



Get into the ‘Spirit’ of the Summerween Season: Plan a Ghoulish Trip to Haunted Carson Valley

CARSON VALLEY, Nev. (Sept. 12, 2024) – Those who feel like Halloween is debuting earlier every year aren’t wrong: a cultural phenomenon called [Summerween](#) is growing in popularity, as retailers roll out creepy decorations and candy wrapped in black and orange well in advance of an anticipated autumn surge in all things spooky. And perhaps as a result of seeing 12-foot skeletons and animated werewolves hitting stores early, travelers are hopping on the Summerween bandwagon, [planning their fall travel](#) around ghoulish adventures during late summer months and into the fall.

Travelers seeking out a “spirited” experience are turning to destinations rich in spooky lore, making Carson Valley — with its four historic communities of Gardnerville, Minden, Genoa, and Topaz Lake - a prime destination. The region was born around 1850 as gold discoveries brought immigrants west, with the silver waters of the Carson River signaling the end of the deadly Forty Mile Desert — the most dreaded portion of any pioneer trail across the United States.

Turns out, all that frontier adventure may have resulted in a few spirits being left behind. Learn about some of the region’s haunted hot spots below.



Genoa Bar, Nevada's oldest Thirst Parlor, in Genoa, Nevada

Getting Ghoulish in Genoa

[Genoa](#) was established in 1851 — at the onset of the Comstock Lode discovery that brought an influx of settlers to the region. This historic site pays homage to the town's original Mormon settlers and the riders of the Pony Express. It is also thought to be one of the most haunted places in Nevada.

With a town this old, of course there's an eerie cemetery: The [Genoa Cemetery](#) is a regular ghost-hunting hot spot for spirit-seekers, with both marked and unmarked graves — many holding the remains of children, which may be the reason many paranormal investigators describe the antics of the graveyard residents as “playful.” Here are a few notable haunts:

- The most famous grave is that of [John “Snowshoe” Thompson](#), who carried mail and supplies on skis over 90 miles between Genoa and Placerville for 20 winters. He now rests in the Genoa Cemetery next to his wife Agnes and son Arthur, his grave marked with a pair of crossed skis.
- Numerous [reports of unexplained lights](#) surround miner Bill Zirn's grave in the Old Genoa Cemetery. His grave is marked by a four-foot granite boulder, which creepily, was the very cause of his demise: He was struck by the boulder before it became his grave marker above his final resting place.

While on the topic of graveyard hauntings, another paranormal stomping ground is said to be the Victorian home of the town's original undertaker, C.W. Dake. Now known as [Antiques Plus/The Dake House](#), this retail establishment started out as the local morgue and funeral home.

If “possibly possessed painting” is an intriguing curiosity, this is a must-stop on a fall ghost-hunting adventure. The owners of the shop acquired an oil still life that reportedly flew off the wall every time they tried to sell it, subsequently learning that the origins of this painting involved a spirit medium and a seance in San Francisco. Visitors can still learn about this “spirit painting,” visit the haunted corner stone, and walk through the haunted garden. The store regularly [announces/hosts spirit investigations on its social media channels](#).

Other landmark locations for spiritual energy in Genoa include:

- [Mormon Station](#), where local lore notes the chicken coop — of all places — is the paranormal hot spot on this property.
- Built in 1855, [The Pink House](#) is now a restaurant and events center that pays homage to its gothic revival architectural style and has earned stature as a National Registered Historical Site. Previous residents have experienced significant tragedy, like the story of Judge Daniel Virgin and Mary Raycraft Virgin, who lost two children tragically — one in a lumber mill accident, the other when a carriage overturned with the child inside. A former housekeeper is said to still be serving tea inside.
- The Genoa Courthouse was the first and only courthouse in Douglas County from 1865 to 1916, making the [Courthouse Museum](#) a must-visit for those interested in stepping back in time to the days of Old West justice.

Genoa visitors can wrap up their search for haunted spirits by imbibing in liquid spirits (accompanied by a visit from a famous ghost named Red) at [The Genoa Bar and Saloon](#), Nevada's oldest Thirst Parlor. Red allegedly loves to turn on the jukebox or play other hijinks on customers and staff, like throwing straws.

Stroll with the Spirits at Dangberg Home Ranch Historic Park

In a neighboring Carson Valley town, visitors can learn the backstory of the man informally acknowledged as the Founding Father of Carson Valley, German immigrant Heinrich Friedrich Dangberg, who was only 18 when he came to America. He established his home in 1857 at what would become [Dangberg Home Ranch Historic Park](#), raising five children there. In 1906, the family founded the town of Minden, named after Minden, Germany.

Ghostly sightings have been reported throughout the Dangberg Ranch property, where the past is very much alive among the heritage ranch's preserved historic buildings and artifacts, all of which originally belonged to the Dangberg family or were original features of the home. From April to October (and weather permitting), several buildings are open for visitors to see, featuring interpretive signs that share the site's [history](#). Notable landmarks include a stone cellar built in 1870, a laundry house from 1906, and the original carriage house built in 1917.

Have a 'Phantasmic' Time in a Coffin Race or on a Haunted Horseless Carriage Ride

The Carson Valley certainly leans into its ghostly lore, hosting events and activities that celebrate the bizarre in various forms. Two notable options:

- If building a coffin with a team of friends and racing it down the streets of Gardnerville sounds like a wild ride, it is: Main Street Gardnerville hosts its annual [Coffin Races & Fall Festival](#) at Heritage Park in Gardnerville on Oct. 5 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. This free family festival also features scarecrow-building, live music from local bands, and more than 60 arts and crafts vendors with a food truck alley.
- Take a [Tahoe Sleigh Ride](#) Haunted Horseless Tour, a narrated e-carriage ride through Genoa that tells tales of the region's poltergeist-punctuated past. Stay tuned to their [social media](#) to learn more about these rides, happening Halloween Night from 5-7 p.m.

Summerween is in full swing in the Carson Valley, welcoming visitors for creepy fall adventures and a spectre-tacular time! Learn more about Genoa, Minden, Gardnerville, and Topaz Lake [here](#), or call the Carson Valley Visitors Authority at (775) 782-8145.

###

Straddling the California-Nevada state line 1.5 hours south of the Reno-Tahoe International Airport, discover the four communities — Genoa, Minden, Gardnerville and Topaz Lake — that comprise spectacular Carson Valley. Beholding some of Nevada's first and oldest establishments, visiting Carson Valley means authentically interacting with Nevada's many histories while experiencing world-renowned outdoor recreation Nevada, and the American West is known for. From legendary forefathers who paved the way to Nevada statehood, to wild horse bands, eagles, and other wildlife, to premiere air sports, American Indian, Basque, and Western Ranching histories and

cultures, and distinctive dining experiences that all exist here and only here, Carson Valley offers an adventure for everyone. For more information about lodging, special events, and more trip planning tools, go to VisitCarsonValley.org or dial (775) 782-8145. The Visitor Information Center is located within the Carson Valley Museum and Cultural Center at 1477 U.S. Highway 395 N, Gardnerville, NV.

MEDIA RESOURCES

[Click for photos](#)

MEDIA CONTACT

Amy Demuth, RAD Strategies Inc.

media@radstrategiesinc.com / 775-323-6333

Media interested in visiting Carson Valley should fill out the [Media Request Form](#).