

TRAVEL

SPOOKY FAMILY TRAVEL

If you're looking for a frightfully good time, here's a sampling of spine-tingling Halloween events for the whole family.

ST. CHARLES SCARECROW FESTIVAL

St. Charles, Illinois

October 8-10

Rating: 1 Ghost (scare-free activities for any age)

Don't miss the scarecrow contest, the highlight of this fright-free festival, where you're invited to inspect more than 100 handcrafted scarecrows and vote for your favorite. The five decorating categories to choose from are: traditional (for scarecrows like those found in farmers' fields); whimsical (friendly scarecrows); children's (for kids ages 12 or younger); business (only for businesses in the St. Charles area); and mechanical (features movement, sound, or light). Once you've had your fill of scarecrow gazing, check out the free children's events, such as the haystack hunt (where prizes are stashed), as well as activities featuring coloring, balloon artists, magicians, clowns, and stilt-walkers. For more information, call 800/777-4373 or visit their Web site at www.scarecrowfest.com.

BAKER'S JUNCTION HAUNTED TRAIN

Smithville, Indiana

Fridays and Saturdays in October

Rating: 2 Ghosts (fine for little ones accompanied by adult)

The Big Fright at Baker's Junction features four haunted train cars, two nail-biting mazes and passage through a ghostly graveyard. The haunted train is for kids of all ages and offers a scare-free kiddie playland with fun ghosts and activities. For more daring souls, enter the door to The Big Fright at your own peril. It's scares galore as monsters jump up, pop out, and drop from nowhere. Admission is \$5 per person. Call 812/824-2158 or visit www.bakersjunction.com.

BOO AT THE ZOO

Cleveland, Ohio

October 22-24; 29-31

Rating: 1 Ghost (scare-free activities for any age)

Have your fill of critters, treats, and Halloween fun at this fright-free event. Come in costume and roam the zoo to check out the animals in their nighttime habitats. Then wander through the haunted hay maze, meet the zookeeper, and watch live animal and magic shows. Keep watch for costumed characters, clowns, and jugglers. Don't miss the Jack O'Lantern Express train ride through Australian Adventure, and then take a break to do some Halloween-themed arts and crafts, or stop for a drink of complimentary Boo Brew (apple cider). Make sure the kids pick up their free treat bag. Get your tickets early! Admission is \$5 per person, and free for children two and under. Call the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo at 216/635-3366 or visit www.clemetzoo.com. 🐾

—By Julie Collins

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