



Bucoda may be tiny, but its reputation as a Halloween headquarters is larger than life. While the town today transforms into “Boo-coda” every October, its haunted history runs deep. This was the site of Washington Territory’s first prison back when the area was called Seatco—from the Coast Salish/Upper Chehalis word “tsiatko,” which means “spirit” and refers to legendary beings ranging from hairy Sasquatch-type creatures to more dangerous night spirits that indigenous locals blamed for mysterious deaths. The prison, described as “hell on earth,” closed in 1887 and burned down in 1907. A commemorative stone in a park near the Skookumchuck River is all that exists of its memory today.

Bucoda gradually shed its dark reputation with the arrival of settlers and industry. The haunting grounds were renamed Bucoda—a combination of the last names of James Buckley, Samuel Coulter, and John David, three late 19th-century investors who sought to steer the town toward a better reputation.

By the 1870’s, the Northern Pacific

Railroad, coal mines, sawmills, and other construction industries had taken root, making it so lucrative that it later earned the moniker “the town with the million-dollar payroll.”

While the past may be buried, Bucoda today calls itself “the world’s tiniest town with the biggest Halloween spirit.” Population approx. 600, Bucoda becomes the spooky capital of the Northwest every fall—so much so that in 2021 the town voted to embrace its dark side by renaming Bucoda “BOO-coda” for the month of October. All in good fun, no evil spirits allowed.

BOO-CODA

YOUR GUIDE TO



A Small Town With
a Big Halloween Spirit

EXPERIENCEBUCODA.COM

THINGS TO DO

1 BOO-CODA SPOOKTACULAR

What started as a haunted house fundraiser in a gym morphed into a month-long freaky fest that's only getting bigger and badder—it even won the Washington Festival and Events Association 2021 (Best South Puget Sound Festival) award. Every weekend in October, the town transforms into a celebration of all things morbid, from haunted houses to trick-or-treating, with parades and vendor fairs. Driving slowly around is the town hearse, purchased for marketing purposes and helmed by Bucoda's friendly undertaker—and as of 2022, the town's mayor. For dates and information about events, visit boo-coda.com.

2 PINE BOX DERBY CASKET RACES

If you come to Bucoda for the Halloween festivities, don't miss these races, in which pallbearers load friends and family into makeshift caskets and speed down the main street—in costume, of course!

3 THRILL THE WORLD

Bucoda is an official member of Thrill the World™, a global group dance party choreographed to Michael Jackson's "Thriller." Participants dress up as the living dead and publicly perform a synced routine to the pop legend's Halloween anthem.

4 HAUNTED HOUSE

Be prepared to have all five senses spooked by next-level creepiness in Bucoda's community-run fright fest inside the town's old gym.



5 SEATCO PRISON SITE

Seatco Prison, known as "hell on earth" to its inmates, is gone, but the curious can visit the stone historical marker that marks its location on South Factory Road.

6 NEARBY: FOREST GROVE CEMETERY

Visit this historic cemetery in neighboring Tenino on your own, make a reservation, or go with the South Thurston County Historical Society or on a group tour during Boo-coda. For more Seatco history, check out a new plaque memorializing a prisoner pauper's grave. 18011 Northcraft Rd SE, Tenino

7 BUCODA VOLUNTEER PARK

This green space with picnic shelters, access to the Skookumchuck River, and tent and RV sites is perfect for an afternoon in the sun and is available to

rent for family reunions and company picnics. Tono Rd SE

8 JOE'S PLACE

A Bucoda institution, Joe's Place is a fifth-generation joint that specializes in burgers, beer and wine, and homemade ice cream milkshakes. Come for karaoke (Thursday Steak night) or one of its festivals throughout the year, like the chili cook off. 118 S Main St, 888-631-0942, joesplaceinc.com

