

Joliet Correctional Center

Imagine a life spent within the confines of four 25-foot tall limestone walls; a life without running water or plumbing; a life where one wrong move could get you in a cell the size of a closet. This was reality for prisoners of the Joliet Correctional Center in Joliet, Illinois. Though no longer operating, Joliet Correctional Center offers residents and tourists a peak into the building's past and an opportunity to step into the shoes of its inmates.

Known around town as the Joliet Prison, the center's claim to fame came from its supporting role in the famous Blues Brothers Movie filmed in 1980. The prison graced the silver screen as the film opens with a shot of the prison and main character, Jake Blues, being released. While the nation may recognize it from the movie, residents of Joliet see the prison in a completely different light. Infamous for its harsh treatment of prisoners, the castle-like structure brings chills to residents as they pass by. Joliet Prison was built in 1858 by convict labor. Can you imagine what it must have felt like for prisoners to know that they would soon be imprisoned in the structure they were working to build? When completed, the prison housed 761 inmates but at peak capacity in 1990, 1300 inmates were held here. For the first fifty years, prisoners had no running water or plumbing and were given slop buckets to use as toilets.

The prison's haunting past is slowly fading as the city takes strides to transform the facility into a tourist attraction. City managers are working to create audio tours and interactive exhibits for visitors to get a glimpse of life in Joliet Prison. Instead of locking your doors as you drive by, stop in to see the recently opened Joliet Prison Park and have your mug shot taken!

Source(s):

Schmadeke, Steve. (2009) Infamous Joliet Correctional Center to Become Tourist Park, in Corrections News, Products, Training, Careers at CorrectionsOne. Retrieved November 19, 2010 from <http://www.correctionsone.com/corrections/articles/1857464-Infamous-Joliet-Correctional-Center-to-become-tourist-park/>.

Wikipedia. (2010). Joliet Correctional Center. Retrieved November 19, 2010 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joliet_Correctional_Center.

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