

Sailors Grave Haunt Sets Sail Again

Written by Shawn Morse

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Snohomish, WA - According to legend, an 18th-century pirate and his crew were sunk off the coast of Dead Man's Grotto in a fierce battle. The captain cursed anyone who tried to loot his treasure, and to this day, he, his crew, and his ghostly ship appear each dark, cold eve in October to haunt the living.



What started out as a single static handmade ghost illuminated by a black light and some eerie sounds seven years ago has gradually transformed into an extensive full-yard Halloween display with a Pirates of the Caribbean theme. [Sailors Grave Haunt](#), located in south Snohomish, is the creation of Shawn Morse, a Halloween junkie who loves decorating his front yard each year in October.

But don't call these "decorations". Morse is quick to point out that most of the items in his display are homemade props and modified store-bought products. "Most of the products found in stores around Halloween are cheaply made and don't look realistic. I pride myself in creating something unique with a touch of realism. This enables the visitors to become more immersed in the display," he explains.

In addition to the four handmade tombstones, several hand-painted signs, and engineered animatronic pirate skeletons, Morse designed and built a 16-foot long wooden pirate ship complete with bow that extends from the front porch and four cannons. Each of the cannons blasts out smoke and lights up at the sound of cannon fire. "Everyone loves the cannons," says Morse. "This year, the smoke even smells a bit like gun powder thanks to a special scent additive."

The pirate theme display, which features a skeletal helmsman, rum-drinking skeleton, and talking pirate captain, started five years ago and has grown every year since. "I wanted to create a unique Halloween yard display with a theme that would differentiate our display from others in the area and appeal to kids young and old, and pirates is such a fun theme," he says.

But rather than being satisfied with a simple static Halloween display, Morse wanted motion in his yard. "It started with trying to animate the helmsman a couple of years ago, and now we have five motor-operated animatronics and a laser vortex tunnel," he explains.

Each Saturday evening in October and on Halloween night, the animatronics are turned on together with the cannons, pirate soundtrack, fog, and thunder and lightning effects. "I enjoy bringing a little bit of Disney to the neighborhood. And the kids really enjoy walking up the dock and gangplank onto the ship to trick-or-treat on Halloween night."

New this year, visitors can make a donation to help benefit Seattle Children's Hospital. All donations will be matched.

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www.sailorsgravehaunt.com