



# Alton's first "escape room" opening this weekend

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ALTON - Escape rooms are all the rage these days.

The purpose of an escape room is to solve puzzles as a team to unlock the room in which a group of people has been locked. Several such rooms exist in large cities such as St. Louis and Chicago, but one will be opening in Alton this Saturday, July 15. Located at 319 Ridge St., behind the downtown Subway in the former Telsar building, Alton Room Escape promises a complex, sophisticated and challenging escape room without the burdens and hassles of such attractions in larger markets.

"Alton doesn't have one, so we wanted to be the first," owner Kristin Halsey said. "We did our first escape game in the fall of last year, and my husband and I walked out knowing it was in our wheelhouse. We've always done games and puzzles, so we started looking for buildings, themes and puzzles."

As of this weekend, only one themed room is opened in Alton Room Escape. Called "Captain's Quarters," the room places teams of three to eight people within the locked quarters of a pirate captain. They are told they have 60 minutes to complete the puzzles and escape, or else their own captain will be forced to walk the plank.

"Imagine it's the 1600s and you have paid for passage to the New World, but your ship gets attacked by pirates," Halsey said.

While she refused to discuss the nature of the puzzles required to escape the room, Halsey said logic puzzles and directional puzzles will certainly be part of the adventure. She also promised escape would require a boat load of teamwork.

"There is lots of teamwork involved," she said. "And that is key for me. I'm an educator. I have my master's in education. I want people to work on collaboration and teamwork. No one can do it alone. It's designed for at least three people, but no more than eight."

Her husband, Tom Halsey, also has done work for the theater department of Principia College, working on sets. Kristin Halsey believes her husband's carpentry skills have also been able to contribute to the overall aesthetics and design of the escape room.

The price to complete the escape puzzles is \$25 per person. Halsey said prices in St. Louis range from \$26-\$30. Halsey also said people are invited to book their adventures in advance, which can be done at [www.AltonRoomEscape.com](http://www.AltonRoomEscape.com). Reservations begin as early as July 15, and people can choose times.

Another quality Alton Room Escape does not share with the St. Louis market is forced bookings. Halsey said several escape rooms either force people to purchase all available slots for their outings or will place strangers on the team until all available slots have been filled.

"We won't add people into a room without spots," Halsey assured.

Alton Room Escape also features a "debriefing room," because Halsey said teams would like to talk about the room after escaping it. She also said she would be looking towards getting restaurants in Alton to partner with Alton Room Escape for packages directed at people coming from elsewhere to enjoy some Alton food and activities.

According to test groups who have played "Captain's Quarters" leading up to this weekend's opening, the puzzles are clever and sophisticated. Halsey said people will "have to bring their A game" if they want to complete the room's challenges on time.



The recommended minimum age for Alton Room Escape's Captain's Quarters is 16, Halsey said, but future rooms may focus on a younger age range. She said three or four themed rooms will most likely be in the complex once it is completed. She said they definitely have the space to expand, as well as plans to do so in the future.

More information can be found on Alton Room Escape's Facebook page as well.

