

Ghostly tours help you find the boobird of happiness

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Those ghosts, they sure know how to party.

After all, you never hear about them hanging around just any joint. It's always some opulent pad. You know, like a castle or a Victorian mansion, or some other old joint where you'd expect to see ghosts.

Last Friday, I figured I'd spend the night partying with them – so I boarded "Haunted Cleveland." The charter bus tour runs from 6 to around 11:30 every Friday night through Nov. 1.

(Tickets are \$50 per person; \$95 per couple. For reservations, call 216-251-0406. Or you can plot your own tour. There are tons of spooky places in the area, and even a society dedicated to them, www.spiritseekersofohio.net.)

During the five-plus-hour ride, "Haunted Cleveland" visits area haunts in search of spooks and tall tales.

There's the Bratenahl home with the butler who doesn't realize that he's deceased. There's Griffith Disaster, the ooky-spooky lakefront spot at East 306th Street and Lake Shore Boulevard in Willowick, where 286 perished when a steamer ship caught fire in 1850. There's even that gray lady of ghosts, Franklin Castle – the near West Side mansion where an orgy of mayhem is said to have taken place.

You're even encouraged to bring a digital camera with you, just in case a ghost pops out of the bushes. So I did. I shot photos all night. But the closest I got to capturing a ghost was when this abstract white blob appeared in the picture. My thumb.

That's not to say I didn't have a run-in with some paranormal activity when we hit the lighthouse museum in Fairport Harbor.

You see, the lighthouse, 129 Second St., is allegedly haunted by a playful cat who perished many, many years ago. The story was given credence in 2001 when workers installing an air-conditioning unit found the mummified remains of a gray cat in a crawl space.

Even though the feline has been removed, you can still hear the ghost of the critter running around, according to the tour guide.

Well, I got to see it – or at least a distant cousin. There was a gray cat standing on the other side of the street staring right at me and meowing like crazy.

What a friendly ghost. I not only played with the little guy, he even hopped up into my arms and started licking me.

My other close call came when we pulled up to Squire's Castle, in the North Chagrin Reservation of the Cleveland Metroparks.

Built about 1900 by English-born oil baron Feargus Squire, the turreted castle is alleged to be haunted by

the ghost of the allegedly hanged Mrs. Squire.

According to legend, one autumn evening she was awakened by the sound of wolves. After dashing around the house in a frenzy, she stumbled on a basement step, only to make a perfect landing: Her slender neck landed in the noose of a dangling rope.

Allegedly, her ghost still sleepwalks around the castle and she occasionally dangles from the rafters. I not only pointed my camera around looking for her, I also walked around the joint.

I even took a stroll in the nearby woods. That's when I heard a rustling sound and looked down: Two empty cans of Pabst Blue Ribbon were lying before me.

Yep, I knew it. Those ghosts know how to party.

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