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Illinois Hosts Haunted Halloween Happenings

Ghosts, goblins and monsters invite visitors to spooky attractions and festive celebrations statewide

CHICAGO (August 29, 2003) – From haunted houses and tours to spooky festivals and pumpkin trails, Illinois offers Halloween tricks and treats for thrill-seekers, historians and ghost-hunters of any age. This fall visitors will be lured to every region of the state from Northern Illinois' Lena Community Haunted Barn, which boasts 25 attractions of fear and illusion, to Southwest Illinois' Alton, one of America's most haunted small towns¹.

"Illinois is largely considered among experts to be one of the most haunted states in America," said Troy Taylor, a ghost-hunting tour guide in Alton, and author of "*Haunted Illinois*" and 26 additional books documenting America's haunted past. "This state has a rich history full of war stories, gangsters, kidnapped hitchhikers and hundreds of other spirits, many of which are still lingering behind in places where they met their end."

This year, Illinois offers plenty of spooky adventures for thrill-seekers and many family-friendly Halloween events too.

Chicago

- **Chicagoween**, a free month-long festival located at Washington and Dearborn Streets, offers a series of children's and family activities from October 1-31. Transforming Daley Plaza into "Pumpkin Plaza" from October 10-31, Chicagoween offers a haunted village, fortune tellers, magicians, performances by The Midnight Circus, pumpkin carvers and spooky storytellers. Visitors can also attend the annual **Halloween Happenings Parade** on October 18 and take the **Haunted "L" Ride**, running from October 9-30. The Halloween Happenings parade marches costume-clad children down State Street, while the Haunted "L" Ride takes guests on a free train tour of the Loop as costumed storytellers recount bone-shilling tales of Chicago's history. (312/346-3278, www.cityofchicago.org/specialevents)

¹ Troy Taylor, "*Haunted Illinois*"

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Illinois Bureau of Tourism/Halloween 2

- Visitors to Illinois can book tours on a variety of ghost-hunting expeditions. In Chicago, families can take advantage of day tours for all ages, while adults can set out on night tours. Richard Crowe, one of the Midwest's only professional ghost-hunters, leads guests on **Supernatural Tours** through the "haunted history" of the Windy City to some of Chicago's most famous spooked sites. Day trips stop at the Resurrection Cemetery, where Crowe recalls many spiritual accounts, including the popular story of "Resurrection Hitchhiker Mary," who many say still haunts the cemetery. Special tours, offered nightly from October 17-November 3, stop at the St. Valentine's Massacre site, Chinatown and the Old Water Tower on Michigan Avenue. (708/499-0300, www.ghosttours.com)
- **Navy Fear and Fun** at Navy Pier is a great stop for families with attractions such as Captain Fear's Haunted Adventure, Trick-or-Treat Treasure Hunt, Kid's Craft Corner, hayrides on Dock Street and costume contents. New this year, "The Beast" is an attraction for children and provides a spine-tingling walk through the monster's liar, spooking those who take the wrong path. The celebration begins October 3 and runs through November 2. (312/595-7437, www.navypier.com)

Chicagoland

- **Goebbert's Fall Festival**, October 1-31 in South Barrington, offers visitors pick-a-pumpkin patches, a petting zoo and a great view of pig races. In addition, Goebbert's offers a 10-room, monster-filled haunted house that will test the nerves of even the bravest visitors. (847/464-5952, www.pumpkinfarms.com)
- The "**Excursions to the Unknown**" tours held weekends in October throughout the south and southwest suburbs of Chicagoland, offer a historical perspective of the area and the ghosts still haunting it. Led by Ghost Research Society President, Dale Kaczmarek, the tours take guests to several haunted locations including the Glessner House National Historic Landmark, which is said to be haunted by its architect Henry Hobson Richardson, who was the inspiration for Frank Lloyd Wright. Kaczmarek provides a walking tour of the grounds, shares the history of the house and explains tales about ghost sightings. (www.ghostresearch.org/tours)
- **Fright Fest**, weekends October 11-November 2 at Six Flags Great America Theme Park in Gurnee, spooks visitors with haunted houses featuring a futuristic, post-apocalyptic urban streetscape theme. Rides decorated for the holiday, spirited shows, and an Elvira motion simulator attraction round out the thrills. (847/249-4636, www.sixflags.com)

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Northern

- The **Trail of Terror**, September 20 to November 1 in Northern Illinois, stretches along a road winding through 10 counties from Boone to Winnebago. Each county hosts a unique trail activity from ghost tours and a tour of a haunted asylum to Halloween mazes, fall festivals and pumpkin patches. (800/678-2108, www.trail-of-terror.com)
- The **Lena Community Haunted Barn**, September 20-November 1, has been rated the best haunted house in the state six times in the last decade. Twenty-five attractions are arranged in two barns linked by an outdoor trail. Adult visitors are encouraged to cruise the 1,400-square-foot maze that changes each night, while younger patrons can ride down a spooky slide. (800/369-2955)
- **Pumpkin Junction**, September 26-October 26 in Freeport, offers guests an opportunity to pick their own pumpkin, take a wagon ride, scare up some ghosts at Shep's Haunted Barn, feed the animals at the petting zoo and get lost in the corn maze. Special weekends feature decorate-a-pumpkin and face painting for the little ones. (815-232-6103, www.trail-of-terror.com/pumpkin)
- **House of Horrors**, in Rockford from October 17-31, has a variety of scary attractions including the Barn of Terror – a building so dark visitors can barely see anything, and Terror Alley – frightening visitors as they travel alone through spooky corridors. The Maze Madness and the Isle of Hades provide multi-sensory thrills confusing and spooking adventure-seekers along the way. (815/877-5245, www.fearfest2002.com/fearfest/main)

Central

- At Bloomington's **Creatures Crypt Haunted House**, every weekend in October, thrill-seekers creep through a house filled with Egyptian spirits, mummies, moving skeletons and vampires. Creatures Crypt also offers special nights for families with scaled-back shocks and scares. (309/820-1BOO, www.creaturescrypt.com)
- Every weekend in October, **A Walk Through History Tours** at Danville's Spring Hill Cemetery give visitors a unique view of Victorian-era monuments and stories of prominent Danville citizens. (217/442-2096, www.danvillecvb.com/index.ace)
- **Pumpkin Works 2003**, October 1-31 in Paris, offers nine mazes – including a six-acre, jungle-themed corn maze – a haunted house, hayrides, bonfires and a variety of family activities. (217/275-3327, www.pumpkinworks.com)

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Illinois Bureau of Tourism/Halloween 4

- The old **Masonic Temple** and the haunted **Greenwood Cemetery** in Decatur, October 31, are the sources for *Haunted Illinois'* author Troy Taylor's ghost tour. Taylor leads the ghost-tour through the dark hallways, corridors, theater and secret rooms of the temple, while showing visitors where spirits are believed to live in the cemetery. (618/465-1086, www.prairieghosts.com/halloween)

Western

- **Galesburg Scarecrow Festival**, October 4 and 5 in Standish Park, features a scarecrow contest with five categories: historical, whimsical, children's, local business and traditional. As an official stop on the Knox County Scenic Drive (October 3-5), visitors along the drive serve as judges by voting for the category winners among the hundreds of festive scarecrows. (800/916-3330, www.visitgalesburg.com)
- At **Farmer Jack's Haunted Hayride & Flashlight Nights in the Maze**, October 18-19 and 25-27 in Barry, frightened travelers ride through 140 acres of spooky orchards. For brave and mischievous explorers, the corn maze is open every weekend from October 17-31. (217/335-2670, www.applebasketfarms.com)
- The **Spook Trail**, October 21 in Canton, showcases scary and unusual villains with guided tours through Big Creek Park's walking trail, decorated for the holiday. Costumed characters lead the way, providing entertainment for all ages. (309/647-6074)
- **Fright Night**, October 30 at the Rock Island Arts & Entertainment District's Great River Plaza, provides fun for children, with haunted trolley tours, treasure hunts, costume contests, ghost stories, magicians and pumpkin decorating. (309/788-6311, www.ridistrict.com)

Southern

- **Great Southern Scarecrow Exhibition**, October 3 and 4 in Carbondale, features pumpkin-faced scarecrows, live music concerts, puppet displays and jack-o-lantern activities. (618/457-5100)
- The **Bed and Breakfast Ghost Tours** are offered every weekend in October along a strip of haunted restaurants and bed and breakfasts throughout Pope and Johnson counties. Car tours take guests to their choice of three out of 10 haunted sites, the most popular being burial grounds, a haunted railway, spooky cemeteries and locations of previous UFO sightings. The tours are led by eyewitnesses and storytellers familiar with the sightings. (618/695-3355)

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Illinois Bureau of Tourism/Halloween 5

- Now in its 77th year, the **Centralia Fall Festival and Parade**, October 25, is the state's oldest Halloween parade. Families gather together as children roll pumpkins down Main Street, and participants compete in chili-cooking contests. Vintage car and model train displays are showcased along 12 blocks in downtown Centralia, as is an art show featuring contemporary work. (618/533-1519)
- The **Storytelling Festival**, October 25 in Vienna, features nationally recognized storytellers competing in 12 categories, from mysteries to comedies. Although all category competitions are equally entertaining, the high prize is for the Best Ghost Story. (618/658-5912)

Southwest

- **The Great Godfrey Maze**, August 30-November 1 in Godfrey, is a maze carved into a seven-acre field featuring a new theme each year. This year's theme celebrates the Lewis and Clark bicentennial with a labyrinth of golden corn stalks leading adventurers on 2.4 miles of trails within the maze. Also onsite are helicopter rides, the corn canon – shooting ears of corn at targets – and the cow train, taking visitors through the maze via train. (618/466-1483, www.greatgodfreymaze.com)
- Now in its 11th year, **Antoinette's Haunted History Tours** stop at 13 authentically haunted locations in Alton including two mason lodges, a school, a confederate prison and Mineral Springs Hotel. Interactive opportunities are offered to guests interested in learning how to read ghost-hunting audio and visual equipment. Four different tours – “Waking the Dead,” “Bare Bones,” “Witching Hour” and “Eating with the Entities” – are offered from September 19 through November 21. (618/462-4009, www.hauntedalton.com)
- Alton also hosts **History & Haunting Tours** every weekend in October led by author Troy Taylor. The three-hour tours take guests throughout Alton, to locations such as the Hanson Home & Enos Sanitarium – a former station on the Underground Railroad – while Taylor explains the nature of the hauntings and history of the buildings. (618/465-1086, www.prairieghosts.com)
- The **American Ghost Society's Haunted Museum** welcomes visitors to its Alton-based headquarters, home to hunters who seek out authentic evidence of ghosts and who investigate claims of paranormal activity. Spirit photos and early ghost-hunting equipment are on display and tours are offered for views of local paranormal sites. (618/465-1086, www.prairieghosts.com)

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Illinois Bureau of Tourism/Halloween 6

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers free travel resources and additional information on haunted adventures, attractions and festivals. All are available by calling **800-2CONNECT** to speak with an Illinois travel counselor or by visiting the bureau's Web site at **www.enjoyillinois.com**. The fall issue of *Illinois Now!*, a seasonal magazine devoted exclusively to travel in Illinois, is currently available for fall travel planning. The magazine can be obtained by calling 800-2CONNECT or by visiting the bureau's Web site.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Statewide photography is available electronically or in slide format. For artwork, contact Jennifer Elving at 312/240-2813.

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manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and
quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents.*

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