargeant co-founded an art school there called the Grand Central School of Art. It was there for 20 years with 900 students a year ... and was really, really successful. No one knew about it! And then I found this article in *The New York Times* from the 1920s, describing art school students running across the concourse in fancy dress on the way to this masquerade ball that the school held every May. And I thought, that's rich! That's where that *The Masterpiece* idea originated.



Jackie: When you research, you're looking for surprises?

Fiona: For *The Lions of Fifth Avenue*, I learned the library's superintendent lived inside the building for thirty years with his family beginning in 1911, a seven-room apartment that was deep inside the library. His daughter was born there; the kids raised pigeons on the roof. I knew then that was the book. That's what I'm doing with each one, finding something that really jumps out at me and that I can get emotionally revved up about.

Jackie: So how do you do this research? What kind of sources are you looking at? Where do you start? Give us a look at all that.

Fiona: The internet's great, but it only takes you so far. I will go to libraries. I have a wonderful man named Andrew Alpern. He's an incredible architectural historian in his 80s, and he knows every street in Manhattan. You can name any building, and he will tell you the history or have something to help me. I have a couple of big books here borrowed from him for the project I'm working on now, and they're just so valuable because he knows what I'm looking for and where to find the information. So, the first thing I do once I pick a building is take him out to lunch and ask him questions.

But really, it's finding people who are experts in whatever I'm looking at and reaching out to them, asking if they could do a quick interview. That's the gold—talking face-to-face if I can, because that's where all the good stuff arises.

Jackie: How much time do you actually have to spend in a library?

Fiona: With the New York Public Library book, it was great because I learned that if you have a book contract, you can get a desk at the Allen Room. You can have books delivered to your shelf, so there I was working on a book about the library in the library. I spent a ton of time there, which was magical.



The librarians were really helpful. At one point in an early draft, I had a dead body—it's not there now—but I needed to know where to hide it. I reached out to a librarian and said, "I'm sure you've never gotten this question, but where would you hide a body in the library?" She wrote back, "Oh, right in the basement. Here's a floor plan—right over here behind this room." That kind of direct interaction makes the books come alive.

Jackie: Your books have two major characteristics: the dual timeline, and women fighting against the oppression of their day to be who they truly are. Why is that important to you?

Fiona: As I do my research, I often get outraged at what I read about the treatment of women—or I find someone fascinating and realize no one's ever heard of her.

Much of history was written by men, so there are a lot of men's voices -- but not women's.

Also, society moves forward, then backwards. You have the suffrage movement, then setbacks, McCarthy hearings, then progress, then setbacks again.

Jackie: Which is how you end up with a dual timeline.

Fiona: Exactly. It's fascinating to compare and contrast. That's the heart of the book—looking back and thinking, "Look how far we've come, but we still have far to go." There's always something linking the two stories. I want women who are dynamic, who have agency, who face problems and try to fix them. Even if not every story ends happily—because that's life—there's still strength and resilience.

Jackie: And that's one of the interesting things to me—there's not always a happy ending.

Fiona: Yes. I want to surprise readers. Even though they know the setting will be a New York landmark, I want the decades, characters, and arcs to be different, to push readers and make them think about history's impact on women and how their contributions have been lost.

Jackie: How long does it take you to conceive and write a Fiona Davis novel? I want to learn more about your process.

Fiona: It takes about a year and a half to two years now. It used to be one year between books, but that was fast. I usually research for three to four months—reading everything I can find, watching documentaries, interviewing people, going to the location. For *The Stolen Queen*, I went to Egypt. I try to inhale everything about the time period and characters.

From that, I get a sense of the story and characters. I plot it carefully. I'm the daughter of engineers, so I can't just wing a book. I figure out the characters—what they want, their weaknesses, strengths—and create the story. I use the synopsis as a jumping-off point. I usually know the twists and ending, but things change as I write.

The first draft is tough—I hate writing it—but I love editing. I go through about ten rounds of revisions, showing it to my agent, editor, and beta readers. Every book has its own challenge; you're starting over each time.

Jackie: How do you feel when you finish one?

Fiona: By the tenth revision, I'm ready to let the copy editor take it. But because of the lag between turning in the manuscript and publication, when the book launches, I've usually been working on something else. It's like meeting old friends again. Touring for *The Stolen Queen* after six months away from Annie and Charlotte was so much fun.

Jackie: Tell us about *The Stolen Queen*. This is your first with two distant locations.

Fiona: Yes! When I set a book outside New York for the first time, I didn't just go to New Jersey—I went to Egypt! I wanted to set something at The Met, but it's huge and overwhelming. Then I read Lynne Olson's *Empress of the Nile* about a French Resistance fighter turned archaeologist. That inspired me to create a 1978 Met curator, Charlotte—sixty years old, set in her ways—teamed unwillingly with Annie, a 19-year-old Met Gala assistant. They track down a stolen artifact. It's about female friendship, mothers and daughters. I call it "Indiana Jones meets Thelma and Louise meets *The Devil Wears Prada*."

Jackie: One of your other books really seemed to rise above in terms of exposure. *The Lions of Fifth Avenue* was a GMA Book Club selection. How did that feel and how did that impact you as an author?

Fiona: That had a huge impact. It was summer 2020, during COVID, so it was all on Zoom. I remember getting the call from my agent and she said, "You can't tell a soul!" So, I didn't even tell my mother. I was so terrified it would get out. It made a huge difference! It resonated with readers because this is something we love—the smell of old books and an old library. And the timing was great, too. It was my fifth book and I knew by then how hard it is to get attention as an author. I really, really appreciated every moment of it. It was such an enormous boost!

Jackie: Are there any of the other books that really stand out in your affections -- which ones jump out? I know it's like asking somebody "which is your favorite child?"

Fiona: You know, *The Stolen Queen* I really love. I think it's a little more complex. There are a lot of different angles, The structure is different from the other books, and that was challenging, but very rewarding by the time I figured it out.

I also loved the book set at the Frick Collection, which is *The Magnolia Palace*. The character there, Lillian, was inspired by a real woman named Audrey Munson. She was really interesting to write, and her history was fascinating. Plus, the Frick family was just so dysfunctional! I didn't include half the things in the book that I read about them. There was just a lot to play with on that one. And I love that the Frick has just reopened after a long renovation. So, for the first time, readers can get inside and see it, which is very exciting. All those characters had something that really sang to me.



Jackie: Apparently you can still see the image of Audrey Munson all over New York City? Is that the case?

Fiona: Yes, She was the “It Girl” of the 19-tens, the supermodel. She posed for the figure found above the door to the Frick. There she is, carved in stone. That’s where I first learned about her. There’s three of her at Columbus Circle. She rises above the fountain in front of the Plaza Hotel. And she’s even on the Brooklyn Bridge and the at New York Public Library. She posed for all of these famous sculptors. And then, there was this huge scandal where her landlord killed his wife very violently. And the police, when they were investigating, found a black and white photo of Audrey in a bathing suit from a magazine. They surmised there must have been a love triangle, even though that wasn’t true. And they hounded her, until she and her mother escaped to upstate New York. And eventually she ended up in an asylum, where she died in 1996 at the age of 104. At that time, she was buried in an unmarked grave. Yet, this is a woman who most wouldn’t know or recognize her name, but we knew all the sculptors she posed for. I thought, that’s not right. And so, the character of Lillian is inspired by her. It ended differently in the book, but I just wanted to write about a character who was a very well-known model who has to kind of go “underground.” And so she takes a job as the private secretary to Helen Frick. And mayhem happens, which is as it should.

Jackie: I’ve noticed that there seems to be a sisterhood of sorts--of leading women historic novelists, many of whom I had the privilege to meet at the Historic Novel Society of North America conference this past summer, including you. And you seem to be a member of good standing of that group. What does that sisterhood bring to you?

Fiona: Many of us started in our 40s or 50s, after other careers, so we appreciate being published. We share resources, celebrate each other’s successes. A group of us do a zoom every so often just to check in, and it’s great to be able to say, okay, I’m having a problem with this. How did you handle it? Historical fiction isn’t competitive the way some genres are—if a reader likes my book, they’ll probably like Kate Quinn’s or Allison Pataki’s, too. So, we just are eager to share resources to help each other out. If someone has a cover reveal, we’re all over it.

Jackie: Your first novel came out at 49. What would you say to a woman who thinks it’s too late?

It’s never too late. I couldn’t have written a book in my twenties; I hadn’t lived enough.

I didn’t know how to express myself or to understand what was going on around me. I was just an innocent kid in New York City trying to figure it out.

But once you hit your 40s, you’ve gone through things, right? You’ve lived life and you’ve suffered losses, and you’ve also accomplished things. You have something to draw on when you’re writing characters. So, I say it’s never too late. You know everybody has a story in them. And why not try it?

Jackie: And your life now?

Fiona: I live on the Upper West Side and also have a home just north of the city. New York gives me energy and sparks creativity just seeing people on the street when you go out for milk; the country is where I can focus and write. It’s nice to get away to somewhere quiet, especially if I have to really put my



head down and write. So my boyfriend and I run off to whenever we can. It's interesting being with another writer, but someone in a different genre. His name's Greg Wands and his last book was called *Trust Issues*. It's great, because we each have a study and we meet for lunch where we often solve each other's stuck plot points. In fact, we ended up doing an audio and ebook together called *The Gimlet Slip*. It's a prohibition era New York City story about a woman who runs a criminal empire from the top of the Plaza Hotel and her getaway driver, who's a young girl--and the detective trying to bring them down. And it was so much fun to write together! We had a blast.

Jackie: Are you at liberty to say what building might be next?

Fiona: Yes! I'm working on the Morris-Jumel Mansion, the oldest house in Manhattan. It was George Washington's headquarters for a month during the Revolutionary War, and later home to Eliza Jumel—born the daughter of a prostitute, she became New York's richest woman and married Aaron Burr. She's fascinating. And it's nice because, you know, the Met doesn't really *need* me to write about them. They're doing just fine financially. But the Morris Jumel Mansion is a museum, and it doesn't get the attention it deserves. I just love the idea of bringing readers uptown, because it's full of ghosts, it's full of history, and it deserves to be to be lauded.

Jackie: I promise I'll be reading it and making that pilgrimage.

Fiona: Thank you!

Jackie: There's another issue that has risen in your life. If you don't mind talking about it. I think you're so incredibly inspiring on all of these different fronts, but especially you were diagnosed with Parkinson's at 53, and you've not let it stop you. You've become engaged in helping to make a difference.

Yes. Here it was –the day Lions of Fifth Avenue hit the New York Times list -- I was so excited! And the very next day I was diagnosed with Parkinson's.

But I am lucky. It's slow-progressing, and exercise is key, so I work out daily. I've gotten very involved on the Michael J. Fox Foundation's patient council. You go there and meet 40 people with Parkinson's. We all have completely different symptoms. We're all dealing with it in different ways, but it's really inspiring to see, as well, all the money that the foundation raises that goes to research and development -- and finding a cure. Being an advocate for people with Parkinson's is very important to me. Many people hide their diagnosis due to fear or stigma, but I speak openly. At signings, people often tell me privately that they or their spouse have it. Connecting with them is important to me.

Jackie: And you still have many more books in you.

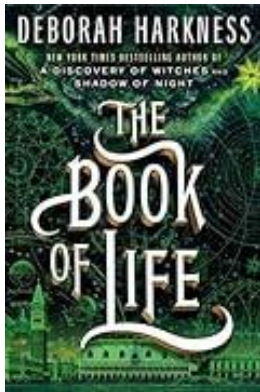
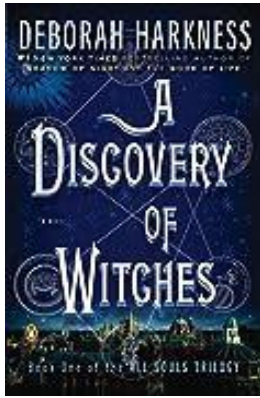
Fiona: I hope so!

Jackie: Are there other landmarks you'd love to write about?

Fiona: I don't plan far ahead; I wait for the next idea to drop into my lap. After *The Magnolia Palace*, a former Rockette emailed, offering to share secrets of Radio City. That led to *The Spectacular*. Readers often suggest the Flatiron Building or Carnegie Hall—there's a lot of great buildings out there. We'll just have to see...

Recommended Reading

- **The Dollhouse (2016)** – Set at the Barbizon Hotel for Women
- **The Address (2017)** – Set at The Dakota
- **The Masterpiece (2018)** – Set at Grand Central Terminal
- **The Chelsea Girls (2019)** – Set at the Chelsea Hotel
- **The Lions of Fifth Avenue (2020)** – Set at the New York Public Library
- **The Magnolia Palace (2022)** – Set at the Frick Collection
- **The Spectacular (2023)** – Set at Radio City Music Hall
- **The Stolen Queen (2024)** – Set at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Egypt



All Souls Trilogy



Deborah Harkness is a historian, scholar, and bestselling novelist best known for her *All Souls Trilogy*, beginning with *A Discovery of Witches*. A professor of history at the University of Southern California, she specializes in the history of science, magic, and alchemy in the early modern period—expertise that richly informs her fiction. Harkness masterfully blends historical detail with fantasy, crafting sweeping narratives that traverse time, libraries, and lineage. Her novels have been translated into more than 30 languages, adapted for television, and celebrated for their scholarly depth, romantic intrigue, and richly immersive settings.

Discovery: Featured Series

Discovery of Witches

You would think that as a professor of history at the University of Southern California, Deborah Harkness would largely concern herself with writing scholarly tomes. And you would be partially right with her two books, *John Dee's Conversations with Angels: Cabala, Alchemy and the End of Nature*) and *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution*.

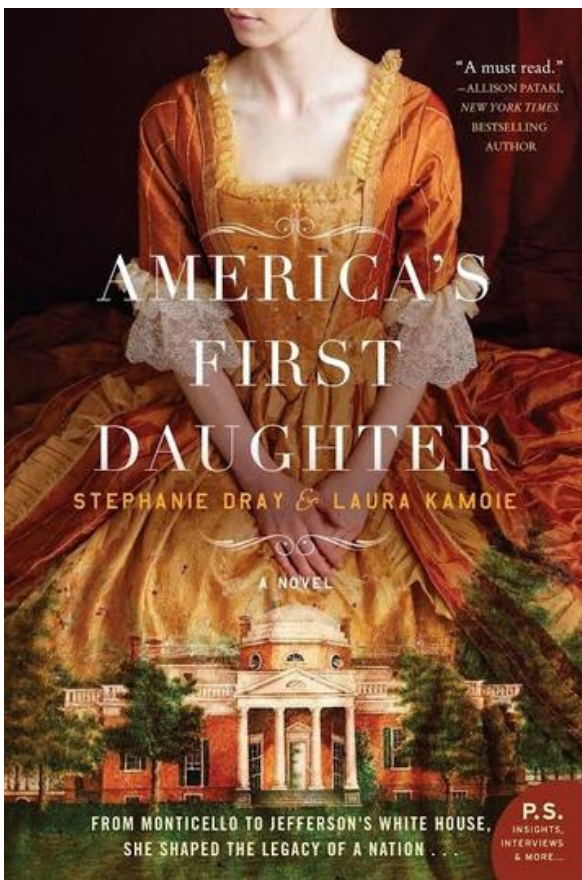
But Professor Deborah is also spell-weaver Deborah, the author of the world's most fascinating series of novels that relate the romance and thrilling adventures of lovers Diana Bishop—an initially reluctant modern-day witch-- and Matthew Clairmont, a very sexy vampire. Deborah's page-turning **All Souls Trilogy** and its followup

Time's Convert have sold tens of millions of books and been turned into a high successful TV series, *A Discovery of Witches*—so named from the title of book one in the trilogy-- available on Amazon Prime and AMC +.

From an historic novel standpoint these books may initially be set in the modern time, but they take their characters in and out of history through time travel (the second book *Shadow of Night* is set in Elizabethan England) and, of course, retrospectives from the origin stories of the vampire Clairmont family. Plus, many of the scenes and settings occur in historic edifices or use historically significant artifacts.

I read the entire first three books – **Discovery of Witches, Shadow of Night and The Book of Life**—in one non-stop marathon—because I just simply couldn't stop! And waited impatiently for the arrival of *Time's Convert* for further adventures of the extended clan. In Diana and Matthew's world, witches, vampires, and demons exist -- unknown to most of mankind – in a uneasy truce carefully balanced by a three partite counsel—until the two lovers mate for life. That pairing throws that careful balance into catastrophic clashes—putting the two of them on the run from enemies on all sides. From the moment historian Diana opens an enchanted manuscript—**Ashmole 782**—in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, the city where a geneticist Matthew is pursuing his research, the books continue to surprise, delight and pull you into their world of love and magic.

This series is a lush, erudite blend of historical fiction, fantasy, romance, and alchemical lore, layered with real-world historical settings and figures. It is a perfect companion for you if you enjoy time travel, libraries, hidden manuscripts, and the enduring tug between science and magic—not to mention a really spectacular romance! You will grow to love these characters! I can't wait till the next installment, myself!



Formidable Real Figures in Fiction

America's First Daughter

by Stephanie Dray and Laura Kamoie

There are First Ladies, and Second Gentlemen, but there's one book that reminds you that there was once a First Daughter. And a powerhouse at that!

America's First Daughter is a meticulously researched historical novel that tells the story of Martha "Patsy" Jefferson Randolph, the eldest daughter of Thomas Jefferson. Drawing heavily from thousands of personal letters and archival sources, the novel offers a sweeping, intimate portrait of a woman who stood at the center of the American Revolution and its turbulent aftermath—not in battlefields or halls of government, but in the drawing rooms and domestic spaces where history quietly turned.

Spanning from Patsy's childhood in colonial Virginia to her years as First Daughter and later matriarch of Monticello, the novel explores her deep loyalty to her father, her complex marriage to Thomas Mann Randolph, and her pivotal role in shaping Jefferson's legacy. Through her eyes, we see both the brilliance and contradictions of Jefferson—his ideals of liberty shadowed by his ownership of enslaved people, and his progressive philosophies tempered by personal compromises.

Balancing historical fidelity with emotional resonance, Dray and Kamoie craft a vivid, emotionally rich narrative of sacrifice, strength, and survival. Patsy emerges not merely as a historical footnote, but as a full, formidable figure whose quiet power shaped a nation from behind the scenes.

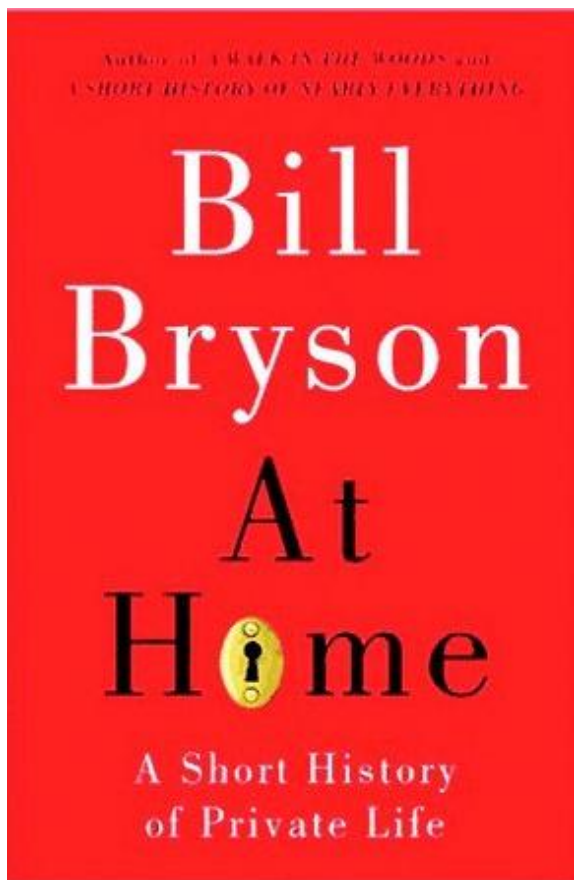
A compelling and thought-provoking blend of history and fiction, *America's First Daughter* offers a fresh, feminine perspective on America's founding, illuminating the price of patriotism and the resilience of women in a world dominated by men.



Stephanie Dray is a *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today* bestselling author of historical fiction. With a background in constitutional law and a passion for America's founding era, she specializes in bringing complex, often overlooked women of history to life. Her novels explore the personal sacrifices behind political movements and the quiet courage of women shaping the world.



Laura Kamoie, a former American history professor with a doctorate from the College of William & Mary, is also a *New York Times* bestselling author. With a deep expertise in early American history, she brings scholarly rigor and narrative depth to her fiction. Together with Dray, she has co-authored several acclaimed novels centered on revolutionary women, including *My Dear Hamilton* and *Ribbons of Scarlet*.



Non-Fiction Focus

At Home: A Short History of Private Life

by Bill Bryson

In ***At Home: A Short History of Private Life***, beloved writer Bill Bryson invites readers on an unexpected journey—not across continents or centuries in the traditional sense, but through the rooms of his own English rectory. From cellar to attic, pantry to parlor, Bryson uses the layout of the home as a lens through which to examine the history of daily life. What emerges is an expansive and often surprising chronicle of how comfort, convenience, and domesticity came to be.

Each chapter explores a specific room or household feature—the kitchen, bedroom, hallway, even the fuse box—and detours into tales of innovation, eccentricity, and transformation. We learn how salt once held empires in its grip, why forks were considered scandalous, and how the idea of childhood privacy is a shockingly recent invention. Bryson's trademark wit and wonder make for a narrative that is at once encyclopedic and intimate, filled with anecdotes that stitch together the material and social evolution of Western domestic life.

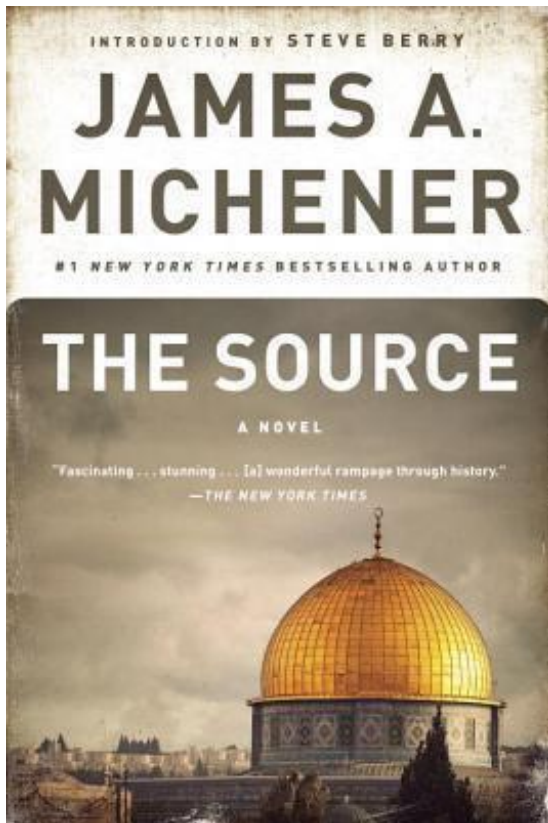
This is not a book about architecture per se, nor is it narrowly focused on design. Rather, it's a rich cultural and historical excavation of how homes—especially in England and America—came to shelter not just bodies, but identities, rituals, and social change. With his keen eye for overlooked details and love of the curious and comical, Bryson proves that even a doorknob can carry the weight of history.

For travelers who love immersing themselves in domestic architecture, decorative arts, and daily customs of the past, this book is like a secret decoder ring. It enriches our understanding of why certain historic houses feel the way they do—why kitchens were once deadly, why servants' staircases were designed to be out of sight, and why bathrooms took so long to become standard.

At Home is a deeply enjoyable read that turns the seemingly mundane into something marvelously meaningful. It reminds us that the spaces we inhabit are not just backdrops to history—they are history, brick by brick, meal by meal, bed by bed.



Bill Bryson is a bestselling author, journalist, and chronicler of cultural curiosity whose works have spanned science, travel, language, and history. Born in Des Moines, Iowa in 1951, he spent much of his adult life in England, where his wry outsider's perspective flourished into a signature voice—humorous, observant, and deeply informed—in short, the modern Mark Twain. With books like *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, *Notes from a Small Island*, *A Sunburned Country*, *A Walk in the Woods*, and *At Home*, Bryson has made complex subjects delightfully and sometimes hilariously accessible to millions of readers. His gift lies in illuminating the overlooked details of daily life and landscapes, turning the ordinary into something extraordinary through wit, research, and a boundless sense of wonder.



James A. Michener (1907–1997) was a Pulitzer Prize–winning American author best known for his sweeping historical novels that explore the cultural and political evolution of regions across the globe. Born in Pennsylvania and adopted at a young age, Michener studied at Swarthmore College and served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. His first major success, *Tales of the South Pacific*, won the Pulitzer Prize and was adapted into the Broadway musical *South Pacific*. Over the course of his prolific career, he wrote more than 40 books, including *Hawaii*, *Centennial*, *Texas*, *Chesapeake*, *Alaska*, *Poland* and *Iberia*. A passionate philanthropist and scholar, Michener donated millions to educational and cultural institutions and is remembered for his ability to bring history vividly to life for generations of readers.

The Masters Revisited

The Source

by James A. Michener

James A. Michener's ***The Source*** is one of those books that stays with you a long time. It's so masterful that it forged the field of the location-centric historic novel, and one that tackled a region so tumultuous and disputed that it still makes headlines daily.

Originally published in 1965, *The Source* is an epic historical novel that explores the layered history of the land that became modern-day Israel. Framed around a fictional archaeological dig at a site called Makor (meaning "source" in Hebrew), and modelled after the actual Megiddo, the novel interweaves a series of chronological vignettes, each representing a different era uncovered during the excavation. These stories span from prehistoric times through the Crusades and into the 20th century, offering glimpses into the religious, political, and cultural forces that shaped the region over thousands of years.

Michener's approach is both educational and immersive. Each stratum of earth yields a tale—of early idol worshippers, Canaanite traders, Jewish rebels under Roman rule, medieval Jews facing persecution in Spain, and Zionists striving to establish a new homeland. The framing narrative follows a group of modern archaeologists whose academic and personal tensions echo the themes of the ancient narratives they unearth.

What sets *The Source* apart is its vast scope, meticulous research, and the way it uses fiction to illuminate real historical events and transitions. Though sprawling and occasionally dense, the novel remains accessible thanks to Michener's gift for character-driven storytelling. Readers gain not just a historical overview of Israel, but a deeper understanding of how faith, tradition, and identity evolve over time.

The Source is a masterclass in historical fiction—ambitious in scale, rich in detail, and deeply human in its portrayal of people grappling with timeless questions. Ideal for readers who enjoy immersive, history-driven narratives that challenge and inform.

History-Centric TV

PBS Deserves Our Support as Lovers of Historic TV

PBS has long been a haven for lovers of historical drama under its renowned Masterpiece banner, offering finely crafted series that transport viewers into the richly textured past,

How much poorer would our lives be if PBS had not entered our living rooms more than 40 years? We would not have been enthralled by:

- **Downton Abbey** – A sweeping Edwardian-to-1920s saga of class, change, and scandal at a Yorkshire estate.
- **Poldark** – Based on Winston Graham’s novels, this series follows a brooding Cornish mine owner returning from war in the late 1700s.
- **Victoria** – A dramatized chronicle of Queen Victoria’s early reign, starring Jenna Coleman.
- **Sanditon** – A bold adaptation of Jane Austen’s unfinished novel, set in a coastal town undergoing Regency-era development.
- **Call the Midwife** – Though rooted in the 1950s and 1960s, this drama provides a vivid window into post-war British society and women’s healthcare.
- **Grantchester** – A mid-century detective drama set in a Cambridgeshire village, revealing tensions between morality, religion, and justice.
- **Wolf Hall** – A luminous adaptation of Hilary Mantel’s Booker Prize-winning novels on Thomas Cromwell and Henry VIII’s turbulent court.
- **Mercy Street** – Set in a Union hospital during the American Civil War, this under-recognized gem examines class, race, and gender in wartime Alexandria, Virginia.
- **Hotel Portofino** – Though a British production, the story is set in 1920s Italy, and PBS viewers will enjoy the lush setting and interwar intrigue.
- **Vienna Blood** – A Freud-influenced young doctor and a crusty inspector partner to solve murders in imperial Vienna. Operatic, decadent, and philosophical.
- **The Forsyte Saga** – A family drama that charts love and ownership through the shifting Edwardian and post-war eras.
- **The First Churchills** – Often cited as the very first presentation on *Masterpiece Theatre*, this BBC miniseries dramatizes the lives of John and Sarah Churchill, Duke and Duchess of Marlborough.
- **The Six Wives of Henry VIII** – A six-play series spotlighting each of Henry VIII’s wives individually. It aired on PBS via *Masterpiece* beginning in 1971.
- **The Edwardians** – A biographical anthology depicting notable Edwardian-era figures.
- **I, Claudius** – Martin Graves’s gripping adaptation of early Imperial Rome remains one of the most acclaimed historical dramas ever aired on PBS.

While normally this space is reserved for a feature on a new or under-the radar TV gem, I felt compelled to offer a celebration and tribute to the incredible riches provided by PBS over the years – historic drama, as well as historic chronicle. Consider also the invaluable work of Ken Burns and the 10 years of History Detectives.

Imagine a world in which that is only a distant past and PBS is reduced to a shadow of its former self. That, of course, is what we may indeed be facing. So I've decided to dedicate this space to encouraging you to support your local PBS station www.pbs.org/stations donate directly to PBS Nationally <https://www.pbs.org/foundation/donate/>, or if you are blessed with the ability of major philanthropy, have a conversation with the PBS Foundation https://www.pbs.org/foundation/?utm_source=chatgpt.com. Purchases at the PBS shop will also support programming and the sustainability of PBS <https://shop.pbs.org>



Let's ensure that we and future generations will have PBS entrance us with compelling historic television, without the need for government support. Let us, the grateful viewers, step into the breach!

Royal Roulette Answers: 1) King Henry III of France (reigned from 1574 until his assassination in 1589); 2. Alfred The Great (871-899) ; 3. Johanna, technically Queen of Castile from 1504 and Queen of Aragon from 1516 to her death in 1555. Her father Ferdinand of Aragon locked her away for 45 years in a monastery while he assumed the throne; 4. King Henry IV of France, who extended this policy to New France in Canada; 5. Portugal's Prince Henry The Navigator (1394-1460) ; 6. Anne of Cleves (January 6 to July 12, 1540); 7. King Herod The Great (72BCE to 4 BCE) , King of Judea while also a Roman client-king. 8. Queen Isabella of Castile and Leon 1474-1504; 9. Edward The Confessor (1042-1066) 10. Kenneth I MacAlpin (Cináed mac Ailpín) (843- 858).

Crossword Answers: 1. Wuthering, 2. Emma, 3. Quixote, 4. Middlemarch, 5. Jude, 6. Crime 7. Persuasion, 8. Heathcliff, 10. Waverly, 11. Mansfield, 12. Northanger 13. Ivanhoe, 14. Pride, 15. Jane.



Bronte Sisters' House, Getty Images

Special Feature

Reading the World Anew: The Rising Allure of Literary Tourism

There's something ineffably romantic about opening a book in the place where its words took shape—whether that means walking the cobbled streets that inspired your favorite novel or sinking into a chaise longue beside a crackling fire, book in hand, in a distant European villa. Today, literary tourism—where books blend with travel—is blossoming into a profound way to wander, wonder, and connect with the written word in a place.

Literary travel is hardly a new phenomenon. For centuries, readers have made pilgrimages to Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon or followed in Hemingway's footsteps through Paris cafés. Yet this branch of cultural tourism has evolved into something larger than visiting birthplaces and museums. It has become a movement of retreats, trails, festivals, and book-centric journeys that turn reading into both an inward and outward adventure. Wikipedia aptly observes that "literary tourists are specifically interested in how places have influenced writing and at the same time how writing has created place." That interplay—between page and place—is at the heart of this renaissance.

Why now? The answer seems to lie in our cultural moment. In an age where screens scatter our attention, travelers are increasingly searching for focused, meaningful experiences. Reading retreats, as one Vacayou feature notes, swap "cardio and cold plunges for books and quiet time," offering improved sleep, reduced stress, and deeper empathy. The rise of BookTok and Bookstagram has reignited passion for reading among younger generations, creating a new



Jane Austen's House in Chawton, Hampshire, Photo Credit Jane Austen's House

audience eager to combine literature with lifestyle. *Travel Weekly* has pointed out that “celebrity book clubs, library-themed wine bars, public readings and the rise of BookTok... the travel industry is taking note.” *Globetrender* put it more poetically: “Literature is increasingly shaping where we travel, as reading culture and wanderlust merge to create one of 2025’s defining tourism trends.”

The audience for such journeys is diverse. There are the solitary bibliophiles, who crave a quiet weekend of nothing but pages and peace; the community seekers who delight in conversation, even if the conversation is shared silence, like those who gather at Silent Book Clubs in 55 countries; the group travelers who sign up for themed literary tours, following Dickens through London or Jane Austen through Bath; and the author-curious, who long to meet the writers they love and hear their voices ring out in person.

What do these journeys look like in practice? Some of the most indulgent experiences are **reading retreats**. These range from intimate escapes like Megan Christopher’s “Ladies Who Lit” gatherings, described in the *New York Post* as “a yoga retreat without the yoga, where you sit around and read and drink a lot of wine,” to more structured author-led getaways in Greece, where afternoons are spent by the Aegean Sea and evenings over dinner with novelists such as Clare Mackintosh or JD Barker. In New York, boutique hotels like the Saratoga Arms are now offering micro-retreats: guests receive “blind date” books, journals, and even bookstore gift cards to deepen their reading weekend.

For those who want community but not structure, **“reading-together weekends”** are emerging. *Travel Dreams Magazine* describes cozy lakeside or beach escapes where the central activity is simply reading alongside others, with breaks for shared meals or themed excursions. In Canada, BookTok’s popularity has fueled new retreats that combine digital enthusiasm with real-world connection, as *Canadian Living* has observed.

Alongside retreats are guided literary tours—

immersive explorations of places bound up with authors and novels. In Bath, Austen’s world is celebrated not only in museums but also in walking trails, teas, and annual festivals where participants don period dress. In London, Dickens, Shakespeare, Sherlock Holmes, and Harry Potter share the same cobbled alleys through themed walking tours. In Spain, readers follow Hemingway’s footsteps through Pamplona, visiting Café Iruña as if *The Sun Also Rises* were still unfolding around them. Even farther afield, South Africa has created literary trails that map writers to their landscapes, strengthening cultural pride while drawing tourists into its rich narrative tapestry.

Festivals, too, have become global beacons of literary tourism. In Bali, the Ubud Writers & Readers Festival draws more than 170 writers and artists each year, combining public readings, food, and cultural workshops. In Sri Lanka, the Galle Literary Festival brings thousands into the walls of a colonial fort town. Scotland’s Wigtown Book Festival has transformed an entire village into a “national book town,” revitalizing its economy with more than 150 events annually. And perhaps most famously, Dublin’s Bloomsday brings James Joyce’s *Ulysses* to life each June 16, with Edwardian dress, pub crawls, and dramatic readings that make the novel a living performance.

Even bookstores themselves have become destinations. Buenos Aires boasts nearly 700 of them, including El Ateneo Grand Splendid, once a theater, now often named the most beautiful bookstore in the world. In Portugal, the azulejo-lined Livraria Lello has become an icon for literary pilgrims (and Harry Potter fans). These spaces, half shrine and half shop, show that sometimes the act of browsing bookshelves in a storied place can be as moving as visiting any museum.

At its core, literary tourism is not simply about visiting sites or buying souvenirs. It is about making literature come alive through place. To read Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* on the Cornish coast, or Márquez’s *Love in the Time of Cholera* while looking out over Cartagena, is to engage in a dialogue between imagination and reality. It is a way of stepping into the living archives of stories, where geography and narrative merge.



Photo Credit Cafe Iruña



Galle Literary Festival, avel Photo Credit Travel Talk Asia



El Ateneo Grand Splendid, Photo Credit Turismo Buenos Aires

For the literary traveler, recommended books can enrich the journey. C.S. Lewis's *The Reading Life* reminds us of the spiritual dimension of books. Lily King's *Writers & Lovers* reflects the push and pull between art and everyday living. Alexandra Horowitz's *On Looking* teaches the art of paying attention to place, while Abbi Waxman's *The Bookish Life of Nina Hill* shows the sheer joy of a book-soaked existence. Geoff Dyer's *Out of Sheer Rage* meditates—humorously and obsessively—on the entanglement of writing, reading, and travel itself.

Ultimately, literary tourism is about renewal. It answers a hunger for meaning, solitude, and community in equal measure. It transforms reading from a solitary act into a cultural adventure and places from mere backdrops into characters themselves. Whether you wander through a festival crowd in Bali, whisper passages aloud under the vaulted arches of an old cathedral, or sip wine in Tuscany with a novel in your lap, you are engaging in literature's most profound promise: that stories are not just read, they are lived.

Why These Literary Journeys Resonate So Deeply

Books are not only read—they are inhabited. To walk where someone once watched the sea, to sip wine as a writer once did, offers something that architecture, food, or museums alone cannot. These journeys deliver:

- **Mindful immersion** beyond screens or selfies.
- **Quiet yet connected spaces**, as seen in silent retreats and libraries in nature. The Guardian reports a **460% rise** in silent-book events in early 2025 alone [VacayouThe Guardian](#).
- **Ritual and reflection**, where reading rescues a stillness we no longer access in daily life.
- **Communal resonance**, where strangers share favorite lines over landscapes that inspired them.

Today's Most Coveted Literary Journeys

“Ladies Who Lit” retreats (Tuscany, Barcelona, more)

Created by Megan Christopher, this bookish escape sold out **overnight**. As she describes it, it's “a yoga retreat without the yoga, where you sit around and read and drink a lot of wine.” It's a literary bonfire for soulmates-in-waiting—complete with book swaps, wine-doused discussions, and destination day trips

Author-Led Greek Isle Excursions

In sun-lit Amorgos, writer Jonas Saul and his wife welcome readers for days of reading followed by wine-scented dinner chats with bestselling authors like Mark Edwards and Clare Mackintosh. One guest called it, simply, a chance to be “done... to sit on a beach for a week with fellow book enthusiasts”



Photo Credit The Saratoga Arms Hotel



Costa Rica Rainforest & Italian Riviera Reading Retreats,
Photo Credit Silent Book Club

Books in Places—From Egypt to Portugal

Founder Paul Wright invites solo travelers to read *Death on the Nile* in Egypt, or *The Guilt Trip* in Portugal. His philosophy: books come alive where they are set. Dinner table conversation is optional, but the atmosphere is everything

The Saratoga Arms Literary Getaway

Upstate New York provides quiet luxury to overstressed readers. Guests wake to “blind date with a book” surprises, journals, gift cards to a nearby bookstore—all paired with the timeless spirit of Yaddo’s literary legacy

Costa Rica Rainforest & Italian Riviera Reading Retreats

Silent Book Club has extended its quiet ethos to formal retreats—4 days in Costa Rica’s rainforest, or a sunny Italian Riviera escape where “la dolce vita” meets literary leisure

Books-inspired “Field Trips”

From detective walks to food-for-thought tours, [Travel Weekly](#) and [Top10Trending](#) describe narrative-themed hikes, Charlotte Brontë’s Yorkshire path, or Buenos Aires’ women-poets trail—experiences shaped by story rather than sightseeing alone

Hot Spots of Literary Pilgrimage

Cheltenham Literature Festival (October 10–19, 2025, UK)

One of the year’s intellectual high points, this festival brings together heavyweights—authors, thinkers, prize-winners, and public figures—for a ten-day cultural feast

“Ultimate Jane Austen Anniversary” Experience (Bath, UK)

In homage to Austen’s 250th birthday, fans donned Regency gowns, learned period dance, enjoyed afternoon tea, and visited her Chawton cottage. The Jane Austen Centre expects nearly 250,000 visitors in 2025 amid renewed “Austenmania”

Books in Places—Lyme Regis, England

One guest described reading Lucy Foley’s *The Midnight Feast* in Lyme Regis: “charming hotels, local cuisine, literature where it belongs—out in the world”

Galle Literary Festival (Sri Lanka, January)

Set in a coastal colonial fort, this growing festival engages global authors, gourmet cuisine, art, and conversation—an intersection of place, politics, and prose

KZN Literary Trails (KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa)

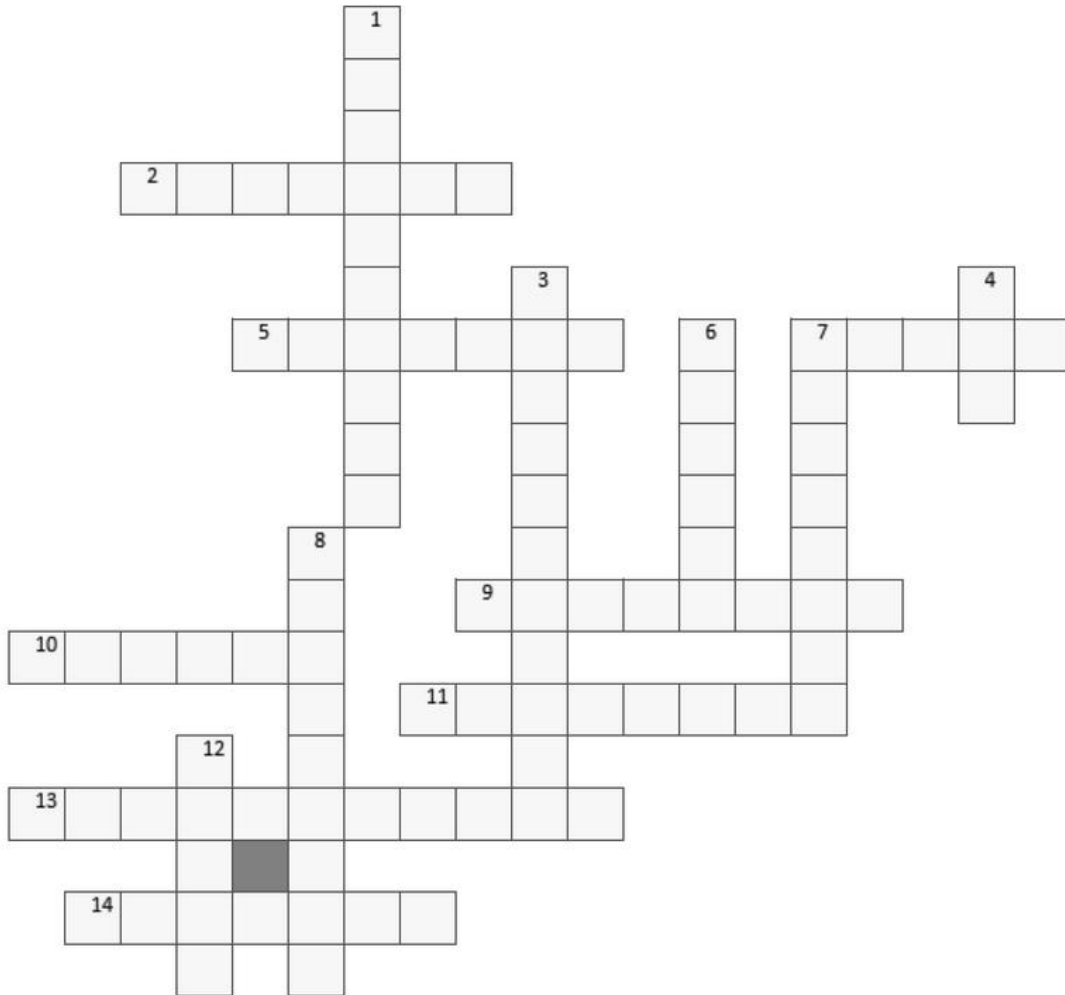
Literary tourism meets community storytelling here: walking routes, archival multimedia, and tours that connect writers like Alan Paton and Rider Haggard to their landscapes, guided by locals, and supported by university-led research

Lisbon, Los Angeles, Dublin—Walking in Words

Tertulia’s recent roundup spots tours where you can trace Pessoa’s Lisbon, Fitzgerald’s Los Angeles, or Didion’s soulful sketched walks—part story, part walk, part theatrical experience

The Historic Traveler Literary Crossword

All About Witches



ACROSS

- 2. A male witch.
- 5. Mixtures brewed by witches for various effects.
- 7. Under a spell or curse.
- 9. A large pot used for brewing potions.
- 10. Relating to magic or the supernatural.
- 11. A witch's book of spells.
- 13. A magical spell or charm.
- 14. The practice of magic.

DOWN

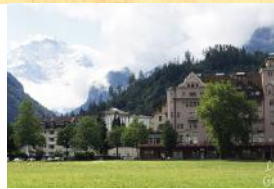
- 1. A witch's mode of transportation.
- 3. A magical chant or spell.
- 4. A curse or spell.
- 6. Under a spell of misfortune.
- 7. Harry Potter's intelligent friend who is a witch.
- 8. Under the influence of magic.
- 12. A spell to bring good luck.

See answers on page 74



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