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Ghosts, Goblins & Spooks Come Out to Party in Estes Park

Now that the summer the month of October is filled with fun and spooky activities for couples and families to enjoy in Estes Park.

The Stanley Museum in Lower Stanley Village is offering “Ghost Stories of the Stanleys,” Saturday afternoons through October when retired Park Ranger Tom Danton shares informative stories about F.O. and Flora Stanley and of the hotel. Danton says he enjoys telling the Stanley ghost stories because they are not terribly scary. Some hotels, he says are haunted because of tragedies.

According to Danton, ghosts return to the Stanley Hotel because they remember it as one of the most splendid times of their lives. He says things mysteriously move around the hotel and museum, and Mr. and Mrs. Stanley are often spotted on the grand staircase overlooking the lobby at the hotel. Danton mixes interesting elements of history into the ghost stories, and audiences depart with more knowledge about Estes Park and the hotel than they had before.

Of course, Estes Park is known for the Stanley Hotel – named as one of the top ten haunted hotels in the United States, inspiring Stephen King to write his famous novel, “The Shining.” The hotel has several ghostly opportunities available during this season. Visitors can take a historic Ghost Tour of the Stanley Hotel where they’ll learn about the history and haunting of the hotel during this 90-minute tour.

On the fourth floor, which used to be the servant’s quarters, visitors may hear the squeals of children playing echoing down the hallway. The tour includes the music room where Flora Stanley often is heard playing her piano and the billiard room where the aroma created by smoke from F.O. Stanley’s cigar has been noticed. Guides take sightseers into the underground tunnel used by servants and employees over the years. Many a visitor has returned from the Stanley with photographs of orbs and ghostly apparitions – and even audio recordings of melodic harmonies from Flora’s antique grand piano.

For an even more extensive exploration of the hotel and possible apparitions, join the Stanley Hotel's professional ghost hunter to explore the paranormal world at the hotel. Investigations are held from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. and participants must be at least 18 years old. Reservations are required.

The Stanley Hotel is not the only haunt in town. The aspen and evergreen woods around Aspen Lodge Ranch Resort are filled with howling ghosts and goblins – and even a headless horseman – in a non-gory, lighthearted excursion everyone in the family can enjoy. Reservations are required for a Scary Wagon Ride drawn by a team of Belgian horses through the haunted forest at Aspen Hollow Oct. 16, 17, 23, 24 and 30.

Want to bring the family for a weekend get-a-way? The YMCA of the Rockies - Estes Park Center offers a Fall Festival where you can enjoy the sights and sounds of fun that autumn brings. The whole family will enjoy pumpkin carving and painting, crafts, archery, a family campfire with s'mores, a family square dance and more. The festival weekend is scheduled for Oct. 30-Nov. 1.

Among other special lodging opportunities during the Halloween weekend is that from the Anniversary Inn Bed & Breakfast. Guests are invited for pumpkin carving, hot apple cider and gingerbread along with trick or treating for all ages.

Looking for a Halloween dance?

Visitors can enjoy toe-tapping acoustic, country, and Delta blues at the Rock Inn Mountain Tavern on Oct. 30. On Oct. 31, attend the Rock Inn's Halloween blowout bash with Danny Shafer and the Unknown Americans. Downtown on Halloween evening you can rock the night away to the Brian Hornbuckle Band at Lonigan's Saloon Nightclub & Grill Annual Halloween Costume Party.

The Stanley Hotel's annual costume party for those 21 and over, the Shining Ball, is Saturday, Oct. 31 from 8 p.m. to midnight. Prizes will be awarded to the sexiest couple. The scariest couple, most original couple and the best character from the movie, "The Shining."

To contact facilities for reservations and costs:

Anniversary Inn B&B: 970-586-6200

Aspen Lodge: 970-586-8133

Lonigans Saloon Nightclub & Grill: 970-586-4346

Rock Inn Mountain Tavern: 970-586-4116

Stanley Hotel Ghost Tours and Hunts: 970-577-4110

Stanley Museum: 970-577-1903

YMCA of the Rockies-Estes Park Center: 877-777-9622

Estes Park is located at the Eastern entrance to Rocky Mountain National Park.