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4 Authentic Haunted Hotels of the Wild West

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Whether you believe in ghosts or not, there's nothing like the tale of a jaded spirit that can't find peace to give you the willies. Look no further than the Wild West where dead men (and women) DO tell tales. Want to be scared out of your pants? This Halloween, check into one of these haunted Wild West hotels where a restless soul might keep you from getting a good night's sleep.

1. St. James Hotel (Cimarron, NM)

It has been said that many a violent and deadly encounter occurred at the [St. James Hotel](#) where the likes of Jesse James and Billy the Kid have hung their hats and holsters. (When you go for breakfast, you'll notice the dining room has bullet holes in the ceiling). The hotel was a popular stop to those on the Santa Fe Trail where stagecoaches, smugglers, traders, and outlaws made their way west. (The railroad would be built on the trail in later years.)

Who slept there:

Jesse James, Bat Masterson, Billy the Kid, Wyatt Earp, Doc Holiday, Pat Garrett

Haunt Factor: High

Among other stories at the James, Room 18 is so haunted no one can book it. It's locked. TJ (Thomas James) Wright, a guest, who was staying there in 1882, was said to have been very lucky in a poker game one evening which didn't sit well with some other players. He was shot and flopped dead in Room 18. Guests have reportedly seen his apparition in mirrors and lurking in the hotel hallways.

2. Bullock Hotel (Deadwood, SD)

The Black Hills Gold Rush was a boon for Dakota Territory, attracting the pioneers, prospectors, and unsavory types that would settle there in the 1870s. It was also a lawless town before the appointment of Seth Bullock as the first sheriff of Deadwood (See HBO's [Deadwood TV series](#) storyline). Bullock had been the proprietor of the town's hardware store. Soon, he appointed many a deputy to assist in cleaning up Deadwood's bad reputation. After a devastating fire destroyed his store, he decided to change tactics and open up the town's finest luxury hotel, [The Bullock Hotel](#), in the same space.

Haunt Factor: Moderate

Sheriff Bullock is rumored to roam the halls continuing to run his beloved hotel. (He died of cancer in 1919). Guests have reported seeing his filmy appearance throughout the hotel, and, on occasion, get a whiff of his eternal burning stogie.

3. Irma Hotel (Cody, WY)

Just outside of Yellowstone National Park, you'll find [Buffalo Bill's Irma Hotel](#) (named after his daughter) which was built in 1902, a few years after Mr. Cody founded the town itself. Such famous personalities as Calamity Jane and Annie Oakley are known to have stayed there and, perhaps, practiced their shooting skills. Some financial mishandlings, led Buffalo Bill to sign over the lease of his cherished hotel to his wife in 1913. Was he unhappy with this turn of events? Probably. (Buffalo Bill died in Colorado in 1919)

Who slept there:

Calamity Jane, Annie Oakley

Haunt Factor: Moderate

Besides the rumored specter of Buffalo Bill's spirit running the place, Room 16 has been known to have a rocking chair that eerily rocks with no occupant. No living occupant, that is. (It was Irma's old room).

4. Occidental Hotel (Buffalo, WY)

Located near the Bozeman Trail, the [Occidental Hotel](#) boasts an authentic original saloon and restaurant (The Virginian, named after frequent guest Owen Wister's novel of the same name which was based on characters he met at the hotel). As with the St. James, the bullet holes are real and they may have been from Butch Cassidy's Wild Bunch who were known to belly up to the bar, order a whiskey and get in a shootout about a horse, woman, or card game. (Typical outlaw stuff).

Who slept there:

Butch Cassidy, Tom Horn, Buffalo Bill, Teddy Roosevelt

Haunt Factor: Very High

As a portion of the hotel back in the day was a brothel, it's been said that the spirit of Emily (a prostitute's daughter) haunts one of the rooms in her white nightgown, tapping guests on the shoulder for attention. (Emily had died of cholera when she was seven). Called "Ghost Girl" or "Lady in White," her spirit is such an attraction that children of current guests leave notes and drawings for her. Creepy.

Wherever you stay, try not to be too *freaked out by wayward ghosts* and don't forget to invest in [Allianz Travel Insurance](#) for the journey.

Kenny Gallo is a writer and spirit enthusiast living in Richmond, VA.

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