

TOP 10 PRISON TOURS, JAIL HOTELS AND INSTITUTIONS



A recently released report by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office shows that almost 7000 Brits were arrested last year when visiting a foreign country. According to the report, United Arab Emirates, Thailand and the USA are the most likely places for foreign criminals to be arrested. However, most of the ordinary people abide law thus avoiding the unpleasant experience of being put in jail. Nonetheless, some of them seem to be unhealthily interested in murky underworld of crime and punishment.

If you'd prefer to stay good but still are eager to know what the life in jail is like, Tourism-review.com brings you the top 10 prison tours, jail hotels and institutions that, according to server.skyscanner.net, offer the right kind of experience for you.

Alcatraz Island Prison, San Francisco, USA

You can find 'The Rock', probably the world's most famous prison, in the middle of San Francisco Bay in California. Alcatraz is said to be the prison nobody ever escaped from, even though two inmates were lost at sea and never found. During its 29 years as a prison, it kept its felons securely locked down. Come and take a cell house tour. Alcatraz will be presented to you by former inmates who will tell you the stories about their escape attempts, food riots or solitary confinement.

Robben Island, South Africa

Robben Island is nowadays a world heritage site and museum. However, it used to be a place of banishment, isolation and imprisonment from the 17th to the 20th century. Nelson Mandela spent 27 years of his life there, all the while trying to keep "the struggle" against apartheid alive. At present, the craggy island not far from the coast of South Africa is a reminder to the newly democratic country of the price paid for freedom. Come and take a tour of the island. You will see the maximum security prison and speak with former prisoners. The tour also includes a return boat trip across Table Bay.

San Pedro, La Paz, Bolivia

There are two both interesting and odd facts about San Pedro. The children and families of the inmates are allowed to live in San Pedro and the prisoners must pay for everything during their sentence including the cell, food and clothes. Since the book "Marching Powder" was published in 2003, interest in the infamous San Pedro prison tours has gone up rapidly. If you are intrigued, come and take a unique tour. It is completely unofficial, but you will have a chance to experience a real, live, working prison. Don't hesitate any longer as the days of these voyeuristic tours may be numbered because the book is now being turned into a Hollywood film by Brad Pitt's production company.

Hostel Celica, Ljubljana, Slovenia

The former Yugoslavian jail, whose name means "The Cell" in English, has been transformed into a hostel and art gallery. Hostel Celica's 20 rooms or rather cells are kept in an original prison-like look

and are also used for unique art displays. Although it is called a hostel you don't have to worry since it is clean and stylish even with rooms for couples. If you want to sleep behind bars, you'll need to book in advance though because these cells fill up fast.

Jail Backpackers, Mount Gambier, Australia

The former Australian jail where visitors can stay in cells and sleep in beds made from locally milled pine has almost believable jail house atmosphere. The cells have heavy-looking, rusty, bolted doors that look very original. The authentic prisoner mess hall is ready for anybody to use. It serves great value food. As a prison visitor you can also escape to the nearby Blue Lake, dormant volcanoes, caves and sink holes. So, come and check it yourself.

Karosta, Liepaja, Latvia

'Unfriendly, unheated and uncomfortable' is the true description of the former KGB jail. Not usual words to choose for luring tourist though. But it seems that the place doesn't need fancy advertisement as there is no shortage of inmates signing up for incarceration. Visitors, on contrary, are attracted by full jail treatment. Brace yourself! You'll get lined up and be subjected to a medical examination (verbal only). Then they'll have your mug shots taken and you'll be issued a prisoner passport for your stay. If you misbehave you'll spend some time in solitary or will march round the courtyard. Karosta is not known for the service, food or rooms, but for an authentic prison experience, that is why it is popular with stag groups, corporate bonding events, and ex-cons wanting to relive the bad ol' days.

The Liberty Hotel, Boston, USA

It used to be Charles Street jail that once held Malcom X. However, it underwent extensive reconstruction, which cost huge amount of money, and was transformed into a luxury hotel. If you want to serve your sentence in the most luxurious way possible, Boston's Liberty hotel is the place to get imprisoned at. However, the walkways and central 'courtyard' features mean that the hotel still retains an air of prison style.

Seodaemun Prison Museum, South Korea

Seodaemun prison was built by the Japanese in Seoul during the Japanese occupation of Korea. They imprisoned, tortured and execute there those who resisted and persisted using their own language and kept to their culture. Jennifer Barclay describes the prison in her book 'Meeting Mr Kim: How I went to Korea and Learned to Love Kimchi' as a chilling reminder of the 'thought criminal' such as teachers and writers who died in the spookily modern cells but also as a symbol of the patriotic Koreans who bravely devoted their lives to resisting the Japanese. No longer used as a prison, Seodaemun is a living history education site. It serves to remind future generations of Koreans of the courage and strong will of their ancestors.

Tower of London, London UK

The renowned Tower of London used to be both a fortress and a royal palace. Also, it was a prison intended mainly for royal or political prisoners such a Guy Fawkes. To explore the real experience of the inmates visit the 'Prisoners Exhibition'. You are also welcomed to visit various towers where prisoners were held, executed or tortured.

Devil's Island, French Guiana

Set in idyllic French Guiana is Devil's Island, a "prison in paradise". In colonial times, it was one of the most infamous prisons. It used to be a part of the South American penal colony. Thousands inmates were condemned to hopeless misery on the rocky, palm-covered island. The prison was closed in 1952, however, tourists can still visit the island and explore the remains of various cell blocks, courtyards and punishment houses. Luckily, for the most part the island has become a paradise again.

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