

A sustained note from a lone trombone intertwines with the bright morning sunshine on Royal Street. Shopkeepers sweep their entryways and visitors head for the aromatic cafes that line this beautiful and famous New Orleans street. Although it's early in the day, the enigmatic energy that the city thrives on and visitors flock to experience is tangibly present.



New Orleans, a captivating and iconic city, is one of America's greatest heritages. From the French Quarter to the banks of the Mississippi, the town is in a perpetual artistic and musical motion that begets new festivals and events each season. With its jazz origins and artistically fêted atmosphere, New Orleans presents an intriguing destination to visit any time of year.

The French Quarter & Festivals

The intricate wrought-iron balconies in the French Quarter are alive with colorful potted plants and flowers, as well as interestingly diverse shops located below.

Commerce, music, art and dining intermix and lie within the heart of the quarter that inhabits approximately 10 by 14 square blocks to culminate at the banks of the Mississippi.

Within this renowned district, New Orleans hosts several internationally famous festivals such as Mardi Gras and the Jazz & Heritage Festival. However, a few smaller festivals provide a variety of fantastic musical genres combined with the usual New Orleans celebratory flare.

The exciting French Quarter Festival is free to the public and takes place in April. It features outstanding New Orleans Jazz, Zydeco, soul, Cajun, classical and Latin music over multiple stages along the city's waterfront and throughout the French Quarter. With over 150 different musical groups and performers, this particular festival focuses on local and regional illustrious musicians, such as the Keith Frank & The Soileau Zydeco Band, the Ellis Marsalis Quartet and Rockin' Dopsie Jr. & the Zydeco Twisters, among others. These fabulous performances express the lively and high-spirited atmosphere that is indigenous and contagious in a city known for the best music in the nation.

Interspersed with the kaleidoscope of upbeat music, this three-day festival encompasses delicious local fare, artist booths, family activities and the best time visitors will experience in New Orleans! For additional information on this annual event, visit www.fqfi.org.

Jazz Clubs

The list of jazz clubs and lounges in New Orleans is long. Bourbon Street hosts a few and listed are a few more to check out upon your visit: Preservation Hall, Club 528, Maison Bourbon, Fritzel's and Sweet Lorraine; also, the jazz lounges, Ritz-Carlton Hotel, The Pelican Club, The Mystick Den at the Royal Sonesta, the Jazz Mélange and Bombay Club.

In addition to festivals, the French Quarter exhibits a *raison d'être* of its own. The diverse shops and restaurants set against the richly ornamented historical buildings and lush courtyard gardens beckon visitors to explore.

A wonderful location to start your adventure is Royal Street. Some of the best antique galleries in the country line this avenue offering gorgeous European and early American objets d'art and furniture. For unbelievably luxurious and rare pieces, the eminent Rau Antiques, (Since 1912) located on 630 Royal St. caters to serious collectors and mid-east royalty. Exquisite museum quality paintings by Bouguereau, Pissarro and Renoir adorn the gallery walls and vibrant Tiffany glass panels enchant from a luminous corner. Every case, corner and wall in Rau's displays antique marvels from magnificent jeweled clockworks and lavish French marble mantels to authentic late 1800s Vampire Killing Kits. These treasures are seldom seen outside of museums and private collections and can run into the multimillions. However, Rau's offers elegant and beautiful pieces that are priced for most of us mortals as well. For more information, visit www.rauantiques.com

Perfumeries that create their own scents have been long sought-after by women and men. Hové Parfumeur Ltd., located on 824 Royal St., is New Orleans' oldest perfume manufacturer. This delightful small shop features an intoxicating array of soaps and fragrances (such as Ginger Blanc and Clochettes Des Bois) in lovely carapaces you won't find elsewhere. These are reasonably priced and perfect for individuals seeking unique perfumes and colognes. For additional information, visit www.hoveparfumeur.com

The French Market, located on N. Peters St., is home to restaurants and merchants selling everything from jewelry to T-shirts. This open-air, yet covered, market by the river is extremely popular with visitors who want to browse and shop among the interesting stalls and stores. One of the biggest draws to the market is the famous and wonderful Café Du Monde! Established in 1862, this traditional coffee shop serves the best New Orleans coffee in town. Their scrumptious Beignets, (a powdered-sugar square French doughnut) coffee and hot chocolate are worth a trip to New Orleans by themselves. Fortunately, Café du Monde sells their delicious coffee to take home or there would be some seriously sad patrons. For additional information, visit www.cafedumonde.com

For an interesting tour with wonderful New Orleans history, take the Voodoo/Cemetery Walking Tour. The Voodoo Museum's site might look a bit cheesy, but their walking tours are excellent and last several hours. The licensed tour guides provide an amazing insight to early New Orleans' history and the raised cemetery crypts. After a lengthy cemetery visit and wonderful photo ops, the tour continues to an original Voodoo Museum. Find out about the city's respected 1800s Voodoo Queen Marie Laveau and her influence on the locals to this day. For additional information, visit www.voodooomuseum.com

A Special Place

Houmas House Plantation and Gardens, located about 30 minutes outside New Orleans in Darrow, Louisiana, defines enchantment. This glorious 1770 plantation offers visitors a historical perspective of the mansion and grounds in a heavenly landscaped setting. Owner Kevin Kelly has diligently restored and decorated Houmas House with historically accurate art and furnishings. The magnificent gardens are host to numerous weddings each year and visitors stroll thru the majestic grounds in tranquil reflection.



This inspired estate yields two tremendous gourmet restaurants as well, Latil's Landing and Café Burnside. Chef Jeremy Langlois creates culinary delicacies that range from Bisque of Curried Pumpkin, Crawfish & Corn and Bourbon Shrimp to scrumptious Apple Galette. The cuisine is superior and the experience of dining in the spectacular setting of Houmas House is analogous to a dream.

The plantation proffers a unique gift shop filled with fabulous treasures and tours of the mansion run daily. If you are in New Orleans, make sure to visit Houma House. The history is fascinating and the sheer beauty of the house and grounds will take your breath away. For additional information, visit www.houmashouse.com.

Fantastic Restaurants

New Orleans cuisine is magnificent! With so many different restaurants from which to choose in this gastronomic paradise, the options may seem overwhelming. Listed are a few of the crème de la crème of New Orleans and certainly preeminent in the country.



Brennan's, located on 417 Royal St., imbues an aura of the utmost panache and ease with sublime cuisine served in a decidedly convivial and social setting. Anthony Hopkins claims Brennan's as his favorite restaurant and so do many top celebrities and savvy travelers. If you visit New Orleans, Breakfast at Brennan's should be first on your agenda. The extraordinary menu features: gourmet omelets, alluring spirits entitled Eye Openers, three-course Prix Fixe with gorgeous varieties of Eggs

Benedict, soups, exquisite desserts such as Crepes Fitzgerald and their world-renown Bananas Foster. Yes, Bananas Foster was created right at Brennan's in New Orleans. Their verdant outdoor patio seating is positively lovely and inside guest's stories abound in a comfortable yet elegant atmosphere. Brennan's bestows a leisurely and unparalleled dining experience with the grace of romantic era. For additional information, visit www.brennansneworleans.com

Antoine's, located on 713 St. Louis St., stands unique and reflects a refined ambiance that has never wavered in its 165-year history. Honored with kings and royalty, the regal establishment with its 15 distinctive, beautiful dining rooms has been a continuously owned family restaurant and an integral part of New Orleans' history. Antoine's cuisine is prepared and served with the same artistry and discerning attention as a Michelangelo. Each of their menu items are supreme; however upon your visit, experience the celestial Petite Filet Marchand de Vin and Champignons and for dessert the Omelette Alaska Antoine (an extraordinary light and creamy Baked Alaska). To top off your culinary repast, order a flaming and brilliant café with verve, Café Brulot Diabolique. This distinctive flamed, spiced, coffee with brandies will enhance your day. Antoine's sublime cuisine, impeccable service and chic milieu present a grand and memorable dining event. For additional information, visit www.antoines.com

Two additional excellent restaurants to mention are located in Harrah's New Orleans Casino. Bambu with Chef Ricky Toy's-inspired Asian fare also serves the best sushi in the city. Their décor is original and a cross between a Buddhist temple and a ship in a tempest.

The popular Besh Steakhouse impresses with Chef Romeo's virtuoso menu conceptions with a Creole dimension added to his appetizers, entrées and desserts. The contemporary décor adds to the freshness of the cuisine. For additional information on both restaurants, visit www.harrah.com/casinos/harrahs-new-orleans/restaurants-dining

Accommodations



There are numerous hotels in the city, yet few have the reliability, quality, reputation and the location as Harrah's. Harrah's New Orleans Casino & Hotel offers a perfect combination of style, great service and lovely rooms all in walking proximity of the Riverwalk and French Quarter. With the casino situated in a separate building from across the hotel, Harrah's has created a tranquil and elegant environment in their hotel to assuage the excitement of the city and the casino. The rooms are spacious and the marble bathrooms are divine! Guests will want to check out this lovely enclave.

For additional information, visit Harrah's website.

www.harrahneworleans.com