

## &nbsp;Eastern State Penitentiary



By [Angela Ash](#)

The Eastern State Penitentiary rises like a dark, gray castle from the sidewalks of Philadelphia. One may instantly conjure up the images of knights and damsels in distress, but that in no way is an accurate description of the humans that were housed within these walls. Prepare yourself for something quite different altogether.

Opening in 1829, the Eastern State Penitentiary was a revolutionary new

type of prison. Previously, prisons has been used only to keep the prisoner in captivity. However, Eastern State was all about actually reforming the prisoner. They believed that the best way to do this was to place the offender in complete isolation and silence, so as to best ponder over their actions and what changes they could make to "reform" into a life that would not end behind bars.

Touring the massive property is a bit overwhelming. However, with the mp3 tour that is included with general admission, actor Steve Buscemi of *Boardwalk Empire*

fame will guide you throughout the prison cell corridors, its yards, and its common places, with an intriguing narrative that will literally make the walls around you seem to come to life.

It is ironic that Buscemi's voice guides you down the hallway that leads to Al Capone's prison cell, also a popular character on HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*.

In Capone's cell, you will not find the harsh, stark prison decor of other abodes. His room is filled with lavish luxuries that made his time at Eastern State go by quickly and as comfortably as possible.

It is almost chilling to stand right in a prison cell, listening to its actual prisoners speak of life at Eastern State Penitentiary. I can think of no better way to fully immerse oneself into the historic penal system of that day, helping visitors to fully understand just how far life in prison has come today.

The prison closed in 1971, and remains open to visitors who want to step inside its gates.

Of course, one of the first things that automatically comes to mind is that ghost activity must be absolutely rampant at a facility of this nature, and your thought would be correct. After Dark tours may be scheduled, and the building even hosts a haunted attraction during Halloween.

For more information on the Eastern State Penitentiary, visit them [online](#), or you may call (215) 236-3300.