

Designing Your Exit

With more people concerned about the carbon footprint they leave and planning their own funerals in advance, personalization is on the rise. These days, you can even search for funeral ideas on Pinterest the same way you would for a birthday party or a wedding.

While tried-and-true methods of cremation and burial will always be around, new ideas and technology seem to be creating limitless opportunities for personalization. Here are some other unusual burial and cremation options and new technology that you may not have known even existed:

- [Holy Smoke](#) uses cremains for custom-made bullets. Today, you can send Holy Smoke 1lb of your cremains (total cremains, typically 5-7lbs.) and 2-4 weeks later receive 250 shotgun shells, 120 pistol rounds, or 100 rifle rounds in return. These fully-functional memorial cartridges cost around \$1,050.
- [Coeio Infinity Burial Suit](#)—It is handcrafted garment worn by the deceased. The suit is completely biodegradable and has a built in bio-mix, made up of mushrooms and other microorganisms that together do 3 things; aid in decomposition, work to neutralize toxins in the body and transfer nutrients to plant life. The end result is that the bodies are transformed into vital nutrients that enrich the earth and foster new life.
- [Living Headstones](#)—Classic granite headstones display a built-in SQR code that connects physical and digital memorials. These SQR Codes are placed directly on the monument and link to a personalized memorial web page. It can be viewed on the phone as visitors wander through the cemetery or on your computer by typing the URL address in your search engine.
- [Diamonds From The Cremains Of Loved One](#)—[Algordanza](#) and [Eterneva](#) make memorial diamonds with the same physical and chemical features as natural diamonds, which are created out of carbon, isolated solely from the cremains. The molecular structure of the carbon first becomes graphite and as more heat and pressure are applied, the atomic structure of the diamond is formed. The typical pricing is about \$10,000/carat, but you can get smaller diamonds for less.
- [Spirit Pieces](#)—This process is a lot less expensive than the memorial diamond, so it might be an option for the cost conscious. The company makes jewelry or other mementos, which contain the cremains of your loved one. The typical price is \$50-\$300 depending on what is crafted.
- [Natural Burial](#)—Bodies are placed in a shroud or a biodegradable casket so they decompose naturally. There are at least 50 natural cemeteries across the US, and more regular cemeteries with sections for natural graves. Because of the concern of environmental effects of embalming, you are actually [benefiting the environment](#) by allowing your body to rejoin the cycle of life.
- [LED Vault](#)—In Tokyo, [Ruriden](#) is home to nearly 3,000 small altars, with glass Buddha statues that correspond to drawers storing ashes of the deceased. People visit their deceased loved ones with the help of a smart card which grants access to the building and lights up their corresponding statue.
- [Eternal Reefs](#)—For those who prefer to nourish a more aquatic environment after death. Georgia-based Eternal Reefs creates artificial reef material out of a mixture of concrete and human cremains. These concrete orbs are then placed in areas where reefs need restoration, attracting fish and other organisms that turn the remains into an undersea habitat. Cremation isn't as green as natural burial due to the combustion process, Harris said, but he is a fan of Eternal Reef burials. It's an opportunity not just to return to an aquatic environment, but to produce new life under the sea.
- [Custom Printed Coffins](#)—These environmentally-friendly coffins are designed to depict things you loved in life (sports team, career, something you loved). They are ordered online and quickly printed.

- [Glitter Coffins](#)—For the ones who lived and loved bling. To find out price and ordering of coffins, you can contact your local funeral home, who will get in contact with the manufacturer. Each coffin is made to order and individually priced. Coffins can be shipped worldwide.
- [Anderson-McQueen](#) funeral home in Florida, is currently the only place in the US where you can [have your tissues dissolved](#) as an alternative to traditional cremation. The process, called [Resomation](#) or "bio-cremation," uses heated water and potassium hydroxide to liquefy the body, leaving only bones behind, which are then pulverized and the bone fragments are returned to the family. The Resomation device is still being installed and tested but it has raised a lot of interest. This process is more environmentally friendly than cremation. It requires water of only 350 degrees F and takes the same amount of time as traditional cremation, so it's less energy-intensive. Resomation costs including transportation, handling and other fees bring the cost to about \$3,000.
- [Cryonics](#)—And then there are those who would prefer to hang on to their old life. For those people with large wallets, there is Cryonics, which freezes a person's body in hopes that later medical science will make it [possible to revive them](#), personality and memory intact. Despite numerous barriers to this, including the toxicity of chemicals used in an attempt to prevent damage to cells from freezing, advocates have promoted Cryonics since the late '60s. According to the Cryonics Institute, there were just over 200 people in cryonics storage in the US as of August 2011. Prices vary depending on procedure, preservation company and payment plan, but can be as high as \$200,000 for whole-body preservation. Cost-cutters can have a head-only preservation for around \$80,000.
- [Celetis Memorial Spaceflights](#)—If Cryonics sounds too expensive, you can always get shot into space. Your cremains will hitch a ride on a rocket already headed for the stars, a journey that is more symbolic than practical: Because of the high cost of spaceflight, only 0.04 to 0.25 ounces of cremains are launched. A [low-orbit journey](#) that lets your cremains experience zero gravity before returning to Earth starts at \$995. You can orbit the Earth and burn up in the atmosphere for about \$3,000. If you are really dedicated, you can be launched to the moon for \$10,000 or into deep space for \$12,500.
- Mummification—[Summum](#), a religion that offers mummification services. Before his death in 2008, Summum's founder Corky Ra said at least 1,400 people had signed up for it. The cost for [human mummification](#) starts at \$63,000. The hope is that their preserved DNA will enable future scientists to clone them and give their genes a second shot at life. Ra put his money where his mouth was, after he died, he was mummified and is now encased in a Summum pyramid in Salt Lake City.
- [Institute for Plastination](#)—Much like mummification, plastination involves preserving the body in a semi-recognizable form. Invented by anatomist Gunther von Hagens, plastination is used in medical schools and anatomy labs to preserve organ specimens for education. But he took the process one step further, creating [plastinated bodies](#) posed as if frozen in the midst of their everyday activities. According to the Institute, thousands have signed up to donate their bodies for education and display.
- Freeze-Drying—[Promessa](#), the company, states the process involves immersing the body in [liquid nitrogen](#), which makes it very brittle. Vibrations shake the body apart and the water is evaporated away in a special vacuum chamber. Next, a separator filters out any mercury fillings or surgical implants, and the powdered remains are laid to rest in a shallow grave, where oxygen and water can mix with the powdered remains, turning them into compost. No one has yet been sent off into the afterlife the Promession way, but developing the service, now has a licensed branch in the UK. This is the latest on what is happening with [Promessa](#).