

Haunted Europe

By Genevieve Northup

Infamous murders, epidemics, public executions and medieval torture - it's no surprise that European destinations are said to be haunted. This Halloween, experience heart-pounding, hair-raising excitement at these hot spots of paranormal activity.

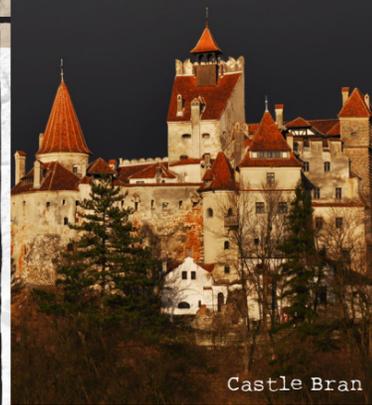
Vaults - Edinburgh, Scotland

Leave the comfort of daylight to explore a labyrinth of underground passageways during a guided tour of the vaults. This subterranean area was the old city, partially demolished and replaced by structural supports for the South Bridge in 1785. Until the late 1800s, the vaults provided cover for criminals and housed Edinburgh's poorest residents.

Tower of London and Whitechapel - London, England

According to folklore, dozens of spirits reside in the Tower of London, including Henry VIII's beheaded wives. The Countess of Salisbury is another Henry VIII-hating poltergeist; she refused to kneel at execution and was hacked to death. And in 1483, 12-year-old heir to the throne Edward V and his younger brother were imprisoned at the Tower and disappeared soon after. Two child-size skeletons were found in the tower nearly 200 years later, but their ghosts remain.

In the Whitechapel District, serial killer Jack the Ripper preyed on prostitutes in 1888. With a little imagination and an expert guide from London Walks, return to the 19th century, when the Whitechapel District was plagued by poverty, crime and fear as butchered bodies were discov-



Castle Bran

ered. Donald Rumbelow, a crime historian and author of books on the Ripper murders, founded the Ripper tour to ensure it is the creepiest walk of your life.

Castles Bran and Poenari - Bran and Arefu, Romania

The secluded fortress depicted in Bram Stoker's novel, "Dracula," resembles Transylvania's iconic Castle Bran. The path leading to the citadel is a lively marketplace of Dracula chotchkies. But when you reach the imposing castle atop a rocky cliff, the wind begins to howl, the noise from the crowd dissipates, and Stoker's fiction



Père LaChaise Cemetery

comes to life. While navigating the maze of sparsely furnished rooms, hidden chambers and spiral staircases, you'll lose your companions and perhaps your courage.

Despite recent research findings, many still believe that the Prince of Wallachia, Vlad III or Vlad Tepes, was Stoker's inspiration for the famous vampire. Tepes, often referred to as "Dracula," terrorized traitors and adversaries during the 15th century. To see the real Dracula's lair requires a trek up 1,500 steps to the abandoned Poenari Castle. Look over the edge of the crumbling walls for a spine-tingling thrill.

Catacombs and Père LaChaise Cemetery - Paris, France

To alleviate the overcrowding of cemeteries during the French Revolution, the dead were relocated to mining tunnels. Today, you can walk amid the bones of 6 million Parisians neatly stacked for eternity in the darkness below the city of lights.

Three new cemeteries were built outside of Paris, including Père LaChaise, called "city of the dead." More than 1 million people, includ-



The Bone Church

ing famous artists, composers and authors, are buried at LaChaise. Among the mausoleums and headstones, you may hear the prose of Oscar Wilde or the melodies of Frédéric Chopin; it's not just in your head.

Sedlec Ossuary - Sedlec, Czech Republic

In the late 1800s woodcarver František Rint used the bones of 40,000 people to decorate the ossuary of the Cemetery Church of All Saints. A mundane exterior provides no indication of the macabre chandeliers, vases, garlands and bell-shaped displays of the ossuary chapel, nicknamed "The Bone Church." It's worth the hour-long drive from Prague.

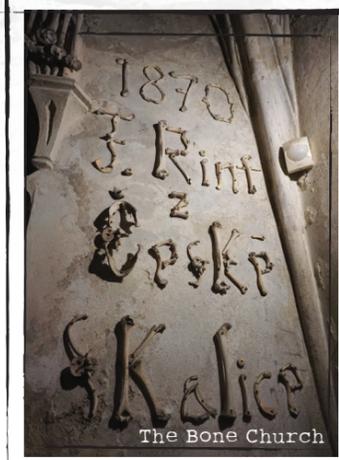
Frankenstein Castle - Mühlthal, Germany

For the truly daring, there's the month-long celebration at Burg Frankenstein, located near Darmstadt. Every weekend from October 24 to November 9, mass murderers and monsters hunt the castle grounds for easy targets. At this



The Bone Church

František Rint used the bones of 40,000 people to decorate the ossuary of the Cemetery Church of All Saints.



The Bone Church

haunted house, ghouls are allowed to touch guests, so bring a group to face off against Freddy Krueger, Dracula and Frankenstein. Advance booking is a necessity. Visit www.frankenstein-halloween.de for details. ■

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