

## Indiana's Lesser-known Abandoned (and rumored haunted) Attractions

### Thunder Island Water Park – Westfield, Indiana

Thunder Island, a once thriving small-town waterpark first opened in 1975, now sits abandoned on the outskirts of Westfield, Indiana. Miles from the main road, and accessible only by foot from a small parking lot next to a cemetery plot, the waterpark is something of a local legend, forgotten by all but the most curious individuals. Though Thunder Island closed in 1993 due to financial reasons, it has yet to outrun insistent rumors claiming a gruesome death on one of the waterslides (LINK 1).

Very few of the park's original attractions are still recognizable on the property. Most of the concrete walkways are hidden by overgrown weeds, and graffiti marks much of the grounds and waterslides. The lone building on the property is near collapse, the pools of water are murky and untouched, and the faded mini-golf greens are deteriorating into their surroundings. Nature has reclaimed much of the original construction, and the empty fields stretching out on either side of the park's property limits give the curious explorer a sense of complete solitude.

If you aren't looking for it, Thunder Island is undetectable to the average passerby, though once it would have been visible from the state road running parallel to the original entrance. This hidden park will eventually disappear entirely into the forest that has already begun to take it over, but, for now, remains eerily empty just a short distance from the town of Westfield.

Link 1: <https://peelingwalls.com/2018/04/04/indianapolis-thunder-island-water-park/>  
<http://www.viralinfections.info/article/334786257/indianapolis-thunder-island/>

### The Electric Bridge, Werewolf Hollow, Shelbyville, Indiana

Werewolf Hollow is Shelbyville's local legend and singular claim to fame. A piece of property spanning about half a mile in each direction, Werewolf Hollow features, according to local lore, "The Electric Bridge", a remote bridge on the outskirts of town that allegedly stalls cars and occasionally omits strange noises, often attributed to ghosts or other supernatural causes.

Though many of the legends are mere small-town ghost stories, some of the legends surrounding the Electric Bridge have been proven true. Due to massive powerlines built close to the bridge in the 1980s, the bridge's metal railings now conduct large amounts of static electricity, which are responsible for the static humming and crackling often heard near the bridge, and even, occasionally, for stalled cars (LINK 2).

Due to the static being conducted by the bridge, curious travellers will find that lightbulbs will light themselves when placed against the metal railings, and that static can be conducted between two individuals if one is in contact with the railing (LINK 2), making it a good destination for those interested in seeing a real-life science experiment in action. Though not "haunted", the surplus of electricity in the air produces a spine-tingling effect that causes observers to feel watched, surrounded by nothing but fields and forests.

Link 2: <https://www.indystar.com/story/life/2017/09/26/shocking-truth-behind-shelbyvilles-electric-bridge/637019001/>

Hindostan Falls, Center Township, Martin County, Indiana

Hindostan Falls was founded in 1816 by English immigrants at the falls of Indiana's White River, along a stagecoach route that connected Vincennes and New Albany. By 1820, the town had an approximate population of 1,200, making it the largest community in the county, and one of the largest frontier settlements in Indiana (LINK 3).

Unfortunately, 1820 brought trouble for Hindostan Falls. A yellow fever epidemic broke out across the community, as did an economic depression. Those not affected or driven out by disease moved away to find better economic stability. As the town began to shrink, the county treasurer arranged for the transport of the town funds to the new county seat, Mount Pleasant, which has since also become a ghost town. The funds never reached their destination, and speculation continues today as to where the estimated \$15,000 could have gone (LINK 3).

The town was officially deserted in 1830, when the post office finally closed, and the county seat was eventually moved to Shoals, Indiana, which still thrives today (LINK 3). Though none of the original buildings still stand, three pioneer cemeteries, Hall Cemetery, McBride's Cemetery, and Shoalts Cemetery (LINK 4), remain, marking the final resting places of the yellow fever victims of the Hindostan Falls settlement, and reminding passer-by's that the now non-existent town once thrived at the East Fork of the falls, which in and of themselves are worth the journey.

Link 3: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindostan\\_Falls,\\_Indiana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindostan_Falls,_Indiana)

Link 4: <http://justahoosiergirl.blogspot.com/2014/09/the-tragic-tale-of-hindostan-falls.html>

Knightridge Space Observatory, Bloomington, Indiana

Built between 1936 and 1937, the Knightridge Space Observatory now sits unused in the woods outside of the quaint, college town of Bloomington, Indiana. Once a fully functional observatory, the building now lacks its original equipment, which was shipped to the Paul Robinson Observatory in New Jersey in the 1960s (LINK 5), and is a haunting shell of what it once was.

When Knightridge was first built, the town around it was small and remote. Since then, light pollution has rendered the observatory useless (LINK 5). Once, the building was designed to rotate, an effect created by setting the building on rollers; however, these rollers have long since rusted into place. Despite the simplicity of the design and the crudeness of the architecture, the observatory displays a certain antique beauty that draws the imagination.

As it stands today, graffiti marks the walls, the remaining mechanisms are rusted, and many of the panels have been damaged by falling logs, yet the fascination behind this historic observatory has yet to fade, and it remains a popular destination for those seeking adventure.

Link 5: <http://eerie-indiana.blogspot.com/2013/09/abandoned-knightridge-space-observatory.html>

## John Dillinger's Grave, Crown Hill Cemetery, Indianapolis, Indiana

Crown Hill Cemetery is the final resting place for many famous individuals, one of the most notable being John Dillinger, a Depression-era outlaw born in Indianapolis. Between 1933 and 1934, Dillinger and his gang robbed banks and police arsenals across the Midwest, and killed and wounded anyone who got in their way (LINK 6).

Dillinger's campaign ended when he stole a sheriff's car, a federal offense which ultimately involved the FBI. Dillinger was shot four times after a chase led the FBI to a theater in Chicago, and was pronounced dead at the hospital. On the day of his burial, spectators rioted, and members of the media were assaulted, and threats were left for Dillinger's family (LINK 6).

Dillinger's grave has become a popular tourist attraction for those interested in the notorious outlaw. A slab of concrete has been poured over the grave to deter vandalism, and the headstone has been replaced many times, as visitors chip away pieces of the headstone as souvenirs, and leave notes for Dillinger (LINK 6).

Link 6: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/283/john-herbert-dillinger>

## Butlerville High School, Butlerville, Indiana

Built in 1904 and closed between 1948 and 1950, the Butlerville High School sits empty, as a prominent example of early classic 1900s architecture. The building shows prior use as a residency as well, with broken furniture and torn curtains left behind. The classic bell tower has long since collapsed into the building, but many important architectural details still remain (LINK 7).

The building was closed due to Indiana school consolidation, and has been untouched for over thirty years. Near the high school, though not as structurally intact, is the Butlerville Elementary School, subject to the same consolidation and abandoned as well. Despite having been once used as a residence, the high school retains much of the original school furniture, including blackboards and student desks. Much of both buildings have been partially reclaimed by nature, and retain a certain haunting beauty (LINK 7).

Link 7: [http://waningmemories.com/?page\\_id=972](http://waningmemories.com/?page_id=972)

## Central State Hospital/Medical History Museum, Indianapolis, Indiana

Opened in 1848, and harboring a mere five patients, Central State Hospital, formerly known as the Indiana Hospital for the Insane and the Central Indiana Hospital for the Insane, became the first psychiatric hospital in Indiana. By the 1970s, many of the buildings had been declared unstable and demolished, and the hospital was finally closed in 1994 due to allegations of patient abuse (LINK 8).

Since its closing in 1994, many of the buildings on the property have been demolished and rebuilt as student housing, though the maintenance building and many of the tunnels

accessible from the building are still intact, as is an empty administration building. The Indiana Medical History museum was founded in one of the original outbuildings, and is open to visitors seeking to learn about the history of this eerie hospital (LINK 8).

Link 8: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central\\_State\\_Hospital\\_\(Indiana\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_State_Hospital_(Indiana))

#### Union Station, Gary, Indiana

Closed as the necessity for railroads declined, and partially demolished by the infamous Gary fires, Union Station in Gary, Indiana, built in 1910, still stands as a fading example of neoclassical architecture. Once a bustling train station in the heart of the crossroads state, the need for elaborate train stations began to decline in the latter 1900s, and Union Station fell into disuse and disrepair (LINK 9).

With each passing year, the building collapses a bit more, but the detail of the original architecture is still apparent, and the exterior of the building is still in surprisingly good condition. Graffiti lines the walls, broken furniture is scattered across the open floor, and each noise echoes through the vast, empty space, giving visitors a haunting sense of loneliness, as they stand and observe this unique piece of history.

Link 9: <https://lostindiana.net/2001/05/01/union-station-gary/>

#### Mudlavia Hotel, Mudlavia Springs, Indiana

Founded in 1890 near the town of Attica, Indiana by Henry Kramer, the site of the Mudlavia Hotel was built on a spring water reservoir said to have healing properties. The resort was originally intended for visitors with rheumatism and other similar aches and pains, and was famous for its healing water and mud baths. The hotel was a picturesque retreat that boasted famous visitors such as the poet James Whitcomb Riley, and the outlaw John Dillinger. Al Capone was also rumored to have stayed at the hotel, but this has never been confirmed (LINK 10).

The original hotel burnt down in 1920. In 1960, a retirement home was built on the property, which was also destroyed by a fire. In 1971, the property was again rebuilt as the Mudlavia Restaurant, which burned down in 1974 (LINK 10). Some parts of the foundation of the original hotel still stand, as do remains of the restaurant. Urban legends mark the property as being cursed, but no matter the reason, the remaining crumbling buildings create a haunting atmosphere for unsuspecting visitors.

Link 10: <https://historicindiana.weebly.com/mudlavia-hotel.html>

#### Kingsbury Army Ordinance, La Porte, Indiana

Built during World War II after the Department of War called for the construction of ammunitions factories across the United States, the Kingsbury Army Ordinance spans 13,000 acres of land, most of it untouched since the plant fell out of use following the war. La Porte,

Indiana was deemed a perfect location because of its distance from any major cities and its easy access to well water ([LINK 11](#)).

Though in disrepair, most of the original buildings are still standing. Redevelopment has begun, but the process is slow due to the massive amounts of ammunition waste on the property, and the vast acreage of the property, with buildings spaced far enough apart to avoid a total loss should there have been an explosion in the factory. Visitors exploring the site are likely to find war-time artifacts scattered across the property that render these buildings a haunting product of the past.

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Link 11: <http://www.placesthatwere.com/2017/04/kingsbury-ordnance-plant-abandoned-Ammunition-Factory.html>

Eerie, abandoned buildings and small towns with haunting pasts have long been a popular discussion topic, yet the majority of the United States still holds many secrets that are largely unknown to the general public, or less often cataloged in many uncanny road trip compilations.

Whether buried in local lore, or simply not prominent enough to catch the eye of most casual observers, many of these fascinating destinations have been largely ignored.

Indiana is no different. This flyover state in the middle of the Midwest, though often ignored, has more to it than first meets the eye. From abandoned water parks to ghost towns, here a ten lesser-known unusual Indiana destinations.

An Indianapolis based writer and artist with a passion for urban exploration. Monica is currently working on a poetry, photo, and art compilation called Exit Wounds, and writes for various publications in her free time. You can find her online profile here:

<https://clearvoice.com/cv/MonicaRobinson> or follow her on Twitter here:

<https://twitter.com/sxnflxwerheart>.