



Forming a Ghost Hunting Club – Part 4

Finding Places to Investigate

Boy, building a ghost hunting group is hard work. We just want to go have fun investigating. Well, now's your chance. But first you have to find some interesting locations. There are some great websites out there that list supposedly haunted locations in almost every state and that's a great place to start. But don't forget because you started networking with your community, you now have access to your local historical society. They'll know where that murder that was hushed up in the late 1800's took place. They'll know that the town hanging tree used to stand on the site of the new fast food restaurant. They'll also know which cemeteries have the most interesting residents.

This is the kind of information you need to create a comprehensive list of locations in your area. These will give you adequate places to investigate so you aren't tied to calls from clients.

So, what goes on your list? I recommend breaking your list down between public and private locations and then by location specifics.

Examples of some places to investigate are parks, cemeteries, historic sites, businesses and homes. Remember, just because it's a public location doesn't mean that you have 24/7 access. You still need to get permission to be there. Getting caught trespassing will put a quick end to your ghost hunting activities. Now let's break them down.

Parks: Most parks you will want to investigate are owned and managed by either your local, county or state governments. Some national parks are reported to be haunted, but you are less likely to get access to these after dark due to federal regulations. Stick to daytime investigations at national parks and you'll be fine. With your local, city or state parks, you will need to contact the appropriate authority to gain permission to be in the park after dark. Once you have that permission, don't forget to notify the police to avoid unnecessary interruptions to your investigation.

You may also find that some parks are privately owned by universities, foundations or other private entities. As with government operated parks, you will need to identify the appropriate authority and gain access. I can't stress this enough, always gain permission prior to starting your investigation.

Cemeteries: It isn't always immediately apparent if a cemetery is public or private. You will need to do a little research. Many cemeteries are associated with churches and these can be difficult to gain access to. You may find that you get permission from the grounds keeper to be on site, only to find that he didn't have the legal authority to grant you access. Find out who has the legal authority over the cemetery and gain permission to investigate from that person. This can take considerable time and effort, but it will be worth it in the end. Remember that a smile and friendly attitude go a long way to smoothing your way. Be persistent and persuasive but not aggressive.

Always respect the wishes of the cemetery management and the families of those buried there. If you enter a cemetery, even during open hours, and begin to take photos, audio or video recording and are requested to stop. Do so immediately. Always respect the beliefs of others, especially when it comes to death.

Historic Sites: Historic sites are most likely the first you'll add to your list. Remember that sweet old lady you met at the historic society? Well, she had great stories about who did what when and where. These are your best resources for determining which historic sites are worth your effort. The historic society is also going to be a good resource for finding out who owns that crazy Victorian house on the hill. Once you've identified the historic sites you want to investigate, get the permission of the owner or manager first. Again, never trespass and remember just because a building is old doesn't mean it's haunted. So, don't be disappointed if you come away without any evidence.

Businesses & Homes: The majority of the investigations you'll perform in businesses and homes will be because the owner contacted you. The owner will call you because they have something unexplained going on. However, if you know of a location where something odd might be going on, there is nothing that says that you can't pursue the investigation. Visit the business and leave your card. Be prepared to return several times to explain who you are and how you plan to approach the investigation. Again, take your time. Let the business owner get to know you. Show them some evidence you've collected at other locations and assure them that their privacy will be honored.

Cold calls on residential sites take a little more finesse than you might have and you may find that it's not worth the trouble. It's not very pleasant to have the door slammed in your face. Take No for an answer and be respectful of the owner's wishes. The easiest way to gain access to residential locations is to canvas the entire neighborhood, leaving flyers in mailboxes. You may not get access to the house you want, but who knows, you may find something interesting in the house next door.

The internet is also going to be a great resource for finding places to investigate. You will find some comprehensive lists of local historical places, as well as cemeteries and parks in your area. The problem with the internet in regards to reports of haunting is that most of what you will find will be rumor or supposition. Check with other ghost hunting groups in your area to find out if they've investigated a location and what they documented.

It's just a matter of digging into the vast resource of places of interest to find the ones that will yield a fun and exciting investigation.

The one thing you don't want to do is to become an ambulance chaser. Don't comb the local papers for reports of tragedy and then camp out at the location waiting for something to happen. That kind of morbid activity will gain you a bad reputation very quickly. Instead, if you suspect that there is paranormal activity at the site of a tragic event, such as a murder or accident, be sympathetic to the families of the people involved. Explain that you would use your equipment to determine if any spirits remain and to find a way to communicate with those spirits. Always treat the location and the people involved with respect. Always take no for an answer in these cases and not push for access. And most importantly never take advantage of someone's grief just so you can have a good time. If you don't honestly think you can help the family find closure, stay away.

I don't want you to feel that you can't have fun ghost hunting. Just have fun when it is appropriate and be respectful of the spirits of those involved, both living and dead.