



Visit The Scariest Places On Earth

A visit to these incredible and frightening sites around the world, where the unexplainable is sometimes an everyday occurrence, will invariably give visitors the creeps. These include kidnap tunnels in Portland, Oregon, a cemetery where the dead are constantly exhumed, the shockingly cavernous and terrifying catacombs beneath Paris, a lake that swallows up fishermen like the Bermuda Triangle, a murderous forest, the scariest roadway in America and the deserted island in the middle of a major European city where even the bravest souls dare not tread.

- Aviva Sternfeld

Nightmare Tunnels in Portland, Oregon

Deep beneath the streets of the Old Town (also known as Chinatown) section of Portland, Oregon, lies a network of tunnels and tiny cells that send chills up people's spines. These tunnels are an infamous souvenir of a best-forgotten epoch when people were "shanghaied," or kidnapped to be sold as cheap laborers to sea captains in need of crewmen.

The tunnels date back to a largely unfamiliar portion of American history, involving a crime few are aware of that was committed over many decades. Thugs called "crimps" would kidnap people—mostly healthy, well-built men such as sailors, lumberjacks and construction workers—and sell them for profit.

The most common method was to intoxicate or drug the victims and then smuggle them into the tunnels, where they were chained. They were kept underground until they were sold as slaves, sometimes for as little as \$50 a head. The victims now found themselves forced to work on ships sailing to China. (The center of international commerce in China was the city of Shanghai, hence the origin of the term.)

In Portland, this practice is believed to have gone on from 1840 to as late as 1941. Kidnappings occurred there on such a grand scale that the city became known as "the most dangerous port in the world" and the "shanghaiing capital of the world." People



Shoes that kidnapers confiscated from their victims to prevent them from escaping.



A visit to the nightmarish tunnels beneath Portland, Oregon.



Wooden cots where victims slept.



The shanghaiers pulled the rope to open the trapdoor and the victim dropped into the tunnel below.

who just stopped by for a quick drink at a local tavern could suddenly find themselves the latest victim of the shanghaiers, waking up in the underground tunnels from where they were led directly to the port.

The tunnels were connected to the cellars of hotels and businesses, and snaked for nine miles from the Old Town to downtown Portland. They were originally created to transport goods to and from the ships quickly, but some historians claim they later took on a central role in the practice of shanghaiing. They had secret entrances from certain taverns and bars, trapdoors through which intoxicated clients could be slipped into the tunnels where the kidnapers waited for them.

The kidnapers worked in cahoots with the taverns, which were paid a percentage of the profits. A bar owner stood near the secret entrance and waited for someone to be incapacitated by drink. Then he pressed a button to signal to the shanghaiers below, and they pulled a cord. The trapdoor opened and the victim disappeared into the tunnel.

Although other ports along the West Coast, including San Francisco, are said to have been centers of shanghai activity, Portland's underground tunnels are claimed to have made the practice much more manageable and wide-spread than in other areas. Some researchers believe as many as 1,500 people in Portland fell victim to the practice each year.

Shanghai activity increased dramatically during the Prohibition Era, when the

manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages became unconstitutional. Many distilleries and taverns moved "underground" in a very literal sense and became a part of Portland's underground city. This made it that much easier for the unscrupulous shanghaiers to capture unsuspecting victims. The practice continued undeterred thanks to the bribes paid to crooked police officers, politicians and business owners in exchange for their silence or direct cooperation.

Tourists who visit the creepy tunnels today can still view the shocking remnants of that era. These include a room filled with shoes, which were immediately removed from the kidnap victims to discourage escape. The shanghaiers spread glass shards over the floor so that even if someone did try to run away he would leave behind a trail of blood.

There are also tiny 4x4 foot wooden cells where the victims were imprisoned until their sale to a sea captain. Most of the victims would not return for six years, and some were never heard from again.

Unsurprisingly, the terrifying legend of shanghaiing tunnels in Portland has created a popular tourist attraction, complete with claims of haunted areas and ghostly voices mumbling, "Get out!"

Cemetery Where the Dead Are Constantly Exhumed

In Guatemala City, the creepiness about corpses to a whole



A cell in the tunnels.

new level. Guatemala's capital has been suffering for years from two problems: a shortage of land for burying the dead, and a high rate of deaths, thanks to a weak health care system and high crime rate.

Authorities came up with a solution to the first problem by using above-ground burial. In this system bodies are laid to rest in large closets that may be many rows high. The coffin is inserted in an opening which is cemented shut.

It turns out that these graves are available only for rental, not