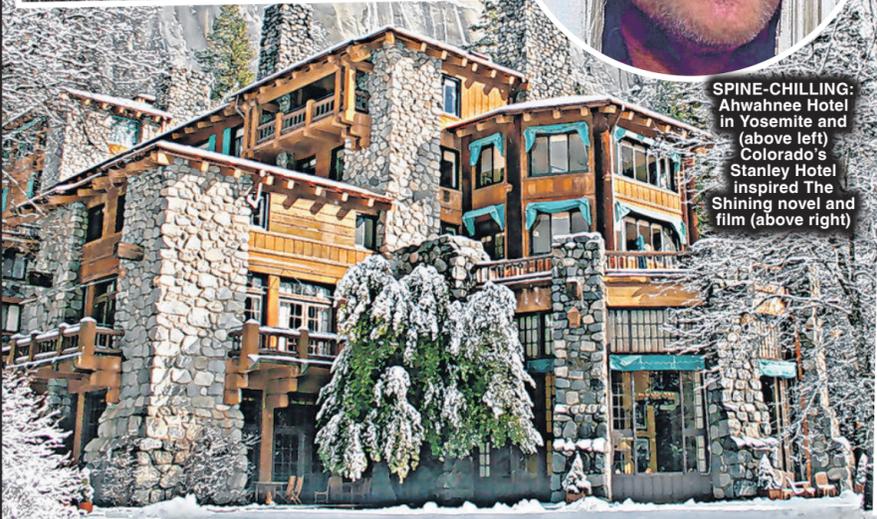


MOST HAUNTED

World's spookiest locations



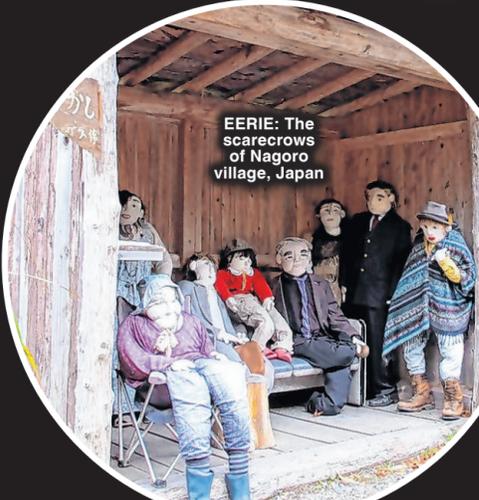
SPINE-CHILLING: Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite and (above left) Colorado's Stanley Hotel inspired *The Shining* novel and film (above right)



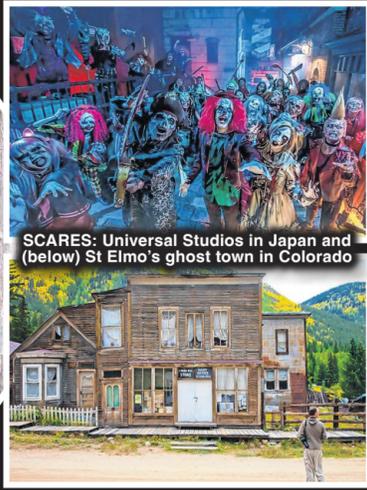
TRADITION: Boujloud festival in Morocco



GHOSTS: Haunted Royal Olive B&B in Sonora



EERIE: The scarecrows of Nagoro village, Japan



SCARES: Universal Studios in Japan and (below) St Elmo's ghost town in Colorado



LUXURY: Hodson Bay Hotel and (inset) room at the Hyatt in Dublin

County-cations' staying power

JUST when there was a glimpse of normality and a smidgen of hope for the hospitality sector, another blow was dealt on Monday last week with the new Level Three restrictions. Within 48 hours, revenues for October across all four of Hodson Bay Group's hotels came crashing down as cancellations filled the air. "This is just another reminder of last March when we shut down our hotels for the first time," says Garry Walsh, commercial director of Hodson Bay Group. "Back then, we were looking forward to a particularly strong year. 2020 bookings for all of the hotels were significantly up year on year."

Overnight everything changed and months of hard work across Hodson Bay Hotel, Galway Bay Hotel, Sheraton Athlone Hotel and the new Hyatt Centric Dublin Hotel fell asunder.

Safety
Walsh adds: "Our first priority was to ensure the safety of our staff and customers. We did this with great success through the introduction of our 'Safe Stay Code'." "We received an incredible response to this and going by countrywide data provided by the Irish Hotels Federation, during the summer we performed well above our competitors."

In light of the new restrictions, the Hodson Bay Group has now come up with its 'County-Cations' offers.

These newly designed packages offer an opportunity to experience a high standard of

THIS will be a Halloween like no other, showing that the real world can be even scarier than our wildest imaginations.

Looking back, Halloween began as the festival of Samhain, which was part of the ancient Celtic religion. At the end of summer, the Celts thought the barrier between our world and the world of ghosts could be permeated, so in an effort to scare these spirits away, and to honour their dead, villagers would build bonfires and burn crops and animals as sacrifices to the Celtic gods. Nowadays, Halloween and ghostly traditions are celebrated (and feared...) all over the world. Though we won't have the chance to travel anywhere this year, we've rounded up some of the best spooky destinations worldwide — including abandoned ghost towns, haunted hotels, horror film inspiration and tours that will make even the most sceptical think twice!

Some of these towns, like Breckenridge, Leadville and Idaho Springs, remain some of Colorado's top destinations, while the not so lucky faded into some of the coolest ghost towns of America. St Elmo is one of Colorado's best-preserved ghost towns. With wooden storefronts and a dusty main street, it looks straight out of a John Wayne movie. After exploring St Elmo, visitors should make their way to the nearby infamous town of Tin Cup. One of the more rowdy towns, sheriffs didn't last very long here, and you can see echoes of their sorry fates lingering at the town cemetery. See www.colorado.com.

Bodie ghost town's arrested decay
Bodie State Historic Park is a genuine California gold-mining ghost town and one of America's most atmospheric ghost towns. Visitors can walk down the deserted streets of a town that once had a population of nearly 10,000 people. People flocked to Bodie in 1875 and transformed it from a town of a few dozen to a lawless wild west, where brothels, shootouts and killings were rife. Designated as a National Historic Site and a State Historic Park in 1962, the remains of Bodie are being preserved in a state of "arrested decay". Today this once thriving mining camp is visited by tourists, howling

winds and an occasional ghost... See www.visitmammoth.com.

Prepare to be outnumbered by spooky scarecrows in Tokushima
Nagoro village is located deep in the rugged mountains of Tokushima in Japan's Iya Valley. Here, people are outnumbered by scarecrows with a ratio of almost 400 to 30. The scarecrows were created by Tsukimi Ayano who once lived in the village and after moving back 17 years later decided to create the straw residents in memory of the town's once bustling community. Visiting this village has a spooky undertone as a result of the rare human interaction and its sheer remoteness. See japan.travel/en/uk/

HAUNTED HOTELS
The hotel which scared Stephen King into writing *The Shining*
The Stanley Hotel is located high on a hill overlooking the town of Estes Park, in the heart of the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. It was the setting that inspired the Overlook Hotel in Stephen King's best-selling novel *The Shining* after he and his wife found themselves to be the only guests at the 140-room hotel. The 100-year-old hotel looks like something from a gothic horror story — a sprawling

mansion with ghost-white panelling, blood-red roofs and creepy attic windows. Whilst the story may be fictional, guests and employees have reported hearing children's laughter coming from a deserted hallway and ghostly strains of piano music. The hotel offers nighttime spirit tours that take guests to some of its creepiest areas, including an underground tunnel. See www.colorado.com.

The inspiration for *The Overlook* on film
Built by American architect Gilbert Stanley Underwood, The Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite was designed in the 1920s with the specific goal of attracting well-to-do clientele. In the following century, *The Ahwahnee* has more than fulfilled that ambition, hosting presidents, royalty and a few ghosts...and if guests have seen the film *The Shining* they might just get a familiar feeling when they step inside! The interior sets of the movie hotel The Overlook were heavily influenced by the Ahwahnee Hotel. Inside the lobby, visitors will find the cavernous ceilings, Native American-inspired patterns, and even the movie's frightening red-doored elevators. See www.yosemite.com.

Ghostly miners and friendly spirits
Ghostly encounters are a daily occurrence

in many of the historic properties found throughout Tuolumne County, California. At the Groveland Hotel, room 15 is believed to be occupied by departed gold miner, Lyle. Serving as a hotel for many of the gold miners in the area eager to make their fortune, Lyle is believed to have been an eccentric individual with a preference for a clean dresser and dim lights. The newest B&B to open in downtown Sonora, The Royal Olive, is rich with local history and each room in the Victorian house is named after a captivating woman who once lived on site. Since it was built with local lumber in the late 1800s, there are some residents that can be seen and not heard, including the friendly spirit Peter who leaves handprints around the property. See www.visittuolumne.com.

GHOST TOURS
Park City Ghost Tours
Park City Ghost Tours are true storytellers, dedicated to sharing fascinating and historically-informed ghost stories. The tour is a 75-minute walking tour sharing stories about the many haunted buildings around Main Street. The research was conducted by owners Rob and Lela Newey, retired history teachers and film maker, and Erik Hutchins who

has studied metaphysics and paranormal activity including human ESP, and the mysteries of crop circles. Through interviews, field recordings and other cutting edge methods these three investigators chose 15 stories because they were the most exciting... and terrifying. See www.deervalley.com.

Discover the other side of Denver
Among Denver's haunted hotspots are the Brown Palace Hotel, which offers a ghost tour to private groups, and the Molly Brown House, where light bulbs unscrew themselves and the door from the dining room to the kitchen opens and closes on its own. Perhaps the most chilling of Denver's haunted spots is Cheesman Park, the graveyard-turned-public-park that inspired the movie *Poltergeist*. When the area was converted to a park in the late 1800s, a half-hearted attempt was made to relocate the bodies. It is believed that many remain buried beneath the park, and the surrounding houses are rumoured to get visits from spirits. See www.colorado.com.

EERIE EVENTS
Boujloud Festival, a unique Berber experience, Morocco
An unusual festival called Boujloud takes

place in some areas of Morocco during the days following the celebration of Eid al-Adha. It involves individuals wearing the skins of rams, and roaming the neighbourhood streets, going from door to door asking for money or sheep and goat skins. Some say that to touch the skin being worn can bring good fortune. This familiar sounding festival is an ancient echo of Halloween. See www.visitmorocco.com.

JOLTS IN JAPAN
Halloween is becoming a bigger thing in Japan year by year, and there are numbers of events including the infamous Shibuya Halloween and the special horror event at Universal Studios Japan. For families, events tend to run in quiet residential areas such as Kichijoji and Nakameguro. Looking for a Halloween experience to remember? Head to Huis Ten Bosch in Kyushu for a night walk amongst thousands of pumpkins and paper lanterns. The activities include an AR ghost hunt, spooky choir and special Halloween menu. For those with younger children, daytime activities include trick or treating, fancy dress and pumpkin photoshoots. See www.visit-kyushu.com/en/ and japan.travel/en/uk/.

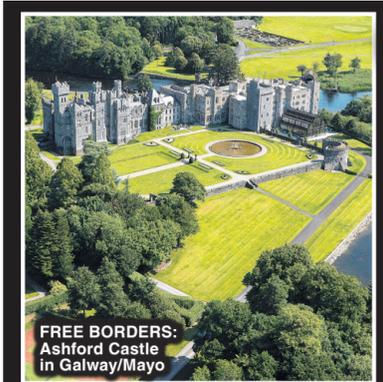
What's on at home

LIMERICK has been shortlisted amongst some of the world's top cities for three international awards, which celebrate outstanding place branding, destination marketing and investment promotion. The Treaty City's 'Atlantic Edge, European Embrace' brand, which launched earlier this year, was announced as a finalist in three categories in the City Nation Place annual awards — the global forum for place branding for towns and cities around the world. Limerick was the only Irish entrant in the shortlist and was a finalist in three categories: Best Citizen Engagement, Best Use of Design and Place Brand of the Year. Limerick City and County Council's head of marketing and communications Laura Ryan said Limerick 'was in great company', shortlisted in three categories alongside places in the US, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Finland and Lithuania. "Developing a new brand positioning for Limerick was a major statement in its own way but to be in international company like this speaks volumes about where Limerick is today," she said. "Despite the COVID challenges, we've worked hard to maintain momentum and Limerick is now fully confident about its proposition, its offering and its ability to compete in the global marketplace." The winners will be announced on November 12.

What's on abroad

IF YOU'RE hoping to hit the slopes when the travel restrictions are finally lifted, the ski village of Verbier in Switzerland has unveiled the highest zipline in the world. The new Mount 4 Zipline, which is expected to operate year-round, begins 3,330 metres up — overtaking the previous highest found above Val Thorens in France. The zipline has been created by a company called Rope Runner and is reported to have cost 750,000 CHF (Swiss francs), which is equivalent to approximately €700,000, to create. Rides cost 45 CHF (€42) for adults, 28 CHF (€26) for teens and seniors and 20 CHF (€18) for children in addition to the lift pass cost (a combined summer lift access and zipline ticket is available). See www.verbier.ch/winter/ for more.

Those descending the zipline meet first at the Gentianes mountain restaurant at the base of the zip line for instruction and to test the kit. The zipline has been created by a company called Rope Runner and is reported to have cost 750,000 CHF (Swiss francs), which is equivalent to approximately €700,000, to create. Rides cost 45 CHF (€42) for adults, 28 CHF (€26) for teens and seniors and 20 CHF (€18) for children in addition to the lift pass cost (a combined summer lift access and zipline ticket is available). See www.verbier.ch/winter/ for more.



FREE BORDERS: Ashford Castle in Galway/Mayo

GET THE BEST OF BOTH COUNTIES...

WHILE Level Three restrictions have altered our travel plans, the 350-acre Ashford Estate straddles the Galway and Mayo border and is uniquely positioned to host guests from both counties. The five-star Ashford Castle, with an address in Co Galway, is looking forward to welcoming guests from the Tribal County, while a special welcome awaits guests from Mayo at the Lodge — so holidaymakers can still enjoy a fabulous break, without crossing their county borders. The family from Mayo will enjoy wonderful local produce during both dinner and breakfast, hosted in the relaxing Quay Bar & Brasserie. **ASHFORD CASTLE, GALWAY** Surrounded by exquisite interiors, beautiful drawing rooms and enticing dining areas, guests from Galway will feel miles away from everyday life. A team of friendly staff will be on hand to take care of your every need, ensuring you feel like a VIP. **THE LODGE AT ASHFORD, MAYO** Across the River Corrib, the four-star Lodge is an elegant sanctuary that is perfect for a trip away with the family this mid-term. Guests from Mayo will enjoy wonderful local produce during both dinner and breakfast, hosted in the relaxing Quay Bar & Brasserie. **OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AT ASHFORD ESTATE** The great outdoors is part of the estate's quintessential charm, with over 30 outdoor activities available on the 350-acre grounds. You can choose from activities such as zip-lining, tree-climbing, archery, horse riding and kayaking, but be sure to book in advance. The Hawk Walk is a particular favourite with visitors and tee-time on the estate's nine-hole golf course can also be booked. **STAY AND SPEND SCHEME** Ashford Castle and The Lodge at Ashford are both part of the Government's Stay and Spend Scheme which allows guests from Ireland to claim back 25 per cent of tax paid on meals and accommodation, between October 2020 and April 2021, with a maximum spend of €625 per adult. **GBAC STAR ACCREDITATION** Ashford Castle and The Lodge have both been awarded the Global Bio-risk Advisory Council (GBAC) STAR accreditation, for the implementation of rigorous protocols in response to bio-risk situations, such as COVID-19. See www.ashfordcastle.com or www.thelodgeac.com for more.