



GRANDE COLONIAL

LA JOLLA ∞ EST. 1913

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THE GRANDE COLONIAL Ghost Stories

The Grande Colonial Hotel in La Jolla has been a part of the La Jolla landscape since 1913. Originally an apartment hotel, the Colonial has been home to celebrities who were looking for an ideal escape from their very public lives. The La Jolla Playhouse, founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer, attracted several up-and-comers and many famous actors and celebrities. One guest room in particular, was a favorite of the visiting celebrities. With a semi-private entrance and exit, this particular room was the scene of several discrete liaisons. Celebrities wanting to keep their private life, well private, would request this room. Today, they still seem to enjoy the room, which still has its secluded entrance and exit. The reception desk has received phone calls from this room and upon answering the call; there is no one on the other end of the line. Each time, an employee was dispatched to the room to make sure everything was okay. Upon checking the room, one employee saw a figure hiding behind some curtains. As he approached, the curtains fell flat. Upon investigation of the curtains, there was no open window and no breeze to account for the movement. Perhaps they just wanted some room service....

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A tall gentleman in a tux, top hat, white scarf and cane was seen roaming the halls of the 1928 building one late evening. A lady in a crème colored evening gown accompanied him. The clerk who saw them was concerned, as he did not recognize them, and the hour was very late. He rushed after them, rounding the corner – and no one was there.....

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The Grande Colonial Hotel has been remodeled several times. When the restaurant NINE-TEN was created it seems the spirits were very unhappy. Restaurant staff would leave pots of broth or sauces simmering overnight, for the next day's menu. They would return to find either the pilot lights snuffed out or the stove turned all the way up. Doors opening and closing, items moved and strange noises were the tell-tail signs that they were not happy. After the remodel of the hotel was completed things did quiet down somewhat. The stoves don't seem to have the same problems today, but the noises and door opening and closing still occur in the bakery. Perhaps they are just after some of our scrumptious desserts.....

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The North Annex in The Grande Colonial's 1913 section is particularly active. Several guests and staff members have heard someone running very heavily and fast down from the third floor to the second floor. A swinging door separates the guest rooms from our meeting room and kitchen. A staff member was working in the meeting room around 10:00 a.m. and heard a ruckus; someone was running down the stairs. She rushed to the entrance and the swinging door opened in front of her – and no one came through the door, it just swung closed in front of her. There was no one in the hallway or stairs and nowhere to hide.

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Guests in the North Annex of The Grande Colonial Hotel sometimes complain of noises in the wee hours of the night from the guests below their rooms. Loud voices, doors slamming and heavy footsteps have been heard. The only problem is that there are no guests in those rooms. Below is the bakery, which once upon a time was two apartments. It seems that two men lived in one apartment and two women in the other and they often got together and had parties. It seems they enjoyed it so much that they still continue to party to this day. The Colonial staff investigates every complaint and the outcome is always the same...the bakery is empty and locked tight for the night.

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Imagine the Suites building at The Grande Colonial hotel in 1913. Ladies sitting on the front porch, visiting and sewing, enjoying the fresh ocean air. It seems that one of these ladies has never left. Back in the day when the hotel was new, a family and their maid stayed in one of the apartments overlooking the ocean. Now the suites' building has two staircases. The servants' staircase is very narrow and this maid was a rather large woman and in her travels up and down the stairs wore away the paint on the railings of the staircase. Today, that staircase railing seems to wear away faster than the other side. It could just be coincidence, but I like to think of that dedicated lady, taking care of her family. Watching the waves from her window...

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Normandy Invasion at The Grande Colonial in La Jolla?

The meeting room often in question of strange happenings is the Sun Room. The Sun Room is currently a favorite for private events with its fabulous ocean view and cozy fireplace. Sixty years ago, however, the Sun Room was used as a temporary barracks for single servicemen during WWII. Hardwood floors still exist under the carpet in the "North Annex" of The Grande Colonial, and during the early part of The Grande Colonial's life, the "North Annex" and the Sun Room were not carpeted. The historic battle known as "D-Day" occurred on June 6, 1944. Perhaps the spirits of those long ago soldiers were reliving the events on the 60th anniversary of the Normandy Invasion. Could the noises heard perhaps be the spirits of those men preparing to join their comrades in arms across the seas?

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During the early morning of June 6, 2004, a guest in room 122 awoke at 3:00 a.m. feeling a bit odd. She lay in her bed for a few moments pondering the strange feelings, not quite sure what they were. Suddenly she heard heavy footsteps on the staircase outside of her room. Up and down, several people ran stomping on each step and a door was slamming repeatedly! This went on for quite a while. She lay in her bed, covers pulled up, wondering if she should dare open the door to see what was going on. At last she opened her door and peered out, but there was no one to be seen. She was certain she heard multiple heavy footsteps of men running up and down the stairs, and the stairs sounded hollow, as if there was no carpet on them. Also, the “slamming door” she heard was not to a guest room at all, but to a meeting room. At 3:00 in the morning, it was very unlikely that there would be a meeting going on. She notified the staff and was assured that no one used that room during the wee hours of the morning and that the security staff made regular rounds and nothing unusual had occurred. At her request, the guest was moved to another room so she could sleep a bit easier, away from the noisy ghosts.

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During a recent remodel of the Sun Room, employees Carla & Matt were talking in the kitchen and observed a frying pan securely stacked on rack above lift up and set down on the counter.

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Another employee, Chrissy, was recently in the Sun Room and heard heavy footsteps thundering down the stairs in the North Annex. She raced to the swinging door partition between the Sun Room and guest rooms to catch the culprit. The door swung open to meet her, but no one came through the door and the hallway/staircase was empty.

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On the morning of 8/5/05, a hotel guest reported to us that her son (11 years old) saw several “small Abraham Lincoln’s jumping around his room. Later the same boy awoke to find a lady with brown hair all dressed in white brushing his hair. They were staying in room #320. The mother reported to us that strange phenomenon happens to them all the time.

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Over the weekend of 11/5/05, a guest was staying in room #508. One night in particular, she was having difficulty sleeping. She awoke at 3 a.m. precisely and noticed a presence in the room. She described it as a “heavy feeling”. Nothing menacing or intrusive...just a “curiosity”, as if she were being watched. She noticed a strange, soft glow in the room. But all of the lights were out and the shades were drawn. She saw an image of a girl, roughly 24 years old, with brown hair wearing a light lace dress. For some reason since the incident, this hotel guest has been unable to get the name Abigail out of her head. She also thought she may have heard the name “Trent” but was unsure. This guest has never known anyone by the name of Abigail Trent in her life. She considers herself to be a very level-headed nurse of 10 years on her way to getting a PhD and becoming a doctor. She is not superstitious or into the supernatural. But now she is definitely a believer!

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On April 22, 2012, guests in room 235 (our Ambassador Suite) informed Mark the bellman of suspicious activity that went on during their stay. The guest said that as he and his wife were watching television the night prior, he suggested they watch television from the bedroom rather than the living room. The wife agreed and turned off the television and walked into the bedroom and sat down. The television turned on all by itself. She asked her husband how he had turned the television on from the other room and he told her he hadn't touched the remote. He then went to the restroom and when he came out and sat on the bed, all of the lights turned off on their own.

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In February of 2013, guests staying in room 420 informed us after they checked out that they very much liked the hotel. However, they reported that they encountered a ghost in their room. They indicated that they make it a habit to keep the bathroom light on when they travel. But it kept turning off by “someone we don't know”. Furthermore, the couple slept in separate beds. The husband said that a “young male ghost kept bothering him, wanting to play with him”. After that, he felt breathless as if something heavy was on his body.

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In August of 2014, one of our guests visiting the hotel on business with Pfizer informed us that she too experienced a ghostly encounter. On her first night with us, in guest room, #311, she saw an acquaintance of hers (someone who was not staying with her) walking into the bathroom in the middle of the night. Once she got her bearings and was able to focus a little better (and get up the nerve to even get out of bed and look), she realized it wasn't anyone she knew. Perhaps it was just a ghost with a headache looking through her Pfizer sundry bag for a little Advil.

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On September 14th, 2015, a guest was dining at NINE-TEN with three other ladies. After finishing their late lunch, they all four went downstairs to find the ladies room. The woman and her sister waited outside of the washroom for their two friends, standing facing the hallway with the laundry room on their right and the stairwell on their left. They were both admiring the heaps of laundry in the laundry room wondering how many people work in the laundry and that was an awful lot of laundry to wash and dry. Suddenly a lady (possibly in her early 40's) appeared out of nowhere. There were no sounds or footsteps to be heard as she was making her way down the hallway. In fact, the ladies don't even remember seeing her legs or her shoes. She was an attractive lady with short, well-groomed hair and she appeared to be Asian. She was very neatly dressed in a purple business suit that an executive would wear and the blazer had very heavily-padded shoulders and a very severe type of neckline with no lapels on the blazer, similar to something you would have seen in the 1980's or 1990's. She was clutching a black portfolio across her chest and was holding on to it with both hands. She had a very confused look on her face and the ladies wondered if she was lost. She stood at the entrance of the laundry room with a very bewildered look. The two other friends came out of the ladies room and they all turned towards the stairway to go back upstairs to the lobby. As they were turning to go upstairs, the lady in purple remained at the laundry room door and one of the women said to her, "the stairway to go upstairs to the lobby is here. Follow me." But when she didn't hear a response, she turned around and no one was there. The woman's sister also witnessed this and proceeded to say, "I think we just saw a ghost."

A year later, this same guest (who has since started working towards becoming a medium to tap into the skills she has had most of her life), reached back out to us with the following: "I really feel the lady in the purple suit I saw that day wanted me to do something on her behalf (not sure what though). I believe there may be a connection to the lady I saw and a Japanese National woman who had been married to an American (they both lived in San Diego while they were married). She was murdered by her husband in 2007 I think and there was a lot of media attention. I believe the woman's name was Fumiko Simoneau. I saw a photo of her online and she looks just like the lady in purple I saw at your hotel."

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It was April of 2016. We were hosting a visiting travel journalist and her family who were visiting San Diego to do a story for various blogs to which she contributes. The family stayed in Suite 101 in the Colonial Suites building (the original hotel dating back to 1913). At one point, the guest was in the bedroom and noticed that the bathroom light was on. She walked into the living room area and asked if anyone had left the light on. Everyone said "no". So she went back into the bedroom and looked inside the bathroom area and the light had been turned off. The next morning of their stay, the guest and her father went to Starbucks and when they returned, her mother indicated that while she was sitting in the living room area of the room, the chain on the door started moving like a pendulum. She thought there was an earthquake but quickly realized it was swinging on its own. Ironically, the night before they all fell asleep, her young daughter turns to her and says, "I'm not sure about this place." When asked why, she responded "I don't know. I feel like there are spirits here and this place is haunted."

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During a late evening in July of 2017, a hotel guest and his brother went on their first ghost-hunting adventure. Equipped with a lot of ghost hunting equipment, they approached Guest Room 311 and suddenly got goose bumps all over their bodies. They put their ears up against the wall to see if they could hear something. But they didn't hear a peep. They then placed the voice recorder from their ghost hunting kit on the wall and stood there for a minute. They later replayed the recorder. And much to their surprise, there were many voices recorded. But again, they never heard anything while standing there with their ear against the wall. To this day, they wonder who it was because no one was there. Just those goose bumps that suddenly appeared. This will be their first unforgettable ghost hunting adventure!

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We hear more stories every day and have recently been informed that the ghosts in the kitchen are back to playing with the stove, turning the flame up and down when no one is around. The kitchen and bakery are VERY active and so is the ladies room. You might hear someone walking around or the doorknob turning when no one but you is in the room. It can be a little scary. One of our housekeepers said she saw faces peering out from one of the windows on the 1st floor of the suites building and was so spooked she switched to day shift!

(7/2017)