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Ghost Tour of Philadelphia Can't Give up the Ghost After a Decade of Haunting City Streets

For most people, in most places, seeing a crowd of freaked out tourists would raise eyebrows. Not in Independence Park and Society Hill in America's most historic—and most haunted—city.

The Ghost Tour of Philadelphia has by now become a fixture, albeit a peculiar one, in Philadelphia's historic district. Who wouldn't grow fond of the gathering of long, flowing black velvet capes, with top hats, canes, and Victorian style dresses, the flickering of flames in brass lanterns, the disembodied voices floating through the darkness...not just at Halloween...but every night from April through November!? Although time has etched the specter of ghost tours in popular culture (you hear "*what* kind of tour?" less and less often these days), the Ghost Tour of Philadelphia continues to provide a one-of-a-kind experience, scaring up fun daily at 7:30 pm, with an additional 9:30 pm tour throughout the summer and fall.

The uniqueness of the Ghost Tour of Philadelphia in part lies in its genesis. What may surprise those who have never taken the tour is the long history that has escorted the Ghost Tour down its 11-year path, a history that ushered "Haunted Philadelphia" into being and produced the city's leading tour provider.

But to fully appreciate the scope of the Ghost Tour's heritage, we must travel back to 1995. Berks County PA, 50 miles west of the city: Enter the young Ghost Tour crew and a hand painted sign with an arrow pointing down a desolate country road to a rundown house, replete with rumors of a moody female ghost later named Lizzie Lincoln. The notorious Lizzie Lincoln Haunted House was born. Within two years, the crew had opened Ghost Tours in Cape May, NJ and Lancaster County, PA, tapping into an as of yet nascent cultural fascination with the supernatural.

October, 1997, Eastern State Penitentiary, Philadelphia PA: The Ghost Tour of Philadelphia debuts with ghost tours inside the prison. The following year, the Ghost Tour of Philadelphia begins daily tours in Independence National Park and Society Hill and, in October 1998, expands to "Terror Behind the Walls" at Eastern State Penitentiary and Fort Mifflin. Only a pedigree as quirky as this one could have spawned such cousins of similar eccentricity. The rest, as they say, is history.

In 2007, the Ghost Tour of Philadelphia proudly celebrated its 10 year anniversary and Ghostlore Press' newest book, *Ghost Stories of Philadelphia, PA*. Besides finding never-before-told stories of Betsy Ross, the millionaire Colemans, Temple University and others, readers can compare their own otherworldly experiences on the tour with those had by past Ghost Tour-goers, included at the end of every chapter.

It's no wonder that, today, the Ghost Tour of Philadelphia is known as the city's most unusual and entertaining tour, offering up the chance to see the *other side* of Philadelphia history and folklore. Tales include the well-known, such as Ben Franklin, Independence Hall, William Penn, Rebecca Gratz, and the bride of City Tavern, and also, of course, the lesser known...tales of plague and pestilence, graveyards and potter's fields, heroes and traitors!

The Ghost Tour of Philadelphia's 90 minute candlelight walking tour starts daily at 7:30 pm in the Signers Garden at 5th and Chestnut Streets, April through November. For reservations, rates, ticket locations, and additional tour times, call 215-413-1997 or visit ghosttour.com. Private and group tours are available March through November. Books are available at ghostlore.com and at regional retailers.