

TRAVEL

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PERFECT 10

Halloween

1 Washington DC
During a spine-chilling tour of Washington called Capital Hauntings (www.washingtonwalks.com/dc-hauntings.html) we pause in gloomy Lafayette Square and look towards St John's Episcopal Church. Our guide explains that presidents can walk across the park from the White House and that every leader has attended church there, all sitting in Pew 54. "But they're not the only ones who've been here," she whispers. "On nights when someone important has died, six white-robed curates have appeared, taking their places in Pew 54 and vanishing on the stroke of midnight." Even the White House seems eerie as we hear how, weeks before his assassination, Abraham Lincoln told a friend about a dream in which people stood by a coffin wailing and saying the president was dead. When he peered into the coffin he saw ... himself.

2 Boston
For another dramatic eye-opener board Boston's Ghosts and Gravestones Black Widow trolley (www.ghostsandgravestones.com), on which a fellow claiming to be a long-dead gravedigger leads visitors through burial grounds where revolutionary figures Paul Revere and Samuel Adams were interred. His most intriguing tale concerns an Irish boy who heard a banshee wailing and found his grandfather dead. Hearing the sound again while serving in the second world war with a young Irish lieutenant named Jack, he laughed ... until news arrived that his father had died at exactly the time of the wailing. Years later, he heard it one last time. Phoning home, he was relieved to hear that his family was safe. Our story-teller pauses. "But turning on the TV, he was shocked to learn that his old friend Jack [John F. Kennedy] had been assassinated in Dallas at exactly the moment the banshee was heard."

3 St John's, Canada
What wilder place for the paranormal than Canada's easternmost province of Newfoundland, with the city of St John's often blanketed in fog from the North Atlantic? Here, the Reverend Thomas Wyckham Jarvis leads the Haunted Hike (www.hauntedhike.com) through the city, telling tales such as one about the three-storey house at 92 Queen's Road. A grandmother in the house heard babies



Jim Fassbinder and his mysterious key; and gloomy Lafayette Square in Washington, DC



With thoughts of the ghostly season egging him on, Bruce Holmes checks out North American haunts that are sure to send a shiver up your spine

crying. Nobody believed her, until it was revealed that in 1957 a woman living there had been charged with disposing of two children's corpses, but she was acquitted. "Now the house is home to the shadowy figure of a woman climbing the stairs ... and the sounds of unseen babies crying out."

4 Quebec
One way to walk the cobbled streets of this old fortified city is with a guide from Ghost Tours of Quebec (www.ghosttoursquebec.com) telling tales of executions and cursed ships sinking in the St Lawrence River. In the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, we hear about the 1832 cholera epidemic and Mrs Dillon, a woman who feared she would catch the disease. Her husband returned from a distant posting to learn that she had died and been buried. He demanded an autopsy, and the gruesome truth was discovered: Mrs Dillon had suffered from narcolepsy, a condition in which a person falls asleep and appears to be dead. "What had the autopsy revealed?" our guide asks rhetorically. "That Iris Dillon had been buried alive. So is it her ghost that can't leave this church?"

5 Nashville
The home of country music and the Grand Ole Opry, Nashville has its share of spirits. On Nashville Ghost Tours (www.nashvilleghosttours.com) you can learn about one that haunts the Opry's former home, the Ryman Auditorium.



Founded by Captain Tom Ryman, who, after a wild youth, became religious, the structure began life as the Union Gospel Tabernacle. After Ryman's death, musical shows were performed there. When the risqué *Carmen* made its debut in 1918, a disapproving heckler booed and interrupted the actors every night, but none of the ushers could find him. Those who knew the voice insisted it was that of Tom Ryman.

6 Seattle
Cruising in her van for the Haunted Happenings tour (www.privateeyetours.com/haunted.htm), our guide explains various psychic phenomena. We learn the origin of the term "graveyard shift" and check out a haunted place where 1970s serial killer Ted Bundy lived as a university student. But our most spooky stop is a derelict building with doors chained shut in an alley in Chinatown. Jake says old Chinese men shake their



The Empress Hotel in Victoria (above) and Boston's 17th-century burial grounds. PHOTOS: BRUCE HOLMES

heads in disbelief that she brings people here, before describing the 1983 robbery-murders at what was the Wah Mee gambling club. "The Chinese say the spirit spends three years in the underworld before returning to the place of its death," she says. Looking over our shoulders, we jump back in the van.

7 Toronto
It's the commercial heart of Canada these days, but what was Toronto like in years gone by? Taking the Haunted Streets of Downtown Toronto tour (www.muddyyorktours.com) is an intriguing way to learn about the paranormal legends behind many famous city sites. One concerns a former planetarium where schoolchildren learned about the universe. Strangely, one little girl always seemed to be left behind, but whenever staff approached her she vanished. When the building became a Children's Museum, toys were thrown mysteriously at staff. And on a recent tour through the now-empty building, a woman insists she saw a little girl outside, listening to the stories.

8 Victoria, Canada
One architectural highlight of Victoria is the Empress Hotel built by architect Francis Rattenbury. Since 1908, the British tradition of afternoon tea has

prevailed there, but most visitors sipping from the hotel china don't realise that all is not as it seems – as John Adams' Ghostly Walks (www.discoverthepast.com/discvr/gwalks.htm) reveal. By the old carriage entrance we hear how a couple were examining old photographs when a man appeared behind them. The figure remained there despite the couple glaring at him. When the husband spoke, it vanished. Later described in detail, the man was said to resemble Rattenbury, who was murdered in England in 1935.

9 New Orleans
With the historic French Quarter largely untouched by last year's Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans Spirit Tours (www.neworleanstours.net) continue to draw those interested in the supernatural. One tale features the ghost of a mystery sultan, a 19th-century Turk who rented a mansion for the summer and arrived with treasure and an entourage, including a harem. One morning, the entire household was found slaughtered. Were they murdered by emissaries of the real sultan, the Turk's vengeful brother, or pirates from a ship that docked for only a day?

10 San Francisco
Psychic Jim Fassbinder saw ghosts as a boy and his San Francisco Ghost Hunt (www.sfgosthunt.com) will leave you intrigued. Fassbinder recounts the 19th-century tale of a Pacific Heights mansion where two wealthy sisters lived

until their crazy cousin stabbed one of them to death. Her ghost still haunts the house. Then he produces a key, perhaps from the mansion, that he says moves by itself. I'm not convinced. When he puts the key in the palm of a young lady on the tour with us, we all watch. She keeps completely still ... and we wait. Then the key turns abruptly, as if unlocking a door. Believe it or not.



A Ghost Tours of Quebec guide on the steps of the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity

BIG DEAL

Peter Walbrook

Swire Travel is selling a two-night weekend package to Kuala Lumpur, with a third night on offer for one dollar. Priced at HK\$2,430 per person, twin-share, for the first two nights, this package includes accommodation at the new Novotel Hydro Majestic

hotel (www.accorhotels.com) on Jalan Kia Peng, breakfast and economy-class flights with Cathay Pacific.

Flights depart every Friday and Saturday from October 27 to December 15, but the third-night deal is available with Friday departures and Monday returns only. For details and reservations call Swire Travel on 3151 8833, or e-mail maviswong@swiretravel.com. tchecks@gmail.com

ENTRÉE

Yenni Kwok

Berlin

Zoe Berlin
Rochstrasse 1 (www.zoe-berlin.de)
This restaurant serves Mediterranean (Italian, Spanish and southern French) and Asian cuisine in cosy, minimalist white surroundings. Since its opening last year, the establishment, owned by a local Italian family, has quickly become a city favourite. The menu changes every week under the direction of Malaysian Eddie Malihudin, who looks after the Asian cuisine, and German Benni Braeuniger, creator of Mediterranean dishes. Mains start at €6.80 (HK\$67).

Pan Asia
Rosenthaler Strasse 38 (www.panasia.de)
In a back building sheltered from the buzz of the Hacheschen Hoefe shopping district, Pan Asia offers an innovative selection of Asian specialities, from sushi and stir-fry to noodles and various tofu dishes. Cream, MSG and artificial flavourings are *verboten*. Occupying a sleek loft space, the restaurant attracts a crowd of designers, photographers, models and yuppies who share long communal tables. Bag a table in the corner lounge for a more

PHOTO: DIEPHOTODESIGNER.DE



private meal or try the courtyard. Don't miss the video installations in the washrooms or the screening of manga movies above the sushi bar. Lunch costs about €6.

Shiro i Shiro
Rosa-Luxemburg-Strasse 11 (www.shiroishiro.com)
Shiro is Japanese for "white" and "castle". The restaurant's interior (above) reflects its name, and sitting at a long, whimsical Alice-in-Wonderland table you might wonder whether the Mad Hatter will join the party. This Lux Eleven Hotel eatery serves high-class Italian-Asian dishes and offers easy-going, affable service. Sample dishes by celebrated chef Duc Ngo include pork and langoustine with watermelon and caramel soy sauce, and tuna tataki

(tuna and foie gras with risotto and herbs). A three-course dinner costs €44.

Remake

Grosse Hamburger Strasse 32
The cosy restaurant, with exposed brick walls and softly illuminated columns, remakes traditional fare to indulge your taste buds. Lemongrass soup with scallops (€8), grilled lamb chop with honey melon (€19.50) and tilapia fish fillet and baby leaf salad (€9.50) are among the highlights. Strawberry and mascarpone cheese compote (€8) is a fine way of ending an intimate dinner ... that, and something from the impressive wine list.

Vau

Jaegerstrasse 54-55
Considered the doyen of contemporary German restaurants in the capital, Vau proves that German food isn't passe, with chef Kolja Kleeberg preparing excellent fish and meat dishes. Daring combinations include roast veal with raw marinated tuna and choron sauce, and sautéed scallops with baked zucchini blossom and saffron jelly. Reservations are essential because gastro-connoisseurs, celebrities, Russian *nouveaux riches* and government ministers often pack the terracotta-coloured dining rooms. A three-course meal can easily break the bank, but a lunch main course for about €12 is a bargain.

For entertainment advertising

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