



# Haunted Halls, Creepy Crypts and Ghost Tours

By Genevieve Northup

Infamous murders, epidemics, public executions and medieval torture — this is why the cities of Europe are said to be haunted. Just venture down a dark “close” in Edinburgh, into Paris’ catacombs or inside a church decorated entirely in bones. Whether you believe in the supernatural or not, creepy settings combined with spooky storytelling may send you scurrying to a well-lit place.

## Edinburgh, Scotland

After a tour through its vaults, you’ll understand what haunts Edinburgh. This underground area was the old city, built over as time passed. During the plague epidemic, it is said that hundreds of people died there. Edinburgh’s Nor’ Loch was the site of “Trials by Douking,” where women accused of witchcraft were tested. If they drowned, they were dead but exonerated. If they survived, they were witches, burned alive at Castlehill. Edinburgh Castle and Greyfriars Kirkyard are also said to be full of supernatural energy. In the 1820s, more than a dozen residents were murdered to provide cadavers for the city’s medical program.

Many companies offer tours of the darker side of Edinburgh, some more frightening than others. City of the Dead tours ([www.blackhart.uk.com](http://www.blackhart.uk.com)), designed by thriller author

J.A. Henderson, are terrifying. Mercat Tours ([www.mercattours.com](http://www.mercattours.com)) provide historical walks and haunting expeditions around the city. The Real Mary King’s Close ([www.realmarykingsclose.com](http://www.realmarykingsclose.com)) team unveils the most haunted area of the vaults which still looks like a 17th century neighborhood.

## Tulloch Castle, Dingwall, Scotland

Just an hour from the mysterious Loch Ness is Tulloch Castle Hotel ([www.bespokehotels.com/tullochcastlehotel](http://www.bespokehotels.com/tullochcastlehotel)). In addition to beautiful accommodations, wonderful food and a golf course, the castle’s apparitions are a major attraction. Its infamous Green Lady was caught on camera in 2008. If you feel daring, reserve Room 8, where former guests have had more than just nightmares.

## London, England

The Tower of London is supposedly inhabited by dozens of spirits, among them Henry VIII’s beheaded wives. Another of his victims, the Countess of Salisbury was accused of treason and after refusing to kneel at execution, was chased around and hacked to death. In 1483, the rightful successor to the throne, 12-year-old Edward V, and his younger brother were declared illegitimate heirs and imprisoned at the Tower, disappearing shortly

thereafter. Bones believed to be those of the missing boys were found nearly 200 years later in the Tower, and their ghosts are said to haunt the room where they were imprisoned.

Richard Jones is a paranormal investigator and author of numerous books on haunted England who offers notoriously creepy ghost tours to the Tower and other haunted locales. To find out more and make reservations, visit [www.london-ghost-tour.com](http://www.london-ghost-tour.com).

For family-friendly hauntings, Ghost Bus Tours are conducted aboard an old double-decker bus. Visit Tower Bridge, where the heads of traitors were displayed, and other London sites. Reservations are recommended: [www.theghostbustours.com](http://www.theghostbustours.com).

And there’s England’s most notorious criminal, serial killer Jack the Ripper, who murdered prostitutes in London’s White Chapel District. London Walks’ Jack the Ripper tour is still led some nights by Donald Rumbelow, a crime historian and author of several books on the Ripper murders. “Jack the Ripper Haunts” meets at 7:30 p.m. daily at the Tower Hill Tube exit. If you want Rumbelow as guide, you’ll need to contact London Walks for his schedule: +44(0)20-7624-3978 or [london@walks.com](mailto:london@walks.com).

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Reservations and pre-payment are not required for any London Walks tours ([www.walks.com](http://www.walks.com)).

### Castle Bran, Romania

Castle Bran in the Transylvania region of Romania may seem to be simply an eerie medieval castle, but the history of the tyrant who briefly stayed there is far more terrifying. Ruler Vlad III Dracul became known as Vlad Tepes (Vlad the Impaler) for his extremely cruel execution method of impaling victims, sometimes thousands at a time. It is rumored that he collected and consumed victims' blood. Today, it is speculated that Tepes was the inspiration for Bram Stoker's "Dracula." Other Romanian sites related to Tepes include his tomb at Snagov Monastery and the ruins of Poenari Castle, his fortress accessible only by climbing nearly 1,500 steps. According to folklore, Vlad's first wife jumped to her death to avoid capture by an approaching enemy army.

Many private companies and installation organizations, such as RTT Travel at Ramstein AB, offer trips to Romania, complete with tours of Castle Bran and other creepy destinations.

### Paris, France

The city of lights has its share of darkness. It is estimated that as many as 40,000 people lost their heads during the guillotine's "Reign of Terror."

The overcrowding of city cemeteries led to extremely unsanitary conditions. Therefore, in the late 18th century, all inner-city cemeteries were condemned, and remains were moved to what is now the Paris Catacombs. These underground mining tunnels-turned ossuaries hold remains of 6 million Parisians organized and stacked to create stunningly macabre displays.

Three new cemeteries were then built just outside of the city, including Père LaChaise, called "city of the dead." Today it's Paris' most popular cemetery and the final resting place of more than 1 million people including Oscar Wilde, Chopin and Jim Morrison.

Mysteries of Paris ([www.parisghosttour.com](http://www.parisghosttour.com)) has ghost tours from March 1 to Oct. 31. Or, to see the catacombs, visit [www.catacombes.paris.fr](http://www.catacombes.paris.fr).

### Germany

Many of Germany's cities are said to be haunted. The walled medieval city of Rothenburg ob der Tauber has a dark

history, retold each night by the Executioner (<http://english.faszination-rothenburg.de>). For a more historical rendition, join the Night Watchman as he guards the city ([www.nightwatchman.de](http://www.nightwatchman.de)). Your trip to Rothenburg will not be complete without a visit to the Medieval Crime Museum ([www.kriminalmuseum.rothenburg.de](http://www.kriminalmuseum.rothenburg.de)). Gaze at contraptions of torture and death so heinous that you'll have to look away. You may also feel an angry spirit or two.

Munich's Marienplatz became the last stop for many during medieval executions and witch burnings. Visit [www.lonelyplanet.com/world/activities/guided-tours/munich-ghost-walking-tour](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/world/activities/guided-tours/munich-ghost-walking-tour) for more information about city ghost tours.

Of course, Germany's castles are hot spots for ghosts, including Burg Eltz, Burg Frankenstein and Burg Rheinstein. Supernatural phenomena have also been seen or felt on military installations throughout Europe. Your dorm room, your office, your fitness center could be teeming with ghosts. The next time a door slams or the lights flicker when no one is around, you might not be alone. ■

**This Halloween, visit one of these haunted destinations, or get your haunt on at Frankenstein Castle in Darmstadt. For tickets, go to [www.frankenstein-halloween.de](http://www.frankenstein-halloween.de).**

Photos from Mercat Tours