



## The Best Things to Do in Salem During Halloween

### Learn About the Witch Trials at the Salem Witch Museum

I recommend starting your visit at the [Salem Witch Museum](#) where you'll get an overview of the town's dark history. It offers an immersive presentation on the 1692 witch trials, featuring life-sized sets and dramatic storytelling. You'll also have a chance to delve deep into the history of witches and what events led to the witch trials.

As a brief history, the Salem Witch Trials were a series of hearings and prosecutions of people accused of witchcraft in Salem, Massachusetts, between 1692 and 1693. The hysteria began in January 1692, when a group of young girls, including Betty Parris and Abigail Williams, began exhibiting strange behaviors and accused several local women of practicing witchcraft.

The trials started in February, and as fear spread, around 250 people were accused of being witches within a 10 month period. That is equivalent to 10% of the town's population! Of those accused, 19 people were executed by hanging and 1 person, Giles Corey, was pressed to death with heavy stones.

The trials were fueled by religious extremism, local feuds, and paranoia. Spectral evidence (testimony based on dreams and visions) played a key role in the convictions.

By May 1693, the hysteria subsided, and those imprisoned were released. The trials are now seen as a cautionary tale of mass hysteria and injustice.

### Take a Walking Ghost Tour

Our favorite thing that we did in Salem was to take a [walking.ghost tour](#). Our tour guide lead us to the city's most haunted and historic spots and shared chilling stories of the town's past. It was a fun and spooky way to experience the town.

We visited spots such as Turner's Seafood. Before it was a popular seafood restaurant, it was the home of Bridget Bishop. She was the first person to deny being a witch and the first to be hung on June 10th, 1692.

The home was later repurposed for social events and was known as Lyceum Hall. In 1831, Alexander Graham Bell did demonstration here and Frederick Douglas also gave a speech in this hall.

Today, the restaurant serves some of the best seafood in town, but it is also believed to be haunted!

The courthouse where the trials took place is no longer standing. However, there is a colorful crosswalk on Washington Street between Church St and Lynde St that marks where the courthouse once stood.

The tour will also take you to Merchant Inn. George Washington once stayed at this beautiful historic hotel, but it also has a reputation for being one of most haunted buildings in Massachusetts.

This hotel was once the home of Joshua Ward, a successful merchant. He built this stately Federal-style home on the land where Sheriff George Corwin's home once stood. He was the ruthless sheriff during the witch trials who carried out the executions at Proctor's Ledge on Gallows Hill. According to our tour guide, it is believed that he would take the accused witches into his house and torture them. The ghosts of these falsely condemned souls are rumored to haunt the hotel to this day, particularly the infamous Lady in Black.

You'll make several other stops on the tour to see important historic sites and hear about the history. It really was a fascinating tour!

## Tour the Witch House

The Witch House was once the home of Judge Jonathan Corwin. He served as a judge, alongside Judge John Hathorne, during the witch trials. He is also the uncle of Sheriff George Corwin.

Jonathan Corwin's home is one of the only remaining buildings in Salem with direct ties to the witch trials. It was built in 1675 and is one of the most popular attractions in Salem today.

The home is open for tours and offers a glimpse into colonial life in the 1600s, as well as providing historical context to the infamous trials.

Tour tickets are released daily at 8 am, and during the month of October they sell out within minutes of being released. Click the link for [ticket information](#).

## Stop by the Salem Cemetery and Witch Trials Memorial

Salem's oldest burial ground, Charter Street Cemetery (Old Burying Point Cemetery), is one of the oldest cemeteries in the US. It is also the final resting place of many historical figures,

including Judge John Hathorne from the witch trials, along with passengers from the Mayflower, Revolutionary War soldiers, and early Puritan families.

What you won't find are the graves of those executed during the witch trials. Sadly, they weren't even given the respect of a proper burial site. Instead, they were buried in a mass grave.

Today, the Salem Witch Trials Memorial has been erected outside the gates of the cemetery and honors the 20 victims who were executed during the trials. You'll find a granite bench in honor of each victim. Take time to walk around and read each name and remember how their lives were unfairly and tragically cut short.

Over time, each of the accused have been exonerated, but I was shocked to learn that the last person wasn't exonerated until 2022!

While you're at the cemetery, look for the Gould-Pickman House adjacent to the cemetery on the corner of Charter and Liberty Street. This home was built in 1665 and is considered one of the oldest structures in Salem.

## Visit Filming Locations from *Hocus Pocus*

If you're a fan of Disney's *Hocus Pocus*, you'll love visiting filming locations around Salem. If you've never seen the movie, I recommend watching it before your visit so that you can appreciate seeing these locations in person.

Some must-see spots include the Ropes Mansion, owned by the Peabody Essex Museum. This historic home is famous for being one of the most haunted places in Salem. It was also featured in *Hocus Pocus* as Allison's house and is open for tours.

The Old Town Hall is the setting for the Halloween party scene. As an interesting side note, the Town Hall is located where the Parker Brothers headquarters once stood. Not many people realize that some of the most popular board games, including Monopoly, were born here in Salem!

A few other filming locations include Pioneer Village where the opening scenes of the movie were filmed. Salem Common is also where the kids are seen riding their bikes, and the abandoned Phillips Elementary School was Max and Allison's school where they tried to roast the Sanderson sisters in a kiln. Click the link for more [Hocus Pocus filming locations](#).

## Shop at the Haunted Happenings Marketplace and Essex Street Shops

The best places to pick up witch-themed attire and gifts is at the Haunted Happenings Marketplace and the Essex Street Shops.

The Haunted Happenings Marketplace is an outdoor pop-up market held every weekend in October at Salem Common and Derby Square. You'll find hundreds of local vendors selling Halloween-themed goods, handmade crafts, and unique souvenirs.

Essex Street is Salem's most popular shopping district. This pedestrian-only street is lined with witchy shops, costume stores, and themed attractions. At night this street is such a vibe with people dressed in costumes roaming around.

A few of the best shops include Witch City Wicks, A candle shop with spooky scents. The Coven's Cottage is a magical store filled with witchcraft supplies, the Black Cat Cult is a witch-themed store that is located in an old bank building, and Emporium 32 is a vintage-inspired shop with eerie finds.

## Take a Photo with the Bewitched Statue

One of Salem's most famous landmarks is the Bewitched Statue, a tribute to the 1960s TV show *Bewitched*. The show helped change the stereotype of witches and fueled America's fascination.

Several episodes were filmed in Salem, which skyrocketed the small town into fame and helped it become the bonafide tourist attraction that it is today.

This bronze statue of Elizabeth Montgomery (who played Samantha) is located in the center of town and is one of the most popular photo spots in Salem. You will most likely wait in line to grab a photo, but it's a fun tribute to the world's most beloved witch!

## Grab a Bite to Eat

After a day of exploring, enjoy some delicious food at Salem's top restaurants! We loved the wood-fired pizza and Hocus Pocus mocktail at Bambolina's. I recommend eating outdoors on the sidewalk patio so that you can enjoy some expert people-watching and appreciate all of the over-the-top costumes!

Here are a few more of the best places to eat in Salem:

- **Ledger Restaurant & Bar:** A historic building turned upscale eatery, perfect for a cozy meal.
- **Red's Sandwich Shop:** A local favorite for breakfast and brunch. Be sure to order their giant pancakes!
- **Turner's Seafood:** A must-visit for fresh New England seafood in a historic setting.
- **Settlers:** This trendy spot has a chic vibe and serves dishes made with locally sourced ingredients.
- **Mercy Tavern:** If you're looking for a fun night out, head to Mercy Tavern for hearty comfort food and live music.

- **Rockafellas:** The food here is mediocre, but if it's a Halloween vibe you're going for, then this is the spot. The restaurant is located in a reportedly haunted building and they really capitalize on that during the season!
- **Gulu Gulu Café:** This quirky coffeehouse is a favorite among locals. It has a fun energy and serves delicious crepes, waffles, sandwiches, and wraps.

We visited Salem while on a girl's trip to Cape Cod and it was such a fun day trip! If you're planning to visit Cape Cod while in the area, see our guides [9 Things to Do During Fall in Cape Cod](#) and [The Best Things to Do on a Day Trip to Nantucket](#).