



PHOTOS COURTESY ST. JAMES HOTEL

GIMME SHELTER: CIMARRÓN

Ghost Riders

TO STEP INTO THE ST. JAMES HOTEL,

with its Victorian furnishings of dark wood and leather, its crystal chandeliers, and the shaggy buffalo head hanging in the lobby, is to step back into the Old West. In the 1870s, Henri Lambert, once chef to Abraham Lincoln, opened the saloon and hotel that later became the St. James. Near the southern outskirts of the peaceful town of Cimarrón (population 917), along the Santa Fe Trail and 55 miles northeast of Taos along U.S. 64, the inn is ideal for history buffs and, naturally, ghost hunters.

The St. James used to be rough and rowdy: You can see bullet holes in the tin ceiling of the dining room (where breakfast, lunch, and dinner are served). Old West legends Clay Allison, Wyatt Earp, Buffalo Bill, and Jesse James are all said to have stayed here—and if you believe the ghost stories, some guests never left. Mary Lambert, Henri's wife, wanders the halls, leaving in the air the scent of rose perfume. Another spirit, The Imp, is mischievous. "He's locked me out of reception three times," says hotel receptionist Judy Kahlor. "He loves to pull jokes."

The malevolent spirit of cowboy TJ Wright is said to haunt Room 18, where Wright died after being shot in the back following a poker game. The room holds only a bed frame and an old dresser, on it a



whiskey bottle, and is kept locked.

Located in Cimarrón's historic district, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the St. James changed hands in 2009, and the new owner is working to preserve the adobe building's period décor. The 10 newer rooms in the hotel's annex have contemporary furnishings, TVs, and private baths, but if you want the Victorian style and feel of the Old West—and a chance of sighting a ghost—stay in one of the 12 rooms in the old hotel.

From \$70. 617 S. Collison Ave., (575) 376-2664, www.exstjames.com

—Kristin Conard



Situated along the Old Santa Fe Trail, Cimarrón's St. James Hotel hosted some of the most legendary characters of the Old West. *Clockwise from top, left*—The look of the hotel lobby stays true to its Victorian-era roots. The oldest rooms in the hotel are named for its guests, such as the Jesse James room, shown here. The ghost of Mary Lambert, wife of the hotel's first proprietor Henri Lambert, is said to roam the halls of the St. James. Henri Lambert was a Frenchman who, along with his wife Mary, opened the hotel in the 1870s