

The streets of the French Quarter in New Orleans are full of history. Some say there is much more to be found, especially during the cover of darkness. That reputation is the stock-in-trade of the many companies offering tours full of tales of things that go bump in the night. One tour takes things a step further. Guests can do a ghost hunt at a 200-year-old building with a history that includes one of the most notoriously brutal murders in recent New Orleans history.

In any city with a bit of history, you're sure to find a ghost tour available. New Orleans, with a long, storied history that includes voodoo and vampires, there are many to choose from. With many ghost hunters to follow on TV and online, it's no surprise that tour companies would take their tales a step further. One company, Bloody Mary's Tours, includes a private hunt at a haunted museum featured on the History Channel, Discovery, The Travel Channel and more. If you're looking for an authentic ghost experience in New Orleans, Bloody Mary and her krewe can provide it.

Mary Millan, also known as Bloody Mary the Voodoo Queen, is a local author and expert on the occult. She was born and raised in New Orleans, and her family has lived in the city since 1718. Her involvement with the paranormal began at an early age. "The ghosts woke me up. Since I was a kid, I've had different experiences. And I'm one that has to find out all the whys," shared Mary.

Most tours start in the French quarter at Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop Bar. Considered the oldest structure used as a bar in America, it's a fitting beginning for the adventure. It's said to be the home of a cursed pirate doomed to protect the pirate treasure of Jean Lafitte rumored to be buried on site. Some have claimed to see the face of the tormented pirate in the flames in the fireplace, or even see the shade of Lafitte himself. If you can't find those spirits, you can certainly find plenty of other spirits behind the bar to fortify you for your evening's adventure.

The tours continue with a journey across the Vieux Carre, sharing history and ghostly tales from many area hot spots. At the Old Ursuline Convent, you hear the tale of the Casket Girls, supposed vampires, sealed shut in the attic on the third floor by nails blessed by the Pope. At Pere Antoine Alley behind Jackson Square, you'll learn about the priest that walks the alley in the early hours on his way to tend the poor. One highlight is the LaLaurie Mansion. Madam LaLaurie's husband experimented on slaves chained to the wall. Their horror only ended when a slave chained to the stove set a fire and directed the firefighters to the rooms above where the torture occurred. With every stop, a deeper understanding of the city and its inhabitants unfolds.

The tour concludes at the Museum on Rampart Street. A charming traditional double creole cottage that reflects its 200 years. It does not boast the wrought-iron balconies and architectural details of so many buildings in the quarter. What's clear is that like so many buildings here, it hides many stories waiting to be told.

As you enter, the worn plaster walls with original brick peeking through reflect the history of the space. A unique collection of occult items fills the shelves and displays. Voodoo Queen Marie Laveau once owned a few of the treasures, some are considered haunted. The museum painted a large representation of a Ouija board on the raw concrete floor.

You soon understand what awaits you in the building. There are many spirits that have found this place during its two-hundred-year history. It's said there are 13 resident ghosts. "There are some ghosts that come with the collection, and I don't have all their names," said Mary. The list includes a cat, a horse in

the old carriage house, several children, and two ladies from the 19th century, Agatha and Rose, that act as protectors of the children. “And of course, there’s Zak and Addie”. Shared Mary.

Many years ago, the apartment upstairs was the location of the brutal murder of Addie Hall in 2006. Shortly after moving into the apartment upstairs, Zack Bowen strangled his girlfriend, Addie. He then committed suicide several days later with a note in his pocket leading officials to the apartment. Evidence showed that Zack dismembered Addie in the tub, boiled some of her parts on the stove, cooked some in the oven, and stored the rest in the refrigerator. It’s no wonder that the building is also known as the Rampart Street Murder House.

“This is not the Zak and Addie Museum. It would be foolish not to mention them, especially when they are there so overtly. There are many spirits. I designed the museum as a sanctuary for all spirits and their stories that were in jeopardy of being lost when the people left after Katrina and never came back. Ghosts are our history and I want to record that,” explained Millan.

The private ghost hunt at the museum includes the use of a range of ghost hunting tools to explore the building. EMF meters are used to identify changes in the surrounding electronic magnetic fields. Simple dowsing rods react to energy fields by pointing and crossing. For those looking for more, the guide also shared a phone app. The app includes both an internal EMF meter and a tool that reveals words captured through your phone as EVP (electronic voice phenomena).

Then the ghost hunt truly begins. The group is free to explore the museum and the suite of rooms upstairs that were Zack and Addie’s former apartment. In the apartment, you can see the bathroom, the scene of the dismemberment, and the stove and refrigerator too. There is a collection of coins, bills, and small gifts on the stove as an offering to the spirits. The lights are dim in the sparsely furnished rooms. Some rooms just have chairs lining the walls where you can sit, watch, and listen. Another room is filled with a collection of haunted dolls. This room also has a small alcove where many find the ghost of a young boy named Abe and his sister Anabelle.

As the hunt winds down, we gather back into the main museum space to share our experiences. Our guide attempts to put the results into perspective based on the known history of the building and ghosts in residence. Some experiences are from older ghosts that witnessed the brutal murder and represent their reaction to the experience. Some are simple interactions with ghosts of children in residence or others downstairs in the museum.

Many have explored the building over the years. Professionals from shows like Paranormal Lockdown and Ghost Adventures and novices alike. “I always like to learn what the spirits have to say to other people and how they interpret it. I enjoy sharing the property with those who are here to explore, not exploit, and really want to find out what’s on the other side,” shared Mary.

The results seen at the property are significant. “We’ve had wonderful EVPs. Direct voice phenomenon like you’re hearing me right now. We’ve also had ghost pictures and ghost sounds. People get touched and grabbed. We’ve found a lot of paranormal evidence,” explained Millan.

“Spirits really want to come out to speak if you can be still and listen,” said Mary. “My hope is those that visit question what goes on around them. I want them to stop and think, question, and embrace the other side. Because we are not alone.”

A ghost tour is a must for any paranormal enthusiast when visiting New Orleans. It allows you to discover the French Quarter and its rich history while also understanding the city's darker side. Including a ghost hunt adds to the evening for fans of true crime and the supernatural alike. Is Bloody Mary's Haunted Museum truly the home of 13 resident spirits? You'll have to try your own ghost hunt and decide for yourself. Be sure to tell Abe I said hello when you're there.

Plan Your Visit

Bloody Mary's Tours & Haunted Museum
826 & 828 N Rampart Street, New Orleans
www.bloodymarystours.com
504-915-7774



Many tours meet at Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop Bar, which is purported to be haunted.

Photo Credit: Phil Chang



The tour winds through the streets of the French Quarter.

Photo Credit Phil Chang



The LaLaurie Mansion is a highlight of the tour.

Photo Credit Phil Chang



The tour continues with a ghost hunting session at the museum on Rampart Street.

Photo Credit JoAnn Chang



The museum painted a giant Ouija board on the floor of a room in the museum.

Photo Credit JoAnn Chang



During the ghost tour, hunters use a range of tools in their quest.

Photo Credit JoAnn Chang