

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

By Ellen Albanese
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

SAN JOSE, Calif. — No one knows for certain why Sarah Winchester, heiress to the gun company fortune, spent 38 years building a lavish Victorian mansion that was never finished, incorporating all manner of architectural oddities such as secret passages, staircases that end at ceilings, and doors that open onto solid walls or thin air. The story goes that a Boston medium advised her to build — but never finish — the house to appease the spirits of those killed by the Winchester rifle, especially Native Americans. But she had also lost an infant daughter and a husband, and some believe the frenetic construction, influenced by what she thought were messages from beyond, may have been a form of grieving.

A LEGACY OF MYSTERY

The weird, wacky Winchester House hits its stride at Halloween

With its towers and turrets, séance room, spider web motifs, and repetition of the number 13, the Winchester House hits its stride at Halloween, but this year two significant events are likely to draw even more visitors than usual, said Tim O'Day, director of marketing. In May the attraction opened 40 rooms, hallways, and other spaces never before open to the public, as the Explore More Tour, which guests may add to the traditional tour of

110 rooms (there are 160 rooms in the mansion). And in February 2018 CBS Films will release "Winchester," a biopic based on Sarah Winchester's life, starring Helen Mirren.

In 1884, three years after her husband's death, Winchester bought a farmhouse in the Santa Clara Valley, then hired a team of carpenters and craftsmen to expand it. Construction continued 24 hours a day, stopping only upon her death in 1922. Money was no object — she had inherited \$20 million in cash and stock. The house had indoor plumbing, an elevator, 47 fireplaces, silver and bronze inlaid doors, and hand-laid parquet floors. Hand-painted

wallpaper came from Japan. Daisy-motif stained glass windows came from Vienna.

The séance room, where Winchester is said to have communicated with spirits and received advice on construction, is in the center of the house. There is one entrance to this room and three exits; one exit is via the entrance door, another exit door leads to an 8-foot fall, and the third exit door has no latch on the other side, preventing re-entry.

In the grand ballroom, the central chandelier, imported from Germany, originally had 12 glass

lamps, but Winchester had one more added to make the magic 13. Elsewhere, a chimney rises four stories, but stops just short of the ceiling, making all four fireplaces connected to it unusable. Then there are the cupboards: The smallest cupboard in the house opens onto a solid wall. Opposite it, the largest opens onto the entire back of the house.

Be sure to visit the beautifully landscaped grounds and gardens for the best views of the mansion's elaborate Queen Anne exterior, with its turrets, towers, cupolas, cornices, and balconies.

Sarah Winchester is buried next to her husband and daughter in Evergreen Cemetery in New Haven. Whatever her motivation for building her mysterious house, she left a treasure that is both a feast for the eye and a source of endless fascination about the mind behind it.

WINCHESTER MYSTERY HOUSE, 525 South Winchester Blvd., San Jose, Calif., 408-247-2101, winchestermysteryhouse.com.

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ELLEN ALBANESE FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

HERE

NEW ENGLAND CIDER CELEBRATION

Celebrate fall's apple harvest at the inaugural New England Cider Week, a series of parties, meals and educational opportunities sponsored by a collaborative mix of restaurants, bars and heritage cider makers (Oct. 24-30). In addition to tasting a variety of fermentations by local brewers — including Eden, Artifact, and Shacksbury — activities offered at six venues (Branch Line; Row 34 Fort Point; Row 34 Portsmouth; Island Creek Oyster Bar Kenmore; Les Sablons; and The Hawthorne) include bocce, bobbing for apples (in cider!), NERF William Tell, a fireside chat with cider makers, and more. At Les Sablons' Sunday Cider Brunch, Chef Jeremy Sewall presents a bounty of ap-

ple-themed dishes, including burnt apple crepes, brioche French toast with caramel apples (yes, please!), and veal tongue sandwich with apple slaw. neciderweek.com

SWEET SLEIGH RIDES IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

If sleigh rides and chocolates make your holiday heart beat faster, make your reservations soon for the Jingle Bell Chocolate Tour in Jackson, N.H. This annual event sells out quickly. Climb aboard an Austrian horse drawn sleigh and be transported between inns, restaurants and general stores in this picturesque village, enjoying tasty chocolates at each destination. Stops include the Inn at Jackson, The Wentworth, An Elegant Country Inn, J-Town Deli & Country Store, The Thompson House Eatery, The Snowflake Inn, The RiverWood Inn, Flossies General Store, and

more. Each rider receives an average of 10 hand-made chocolates, and festive Christmas holiday bag for any chocolates not eaten on the tour. Nov. 25-26; Dec. 2-3, 9, 16-17. Sleighs run hourly. Each sleigh accommodates 10 people; at least 4 sleighs depart per hour. \$25. 603-383-9356, www.mtwashingtonvalley.org/events/events-all-list.cfm?eventID=11037

THERE

AROUND THE WORLD IN 128 DAYS

Is sailing around the world on your bucket list? Start saving your pennies now for Viking's second World Cruise, which will span 128-days, five continents, 21 countries and 44 ports, with 10 port overnights. (Departs Miami Jan. 3, 2019). The new itinerary will allow

guests to explore South America and the islands of the South Pacific; call upon ports in Africa, from Cape Town to Dakar; and cruise the Strait of Magellan, Tasman Sea, and Indian Ocean, before concluding in London. Guests receive complimentary shore excursion in each of the 44 ports; free unlimited Wi-Fi; business class airfare; all gratuities and service fees, complimentary visa service; free luggage shipping services for embarkation; beverage package covering virtually all drinks on board, and an extensive list of added-value included features. Rates from \$49,995 per person. 888-850-6260, www.vikingcruises.com/oceans/cruise-destinations/world-grand/2019-world-cruise/index.html

BOISE SKI AND STAY PACKAGE

Those looking for an under-the-radar snowy winter destination may want to consider Bogus Basin, a 75-year-old recreation area in Idaho with winter tubing, cross country skiing, and a diverse 2,600 square acres of downhill skiable terrain. New this season, the resort is launching a mountain coaster with bobsled-like cars racing down the mountain on a track. (bogusbasin.com) Also debuting this season: the Inn 500 Capitol, a luxury boutique hotel in the heart of downtown Boise, an easy half-hour drive from Bogus. Winter sports lovers can take advantage of the new hotel's Après Ski Bogus Package that includes two one-day lift tickets, and après-ski treats and

drinks delivered to the room. (All 110 rooms have fireplaces, so cozy up). All guests also enjoy complimentary shuttle services in a Mercedes-Benz sedan or Sprinter Van throughout the downtown Boise business district, including the Boise Airport. Available Dec. 15 through Feb. 28; determined by snowfall during Bogus Basin's season. Rates from \$350 per night. 208-227-0500, www.innat500.com/promotions/ski-boise.htm

EVERYWHERE

STYLISH ANTI-THEFT BAGS

Who says anti-theft bags must be dull and dowdy? LTD, the new collection of bags by Travelon, protects your wallet, passport, and other personal belonging from pickpockets and slash-and-grab thieves while sporting classically inspired silhouettes with a stylish modern twist. Features include slash-resistant body panels and straps; locking compartments and straps; and RFID protected slots and pockets. Available in six styles and sizes including clutch, tote, and backpack. Choice of black or red. \$50-\$115. www.travelonbags.com/anti-theft/collection/ltd



SOLAR POWER KEEPS DEVICES CHARGED

Keep your devices charged on camping trips, hikes and other outside adventures with the new Solar Power Charger with Compass by Everything Tech Gear. Before embarking on your travels, plug in at home to full charge capacity, and then rely on the sun to keep it fueled. (No need to recharge at home for up to three months!) The water resistant power bank with 10,000mAh capacity can charge two devices at once, including USB enabled devices such as iPhone, Android, MP3, MP4, PSP, GPS, digital camera, and more. Compact size and lightweight design make it easy to carry. Also acts as a flashlight. Compass with hanger clip and USB cord included. Available in black, blue, red, green and yellow. \$39. everythingtechgear.com/products/new-waterproof-solar-power-bank-10000mah-dual-usb-li-polymer-solar-battery-charger-travel-powerbank-with-a-compass

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