

How To Buy A Haunted House

All the real estate channels on TV have shows about the joy of moving into a new home. But some channels tell another kind of story.

It always starts with the happy moving day. Unpacking boxes, sweeping, polishing. And at the end of the busy day, the happy couple sighs contentedly as they look over their new property.

Cue the odd camera angle, the discordant music. Cut to the serious buyer: "That's when it all started happening ..."

Could this be your story? Not if a haunted house is what you were shopping for.

In a Realtor.com survey of 1000 people, 42% said they'd be too scared to buy a haunted house. The survey didn't ask how many people actually want one.

Are you one of them? If so, you may not have it easy.

The first problem is finding your haunted house. More than 20 US states don't even require sellers to disclose whether a property is "stigmatized" -- that's legalese for a property that's a crime scene, or has had bad publicity. Or is haunted. And your major real estate websites don't make it easy to search for "haunted," "ghost," or "eerie."

So you have to look for clues. Is the house in good shape, but has been on the market for a long time? Is it priced much less than its comps? Is it surrounded by thornbushes and beset by bats? OK, that last one would be too easy. You may have to get clues by asking the realtor directly, or talking to neighbors, or just Googling the address.

And of course, pay attention when you visit. You'll be able to tell if a house is haunted. Or you'll get told by some disembodied voice.

Once you've found your haunted house, it's time to bargain. The Realtor.com survey found that a big discount would change the minds of 40% of the haunted-house-refusers. Realtors know: money talks, even where the ghost walks. You could turn those unnerving china plate drops and temperature drops into a big price drop.

If you're smart about the real estate market, and in tune with the paranormal vibes, you'll find yourself in the haunted house of your dreams -- or nightmares. But remember: these things don't always work out. After all that, those hair-raising house hauntings may just have -- a perfectly logical explanation.