

Haunted places around the world

Francesca Street, CNN • Updated 23rd October 2017

(CNN) — "I think we all like to be a little bit scared, don't we?" says author and historian Robert Grenville, whose book "Haunted Places," explores some of the world's most spine-chilling spots. From Gothic mansions to creepy cemeteries to eerie islands, paranormal places attract our attention, even as we resist the urge to cower indoors.

Grenville's book, published by Amber Books, delves into some of the world's terrifying tales. "There's a timelessness to telling spooky stories round a camp fire, and the book is in that tradition," Grenville tells CNN Travel.

Strange phenomena



The 14th century Mont Saint Michel on a misty night.
Courtesy Alamy/Roman Mikhailov

"Haunted Places" is a globe-spanning exploration of ghostly locales -- with striking photos of these spooky spaces. "The aim was to get a broad span of places from around the world to show that strange phenomena are common experiences for us all," says Grenville, who is based in London.

From the inspiration for Charlotte Brontë's "mad woman in the attic" in "Jane Eyre" to the Scottish castle that inspired Bram Stoker's "Dracula," there's no shortage of spooky spots to explore in Grenville's pages. In many cases, it's the striking buildings, with their mysterious aura, that are the true draw.



The Sterling Opera House in Connecticut is supposedly frequented by a ghost.
Courtesy Alamy/PetterCasolino

Take Sterling Opera House, in Derby, Connecticut. This once-grand 1889 opera house is now disused. Allegedly the empty chairs -- no longer filled with enthusiastic patrons -- are instead frequented by ghostly beings. The disused building evokes a bygone, forgotten era. A relic from another time, it's no wonder

there are rumors of haunting. Grenville thinks the appeal of paranormal places is linked to the idea of abandonment and ruin. "Abandoned buildings have a feeling of loss about them that a haunting only exaggerates and amplifies," he reflects.

Forgotten worlds



The Real Mary King's Close, a tourist spot in Edinburgh, is apparently the site of supernatural happenings.
Courtesy Alamy/Gary Doak

Other creepy spots include Edinburgh's Mary King's Close. This 17th century Scottish close was a plague-ridden cesspit in the 17th century. When the city's more glamorous Royal Exchange, now Edinburgh City Chambers, was built in the 18th century, the street was closed off -- its tragic past buried along with the

plague victim's bodies. But in 1992, a visiting Japanese psychic touring the area is said to have encountered the ghost of a young girl named Annie -- supposedly left behind to die by her family. The Close opened as a

tourist attraction in 2003 and visitors can now venture below Edinburgh's thoroughfares and explore this forgotten, ghostly world.



The Banff Springs Hotel is supposedly haunted by the specter of a dead bride. Courtesy Alamy/Alexander McLean

In Canada, similarly spooky happenings have been spotted at [Banff Springs Hotel](#). The one-time honeymoon destination of Marilyn Monroe, who had her own fair share of tragedy, it's the supposed home of The Bride -- the specter of a young woman who fell to her death wearing her wedding dress. With its vast marble staircase and Gothic exterior, it's not hard to imagine

otherworldly beings walking the hotel's halls.

Cemeteries and islands



Paris's Père Lachaise Cemetery is said to be haunted by writer Marcel Proust and composer Reynaldo Hahn.

Courtesy Dreamstime/Ximdab

Grenville also suggests plenty of eerie outdoor attractions. Graveyards such as Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris and London's Highgate Cemetery are included in the book, thanks to their ghostly grave wanderers.

A particularly chilling spot is the Island of the Dolls in Xochimilco, Mexico City. The trees on the nightmarish isle are adorned with hanging dolls, said to embody the spirits of young girls. "There are a number of tragic tales, especially when young children were lost, and of malevolent spirits," says Grenville. "But there are also many positive encounters, too."

But one of Grenville's favorite stories concerns Old Fort Niagara, the imposing former French fort in New York state.



New York's Old Fort Niagara was the site of a fatal duel.

Courtesy Frank C. Grace

It was apparently the site of a bloody duel, the victor beheaded his victim -- and hid the evidence in a well. "The beheaded French soldier [...] emerges from the well his body was dumped in by his killer," says Grenville. It's a grisly tale that makes a visit to the fortress all the more spine tingling. "What's striking when you visit

a haunted site is the atmosphere you can encounter," says Grenville.

Things that go bump in the night



The island of Poveglia was a quarantine for ships arriving in Venice.

Courtesy Getty/Marco Secchi

"Arriving at dusk or after dark heightens the senses, but there's an almost-tangible sense of something that defies precise definition -- the same feeling you get when your hairs prickle on the back of your neck," says Grenville. The author admits he has yet to visit every location in the book. "Compiling this book has

added a few more destinations to my 'must-see' list!" he says. This globe-spanning book will offer plenty of inspiration for Grenville and other ghost hunters. And even Grenville admits occasionally getting scared. "It's not hard to get your heart in your mouth visiting some of these locations," he says.