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## Best Freebies

### **New Orleans, 1 Day**

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** It's easy to have fun in New Orleans without spending a cent. Come in April for French Quarter Fest, a free weekend-long festival of food and music. And during New Orleans parades, like the famous Irish Channel St. Patrick's Day Parade, catch free beads, cups, toys, and food from the riders on the floats. Of course, there is also free fun to be had on a daily basis in New Orleans. You can people watch on Bourbon, window-shop on Royal, or simply stroll through the unique and beautiful French Quarter. Musicians, gymnasts, magicians, and other performers entertain tourists in and around Jackson Square every day for free, and the city is full of public parks for playing and relaxing. Check out the free Besthof Sculpture Garden at City Park, or give yourself a tour Lafayette Cemetery in the beautiful Garden District. Take the free ferry across the Mississippi and stroll through historic Old Algiers, or drive out to Jean Lafitte Swamp. You can walk for free on the many trails through the Barataria Reserve, where you're almost guaranteed to see a gator or two! On Thursday nights from 5 to 11, the bar at Hotel Le Cirque serves free never-ending glasses of champagne for ladies, and on Fridays the NOmadic belly dancers perform for free at the Dragon's Den around 9 o'clock.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - New Orleans



### Royal Street

Art, antiques and entertainment



### Jackson Square

Art and fun in front of the cathedral



### Bourbon Street

Where the party never stops!



### Lafayette Cemetery

The "vampire" cemetery



### Saint Louis Cemetery 1

The famous "city of the dead"



### Audubon Park

Animals, nature, recreation and relaxation



### New Orleans City Park

Stroll under the oaks



### Jean Lafitte Swamp

Cypress trees and alligators



### Le Cirque

Well-Designed Hotel



### Dragon's Den

Nouvelle Asian plus brass band



### Frenchmen Street

Live music and dancing in the street



### Woldenberg Riverfront Park

Green Oasis

# Day 1 - New Orleans

QUICK NOTE

**contact:**  
tel: 800 672 6124

**location:**  
417 Royal Street  
New Orleans LA 70130

## 1 Royal Street

**DESCRIPTION:** Royal Street in the French Quarter is the perfect place to go for window shopping and a daytime stroll. On this beautiful and historic street, visitors will find art, antiques, specialty shops, and restaurants, as well as dozens of street performers. On any given day you might hear a jazz ensemble, bluegrass group, brass band, or just a boy and his guitar. Magicians, tap dancers, saxophone players, and men in head-to-toe metallic costumes are also common sights. The art galleries are breathtaking, and the street boasts some of the best restaurants in the city, such as Brennan's and The Court of Two Sisters. Other excellent Royal Street points of interest include Painted Alive Gallery, Cornstalk Bed and Breakfast, and the Carousel Bar, located inside Hotel Montelone. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Ken Lund

**contact:**  
tel: +1 504 410 2396  
<http://www.jackson-square.com/>

**location:**  
Decatur Street  
New Orleans LA 70116

## 2 Jackson Square

**DESCRIPTION:** Jackson Square is a beautiful little park that sits in front of the commanding St. Louis Cathedral, the oldest cathedral in America. Presiding over the park is a statue of Andrew Jackson on his horse, and surrounding the square are artists and street performers, as well as horse-drawn carriages waiting to take you on a tour of the Quarter. Have the fortune tellers look at your palm, or let a local artist draw your caricature. Of course, there are also museums, shops, and restaurants surrounding Jackson Square, including Muriel's, a five-star haunted restaurant where each day the wait-staff sets a table and pours wine for their resident ghost. "We don't know who drinks the wine," they say, "but every morning it's gone." In Jackson Square at night, you really can feel the presence of the ghosts of New Orleans past. During the Christmas Season, Jackson Square is the spot for nighttime caroling, and in the spring the park blooms with bright flowers.



Photo courtesy of respres

**location:**  
Bourbon Street  
New Orleans LA 70116

## 3 Bourbon Street

**DESCRIPTION:** It wouldn't be a trip to New Orleans without Bourbon Street! The party never stops on this crazy, colorful street that runs through the heart of the French Quarter. Any time of day or night, you can hear live music, dance in the streets, drink a daiquiri, or dangle Mardi Gras beads at passersby from one of the many balconies. Closer to Canal Street are the adult entertainment clubs, closer to Esplanade Avenue are the gay-friendly venues, and in between are blocks and blocks of bars, clubs, shops, and restaurants. Don't miss Pat O'Brien's famous four-shot rum Hurricane and their outdoor patio with the beautiful fiery fountain. Check out Fritzel's for



Photo courtesy of Gary J Wood

great jazz, Razoo's for sweaty dancing, and the Cat's Meow for karaoke, as well as Jean Lafitte's, a dark and cozy bar located in the pirate's historic blacksmith shop. Go ahead and have a drink (it's five o'clock somewhere!) and saunter down Bourbon Street, the greatest adult playground in the country.

**contact:**  
tel: +1 504 566 5011

**location:**  
1400 Washington Ave  
New Orleans LA 70130

## 4 Lafayette Cemetery

**DESCRIPTION:** Lafayette Cemetery in the Garden District is one of the oldest cemeteries in the country, and has been in operation since 1824. New Orleans residents quickly learned that because of the high water table and unpredictable flooding, coffins cannot be placed six feet underground; their dead must be buried in above-ground tombs. These rows of sarcophagus tombs are the reason New Orleans cemeteries are often referred to as "Cities of the Dead." Lafayette Cemetery may look strangely familiar – it has been used in several movies, including Interview with a Vampire. Author Anne Rice lives nearby and wrote about Lafayette Cemetery in many of her vampire books. Visitors can take a tour and learn the history of Lafayette Cemetery (you can even take a carriage ride there from the French Quarter), or you can explore on your own. See the wall vaults and the "Secret Garden," a square of four tombs built by a secret society of friends who wanted to be buried together. As for lunch after touring, the Commander's Palace, one of the best restaurants in the city, is right across the street. © NileGuide



wcities

**contact:**  
tel: 504 482 5065  
<http://www.neworleansonline.com/neworleans/tours/cemeterytours.html>

**location:**  
3421 Esplanade Avenue  
New Orleans LA 70119

**hours:**  
Daily 9a-3p

## 5 Saint Louis Cemetery 1

**DESCRIPTION:** Established in 1789 on the outer edge of the French Quarter, St. Louis Cemetery Number One is the most famous of all the "Cities of the Dead" in New Orleans. Take a tour or explore on your own the rows of sarcophagi and large society tombs. Marie Louveu, the famous Voodoo Queen, is buried there, and many visitors leave toys, flowers, and coins around her tomb. It is said that if you want to ask her for a favor, just knock on her tomb three times! St. Louis Cemetery is within walking distance of the French Quarter, but you can also take a carriage ride there from Jackson Square, and learn more history along the way. © NileGuide



wcities

**contact:**  
<http://www.auduboninstitute.org/site/PageServer>

**location:**  
6500 St Charles Ave  
New Orleans LA 70130-3145

**hours:**  
Daily 24hrs

## 6 Audubon Park

**DESCRIPTION:** Audubon Park is really several parks in one, spanning St. Charles Avenue all the way to the Mississippi River. A fitness trail circles the Audubon Golf Course and runs alongside live oak trees and lush lagoons that are home to ducks, geese, egrets, and turtles. Cross over Magazine Street, and you'll come to the Audubon Zoo and Cascade Stables. Keep walking alongside the zoo, past the Audubon Labyrinth and across the train tracks, until you get to Riverview Park.



Known to locals as "the fly," this is a great spot for playing soccer, or just laying in the sun with a daiquiri, admiring the waters of the Mississippi. The park is a great place to play or picnic, and if you don't want to drive there, you can get to the park from the French Quarter on the St. Charles Streetcar or by the John James Audubon ferry boat. © NileGuide

**contact:**

tel: 504 482 4888  
fax: 504 483 9412  
<http://www.neworleanscitypark.com>

**location:**

1 Palm Drive  
New Orleans LA 70124

## 7 New Orleans City Park

**DESCRIPTION:** Located in Mid-City, near Lake Ponchartrain, is beautiful 1300-acre City Park. City Park is the home of the Botanical Garden and the New Orleans Museum of Art, as well as the Besthof Sculpture Garden, through which visitors can wander for free. Kids can meet life-size replicas of fairy tale characters in Storyland, enjoy rides at the Carousel Gardens Amusement Park, or take a train ride around the entire park. City Park also has tennis courts, walking trails, a golf course and driving range, stables, and paddle boats. If you're looking for something simpler, take a walk around the duck pond or just stroll through the grounds, admiring the bald cypress trees and live oaks. City Park has more live oak trees than anywhere else in the world, some of which are several hundred years old. Although there is a playground, kids might rather explore the low, sweeping branches of these beautiful trees. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of jvanpelt

**contact:**

<http://www.nps.gov/jela/barataria-preserve.htm>

**location:**

6601 Leo Kerner Lafitte Parkway  
Marrero LA 70072

## 8 Jean Lafitte Swamp

**DESCRIPTION:** Only twenty-five minutes from downtown New Orleans is Jean Lafitte Swamp. There are plenty of swamp tours that explore the watery lands by airboat or ferry, including some that provide transportation to the swamp from the city. You can also go to the Barataria Preserve National Park and walk through the swamps for free, either on your own or with a ranger guide. Sometimes the rangers even do moonlight swamp tours by canoe! Jean Lafitte Swamp is beautiful and mysterious with its cypress trees and winding bayous. It is also home to hundreds of animals, including alligators, egrets, frogs, snakes, and over 300 species of birds.



Photo courtesy of Jean Lafitte Swamp

**contact:**

tel: 888/211-3447  
fax: 504/962-0901  
[www.neworleansfinehotels.com/hotellecirque](http://www.neworleansfinehotels.com/hotellecirque)

**location:**

936 St Charles Ave  
New Orleans LA 70130

## 9 Le Cirque

**DESCRIPTION:** A smart, sharp, and chic version of the generic business hotel -- sort of like a Crowne Plaza, if it was done up in chartreuse and that new misty gray-blue that's all the rage. Oddly, it's not set up as a business hotel, lacking amenities such as separate dataports and even room service, but it does offer 4,000 square feet of meeting space. Rooms are average size; the ones with king-size beds are a bit cramped thanks to all the furniture jammed in along with it (chair, desk, TV). Queen rooms are even smaller. © Frommer's

Hotels.com

**contact:**  
tel: 504 949 1750

**location:**  
435 Esplanade Avenue  
New Orleans LA 70116

## A Dragon's Den

**DESCRIPTION:** This hippy den, with pillows on the floor for lounging, is transformed after dark into one of the funkier jazz venues in the city. You never quite know what to expect in a place that functions as a bar, coffee house and performance venue, so take your chances... It could be, and usually is, quite fun! © wcities.com



Dragon's Den

**location:**  
Frenchmen Street  
New Orleans LA 70116

## B Frenchmen Street

**DESCRIPTION:** The four blocks of Frenchmen Street between Esplanade and Elysian Fields are sort of like the Bourbon Street for locals. Just past the French Quarter, on the edge of the hip Marigny neighborhood, this is where the real music is being played! The little stretch is packed with intimate jazz and blues bars like The Apple Barrel and The Spotted Cat, and high-energy music clubs like d.b.a. and Blue Nile. Some of the most unique and eccentric people in New Orleans hang out on Frenchmen Street, and there's always something going on, especially late at night. You can dance salsa at Café Brazil, have a smoke at the upscale Hookah Café, or enjoy great music and a killer burger at Snug Harbor. And at the end of the night, when you're feeling like a snack, try a local favorite - totchos (tater-tot nachos) at Monaghan's 13.



SanFranAnnie

**contact:**  
tel: 504/861-2537

**location:**  
1 Canal Street  
New Orleans LA 70130

**hours:**  
Daily dawn-dusk

## C Woldenberg Riverfront Park

**DESCRIPTION:** Made up of just under 20 acres of newly repaired green space, Woldenberg Riverfront Park has historically been the city's promenade; now it's an oasis of greenery in the heart of the city with numerous works by popular local artists scattered throughout. The park includes a large lawn with a brick promenade leading to the Mississippi, and it's home to hundreds of trees -- oaks, magnolias, willows, and crape myrtles -- and thousands of shrubs. That greenery got beat up, but nothing like a rainy tropical climate to help foliage thrive again. The **Moonwalk** is a paved pedestrian thoroughfare along the river, a wonderful walk on a pretty New Orleans day but really a must-do for any weather other than pouring rain. It has steps that allow you to get right down to Old Muddy -- on foggy nights, you feel as if you are floating above the water. There are many benches from which to view the city's main industry: its busy port (second in the world only to Amsterdam in annual tonnage). To your right you'll see the Greater New Orleans Bridge and the World Trade Center of New Orleans (formerly the International Trade Mart) skyscraper as well as the Toulouse Street wharf, the departure point for excursion steamboats. This is also an excellent spot to watch full moons rise over the river. © Frommer's



# New Orleans Snapshot

## Local Info

The world watched Hurricane Katrina drown New Orleans in 2005. The world did not watch New Orleans rise from the depths of despair and rebuild-- not only its structures but its famously jubilant spirit. But rise it has and New Orleans today is almost back to normal, at least in those urban areas that visitors frequent. The most popular tourist entertainments here have always been great music, good food and vibrant nightlife and all have been restored to their pre-hurricane strength. Mardi Gras and the Jazz and Heritage Festival are as lively as ever and most of the city's cultural and historical attractions have been restored. In fact, this could be the best time to visit, as the locals are eager to have travelers back and good deals are offered everywhere.

## Sights

Finding fun things to do here is indeed the Big Easy. The French Quarter alone has a vacation's worth of restaurants, trendy nightclubs, historic buildings, antique shops, high-end boutiques, low-end dives and everything in between. If you've come to New Orleans to party, Bourbon Street is worth at least one night out. It's crowded, it's cliched, it's gaudy and bawdy but that's its appeal. Daytime trips to the French Quarter should include a walk down Royal Street or Jackson Square, where you'll find art galleries, upscale stores and specialty shops. You'll likely also spot tarot readers and quartets performing impromptu shows on street corners.

Faubourg Marigny, south of the French Quarter, is an enriching side trip. The district is known for its Bohemian lifestyle and, if you're an architecture fan, this is where you'll see quaint Creole cottages built in the 19th century. Washington Square Park is the hub of activities in the area, with lots of landmarks, bars, entertainment venues, coffee shops and restaurants.

If you have a flair for the occult and voodoo, you'll find many shops selling books, crafts and paraphernalia of the genre in and around New Orleans. To complete your walk on the beguiled side, spend a few hours at the historical cemeteries in the Treme and Mid-City areas.

You can also enjoy New Orleans' sights by hopping aboard one of its many riverboat cruises, ferry rides, streetcar tours or bicycle expeditions. Sites to add to your itinerary include the New Orleans Museum of Art and the park in Mid-City, as well as the beautiful old architecture and historic Victorian mansions Uptown.

The city has plenty of year-round events to add a special touch to any vacation. In addition to the open-air zoo that is Mardi Gras, the biggest events are the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, Voodoo Music Experience and the New Orleans Southern Decadence Festival (now there's an oxymoron).

## Dining

Though seriously dinged by the BP oil spill in the gulf, New Orleans' seafood industry is getting back on its feet and once again supplying the aquatic delicacies that visitors expect to find on city menus. Try asking around to find the freshest oysters and make sure to sample the local favorites: a beignet for breakfast, gumbo for lunch and a late-night po-boy to fuel your dash for your hotel after barhopping.

© NileGuide

## History

Rene Cavelier Sieur de la Salle, a French explorer, was the first European to explore the lower Mississippi River and he claimed the entire river and its basin, a substantially larger plot than the modern state of Louisiana, for France. The immense area was named in honor of King Louis XIV and his wife Anne. Phillippe, Duc d'Orleans, then Regent of France, gave his name to New Orleans, but it was Sieur d'Iberville who

founded the actual city some 20 years later. A port city uniting the Mississippi River with the Gulf of Mexico had long been a strategic dream, but the site's physical landscape, an improbable 15 feet below sea level, was a nightmare. Most of the lands surrounding the river were swamps, wetlands intermittently covered by water, and dense woody vegetation. In addition, malaria, spread by Louisiana's most prolific resident, the mosquito, presented a lethal risk to any worker.

It turned out to be a Scotsman, royal counselor John Law, who stimulated interest in France's newest colonial addition. Law mounted an 18th-century PR campaign complete with phony eyewitness accounts of gold-rich lands. When hopeful and oftentimes poor immigrants arrived and saw none of the promised gold prospects, they had little choice other than to stay and make the best of it. The deceived immigrants also found New Orleans a deadly place with its humid and unsanitary conditions. Those who died were buried in the swampy land, but residents soon discovered that coffins had the unpleasant propensity to pop out of the ground with every hard rain. Aboveground tombs and mausoleums were the only recourse.

Most residents built houses in a square-like grid, now called the Vieux Carre (French Quarter), centered around an open area known as the Place d'Armes, today known as Jackson Square. The societal make-up of this Creole society was a mix of French aristocrats, merchants, farmers, soldiers, indentured servants, and both slaves and free people of color. It soon became fashionable for male Creole aristocrats to have black or mulatto mistresses. Children sired from these unions were often treated well and sometimes given valuable property and a European education. This generous attitude towards minorities set New Orleans apart from all other major North American colonial cities.

In the 1760s, New Orleans underwent its first major social transformation with the arrival of two new groups: the Acadians and the Spanish. The Acadian immigrants, or Cajuns, who were ousted from their native Nova Scotia by the British, traversed the entire United States and settled in the bayous west of New Orleans. The Spanish arrived in the city prodded by

## New Orleans Snapshot continued

the transfer of the Louisiana Territory to Spanish King Charles III, royal cousin to King Louis XV of France. The Spanish reign however, was short and most notable for the building codes enacted to spare the Vieux Carre from the devastating fires that swept the city in 1788 and 1794. Much of the architecture of the area that has been attributed to the French, including rear courtyards and elaborate wrought iron balconies, is actually a Spanish contribution.

Despite the prosperity that developed during Spanish occupation, New Orleans remained predisposed to its French heritage. The city happily reunited with its original founders in 1800, when the Louisiana Territory was returned to France. However, the reunion was short-lived. War debts forced Napoleon to sell the territory to the United States for a mere \$15 million in the famous Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Louisiana later achieved statehood in 1812.

Once Louisiana was officially named an American state, American settlers and Irish and Italian immigrants rushed into the city of New Orleans. Rebuffed by the city's Creole society, the Americans settled upriver from the Vieux Carre in what are now the Central Business District and the Irish Channel. Skirmishes between the old and new residents occurred frequently. The dividing line, an empty canal, between the French Quarter and the American sector, became known as "the neutral ground" and then, Canal Street.

In the years leading up to the Civil War, New Orleans became a prosperous port city. Cotton, tobacco, and sugarcane plantations produced goods at full throttle. Steamboats along the Mississippi transferred the goods to the rest of country. During this economically comfortable period, New Orleans developed its festive reputation. By 1823, costume balls commemorated Mardi Gras, or "Fat Tuesday," the celebration that precedes Lent. Secret aristocratic groups, known as Mardi Gras Krewes, offered structure to the loose, sometimes violent, holiday season. In 1857, the first established Krewe, the Mystick Krewe of Comus, debuted a horse-drawn, decorated float, which soon became a prominent constituent of the annual festivities. Some years later, the Comus Krewe introduced the role of Mardi Gras Queen, bestowing the premier honor on

Mildred Lee, daughter of Confederate General Robert E. Lee.

New Orleans, loyal to the Confederacy, fell quickly to Union forces in the early years of the Civil War. City morale suffered, but the French Quarter continued to thrive because of saloons, gambling parlors, and bordellos. The party atmosphere became somewhat regulated toward the turn of the century when alderman Sidney Story proposed setting up a red-light district along Basin Street, just to the north of the French Quarter. The district soon became known as Storyville. Resident entertainers there, most notably "King" Oliver and Jelly Roll Morton, would later contribute to the birth of the national musical art form known as jazz.

The beginning of the 20th century was a difficult period for New Orleans. A series of natural disasters, including a hurricane in 1915, a flu epidemic in 1918, and a flood in 1927, devastated the city. Legendary governor and beloved scoundrel Huey P. Long rescued the Crescent City with successful bids to the state legislature for the expansion of public works and services. Long's legally questionable, but ultimately successful methods also put a corrupt stamp on both city and state politics. The famous line, "Folks have a certain way of doing things 'round here," from the movie *The Big Easy*, is a fairly accurate assessment of the local bureaucratic mindset over the past century.

Oil, natural gas and tourism have become New Orleans' largest post-Depression industries. In 1969, the first Jazz Fest, a 10-day festival and one of the world's largest musical celebrations, attracted the biggest names in jazz and blues to its outdoor stages. The festival continues to draw impossibly large numbers of visitors to the city each year. The 1984 World's Fair Exhibit was a less successful commercial venture, but led to the development of the Warehouse District wharves.

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans causing one of the United States' most devastating natural disasters. Many of the city's levees were breached and over 80 percent of the city was covered in water. A forced evacuation saved many lives but over a thousand people were killed. Though the city was ravaged, the city

is rebuilding and its spirit is stronger than ever.

©

### Hotel Insights

New Orleans makes few bones about it, its *raison d'être* is to play host. New Orleans has luxury hotels, funky guest residences, quaint bed and breakfasts, and even a few youth hostels. Naturally, your accommodations should probably be determined by your expectations of the city. In general, hotel rates go up during Mardi Gras season (February/March) and Jazz Fest (late April/early May), so make sure you book your rooms in advance.

### French Quarter

Staying in the Quarter means you will be close to most of New Orleans' famous attractions: historic houses and churches, wrought iron balconies, first-class entertainment and dining, and the muddy waters of the Mississippi River. Modern hotels, like the Omni Royal New Orleans and quaint hotels, like the Cornstalk Hotel, co-exist in the Quarter. The Quarter is filled with a plethora of excitement. A room facing the always-exuberant Bourbon Street can be fun at night, but a little too much first thing in the morning during some of the more festive seasons.

Le Richelieu is a good choice for budget accommodations, with plenty of personality, while celebrities and high rollers hoping for more privacy opt for the exquisite Soniat House.

### Central Business District

The Central Business District, or CBD, stretches from the Superdome to the Ernest M. Morial Convention Center, and consequently offers the most popular lodging for business travelers and sports fans.

The major hotel chains here include the Marriot, Hilton, Sheraton, and Hyatt hotels. Those searching for something more intimate should try either the Pelham Hotel or the Lafayette Hotel on St. Charles Avenue, easily accessible on the St. Charles Streetcar line.

The ultimate choice to pamper oneself is The Windsor Court, New Orleans' most acclaimed (and possibly most expensive) hotel. Even if you do not stay here, stop by

## New Orleans Snapshot continued

for afternoon tea or an excellent meal at the hotel's restaurant, The Grill Room.

Budget travelers also have a number of solid choices in the CBD, including the Comfort Suites and Holiday Inn Select.

### Garden District

Modern hotels with a solid reputation, like the Avenue Plaza and the highbrow Pontchartrain Hotel, are directly on the streetcar line and fairly close to Lee Circle and many Warehouse District art museums. The lovely homes associated with the district and the walking tours that showcase them attract many tourists to the neighborhood's hotels. If you have the time and luxury of a loose schedule, a Garden District bed-and-breakfast, such as The Terrell House or The McKendrick-Breaux House, is a charming and comfortable way to enjoy New Orleans and get to know the locals. The 1851 Inn on the Avenue is a 150-year old manor with every modern convenience

### Uptown

Uptown is mostly residential, aside from a few coffee shops and clothing stores. Activities center around Tulane and Loyola Universities, Audubon Park, and the Audubon Zoo. The Columns Hotel, nestled among the many St. Charles Avenue mansions, offers nineteen antique-furnished rooms and a popular bar where both locals and tourists have drinks and watch the world pass by. Try the Beau Sejour or the St. Charles Guesthouse in the Uptown area. The Beau Sejour and St. Charles are both conveniently located near Tulane and Loyola Universities and are packed with amenities.

©

## Restaurants Insights

The people of New Orleans are passionate about eating. Any visitor to the city should experience the regional flavor, but there are important differences between the countrified Cajun, refined Creole, and classic Southern styles of cooking that make up New Orleans cuisine. There also exists a unifying principle: "Fat is flavor." Cream, butter, and oil abound. With this in mind, pace yourself! Hot weather and heavy food can limit your visit to the confines of your hotel room. Stay on the

safe side and try to limit yourself to one big meal a day.

### Downtown/French Quarter

Tourists are always at risk of getting an expensive, average-tasting meal in the Quarter. The tourist industry spawned many mediocre restaurants that prioritize location over taste. On the plus side, a truly bad meal is difficult to find anywhere in New Orleans. Avoid the handful of chain restaurants in favor of the little holes in the wall.

To start your morning off, how about an order of pipping hot beignets loaded with powdered sugar from Cafe Du Monde, a New Orleans institution.

Quality service usually comes at a high price in the Quarter, but you are also paying for a slice of history- a seat in some of the oldest fine dining establishments in the country. In any of the classic Creole-French restaurants, like Arnaud's and Brennan's, you will have a satisfying experience laden with such traditional delicacies as Oysters Rockefeller, Trout Meuniere, Turtle Soup, and Banana's Foster. For the full-on Southern buffet, check out Court of the Two Sisters. Locals like to put this granddaddy of buffets down, but it has its merits, including solid bread pudding, Dixieland jazz, and a beautiful view of the Quarter.

For those in search of something more nouveau and intimate, the Quarter also offers the acclaimed Bayona (a four-star bargain), the gorgeous Gamay, the Italian-Creole Bacco, and the romantic Bella Luna, which overlooks the Mississippi River.

There are many places to have a casual lunch. Briny oyster shooters can be had at ACME Oyster House, or a mixed-meat Muffuletta sandwich from the Central Grocery always hits the spot. After lunch, or even better for breakfast, move on to the sticky French pastry at La Marquise.

A scattering of miscellaneous downtown restaurants represent just about everything that New Orleans has to offer. The downtown area has everything from old-school grease joints to cutting-edge bistros. For old-time favorites that never cease to please, New Orleanians go to the no-nonsense Mandina's or the BBQ shrimp palace, Pascal's Manale.

Many people flock to New Orleans for the simple truth that alcohol is everywhere: in the bars, on the sidewalks, in the streets. From the impressive wine lists of the elite New Orleans' Grill Room in the Windsor Court Hotel to the many to-go Daiquiri shops on festive Bourbon Street, folks in New Orleans like to drink and they don't like to wait until the weekend to partake of the spirits. Whether it's to kick off your evening or to wrap it up, no trip to the French Quarter is complete without a Pat O'Brien's cocktail. Try the house special, the "hurricane."

### Central Business District

For a sampling of a New Orleans staple, stop by Mother's for a good ol' fashioned po' boy sandwich. For a slightly more upscale example of traditional Creole food, The Veranda Restaurant will serve up an unforgettable meal. If all the Southern cooking has you hurting, the Apple Seed Shoppe, is an excellent, tasty and healthy lunch spot to keep your day going. When the time comes to quench your thirst, Gordon Biersch Brewery Restaurant serves up quality beers with quality food.

### Garden District

The Garden District is full of all kinds of good eats. For classic cuisine and service, Emeril Lagasse's Delmonico Restaurant & Bar is a Big Easy favorite. Cafe Atchafalaya is another classic Creole eatery where you can sample goods from the Bayou. And if you're serious about your oysters, Casamento's is the place for you, but be aware as they close when oysters aren't in season.

Sundays can be difficult for dining as many of New Orleans' better restaurants close for the day. Fortunately, glorious options still exist, most especially the Brennan family's famous Commander's Palace, the former stomping-ground of celebrity chefs Emeril Lagasse and Paul Prudhomme.

If you're hankering for a taste of the far east down south, Five Happiness Restaurant can satisfy, while The Delachaise serves up a variety of tapas and wines.

The heart and soul of the city's drinking culture lies in its low-key bars. Laid-back hang-outs with names like Le Bon Temps Roule attract an interesting mix of students, celebrities, faded intellectuals, and serious barflies. In short, these are marvelous places to blend in and be entertained.

## New Orleans Snapshot continued

### Warehouse District/Arts District

For an evening of sophistication, try the eponymous Emeril's New Orleans or 7 On Fulton for a fancy, filling meal.

No visit to the south would be complete without some down-home barbeque, so head to Ugly Dog Saloon and Bar-B-Que for brisket or ribs and a game of pool. Cochon serves up spicy Cajun cuisine and the requisite glass of Bourbon.

The Warehouse District offers up quite a bit in the way of ethnic foods as well, such as the Asian-Fusion restaurant Hipstix, or Rock-n-Sake for sushi and sake bombs.

©

### Nightlife Insights

#### Festivals

New Orleanians love to throw a good party—keep in mind this is a city that dances in the street after a funeral. So don't fret if you miss the big money draws Mardi Gras and Jazz Fest. There are still plenty of festivals to go around, including Southern Decadence with the ultimate drag parade down Royal Street; the French Quarter Festival in April that attracts local and international bands as well as some of Jazz Fest's favorite food vendors; and the Creole Tomato Festival, a smaller affair, but just as delicious.

#### Music

A ton of musical history and a citywide penchant for "shakin' it" make New Orleans ground zero for catching great music all year long. Even more good news: if you go local and hit clubs outside the French Quarter you'll find yourself rarely paying more than a \$5 cover charge with standard bar prices.

New Orleans is most famous for jazz. This is where the national art form was born, and the natives haven't forgotten it. You can capture the various evolutionary forms of this African/European musical merger throughout the city. Fans of Dixieland should stick with the Quarter's top venues: Fritzel's and Preservation Hall—understandably touristy, but undeniably soul satisfying. Modern Jazz buffs will enjoy the omnipresence of Ellis Marsalis, father of Wynton and Branford, as he appears in various combos at Snug Harbor on Frenchmen Street. For contemporary New

Orleans style jazz, stick with acts such as Kermit Ruffins at Vaughn's, Nicholas Payton or Los Hombres Calientes at the Funky Butt on Rampart Street, and brass bands like The Dirty Dozen at Donna's, conveniently next door to the Funky Butt.

The next most popular New Orleans musical requests? Cajun and Zydeco, additional examples of the melding of European and African stylings. Both genres fall under the "unapologetic dance" heading and draw on their strong regional country roots (accordions, washboards and smatterings of French). Tipatina's Uptown hosts a Fais-Do-Do every Sunday night featuring the traditional selections of Bruce Daigrepoint. The sessions serve as a weekly reunion of Cajun aficionados from around the city, but beginners are welcomed whole heartedly. At Mid-City Lanes Rock and Bowl, the pine floor boards creak as Zydeco bands play to enthusiastic throngs every Thursday night. Finally, check out Mulate's on Julia Street, a great place to brush up on your waltz and get some good grub.

Speaking of dancing, international enthusiasts can get their tango/reggae/salsa groove on at Frenchmen Street's Cafe Brasil. And don't go forgetting the funk! Look for acts like former Meters man George Porter Jr. and Walter "Wolfman" Washington at the Maple Leaf Bar on Oak Street Uptown or the French Quarter's House of Blues.

It's back into the Quarter and the House of Blues for bigger name out-of-town acts. Other night life attractions to be found in the area include Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville Cafe, full-tilt silly karaoke at Cat's Meow on Bourbon Street, and bass bumping house and disco tunes at neighboring Bourbon Pub and Oz, two of the more integrated gay clubs in the city.

Wind things down with a visit to Kerry Irish Pub on Decatur Street. This spot preserves the integrity of Irish pub culture: quiet conversation, respect for local musicians and relaxed service.

#### Museums

Museums range from the nationally significant D-Day Museum and Confederate Museum to the more obscure Pharmacy Museum, a celebration of the 19th century apothecary.

Most political, sociological and architectural exhibitions of interest can be found in the French Quarter, home of the Louisiana State Museum and its various branches, as well as the Historic New Orleans Collection and important historical residences.

Art lovers will enjoy the huge collection of international art work and archaeological finds at the New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA). A small showcase of African American art is viewable at the Villa Maillou on Gov. Nicholls Street in the Faubourg Tremé District.

#### Theatre

On the line between museum and art gallery lies the Contemporary Art Center (CAC), a spectacularly renovated warehouse on Camp Street that offers two floors of touring art work. The upper level gallery is usually a national show and the lower level gallery is a showcase for local artists working in the medium represented on the second floor. The CAC also stages a variety of art appreciation events, concerts and cutting-edge theater productions.

For more mainstream performing arts events the place to be is downtown. Theater lovers have a variety of options: contemporary drama at The Southern Repertory Theater on the third floor of Canal Place; the Saenger Theatre on Rampart Street at Canal, host to national touring companies and A-list comedians; and the cozy Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre in the Quarter, where old-school chestnuts are performed by local acting vets. Ballet and opera lovers can view local and touring ensembles at the Mahalia Jackson Theatre of Performing Arts in Louis Armstrong Park, while the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra plays various venues around the city.

#### Shopping

All manifestations of material goods are yours for purchasing. Try Magazine Street, lower Garden District to Uptown, for funky, used and questionably French items; Royal Street, for classic antiques; and the Central Business District's New Orleans Shopping Center, Canal Place and sprawling Riverwalk for all your mall needs. Music buffs take note of the Louisiana Music Factory across from the House of Blues, as well as the GHB Jazz Foundation at the French Market, stocked with Dixieland, traditional and classic jazz recordings.

## New Orleans Snapshot continued

### Casinos

It was only a matter of time before the ultimate addition was made to the Quarter's increasingly adult playground atmosphere. Located at the corner of St. Peter and Canal Streets, the newest link in the Harrah's Casino chain houses 100,000 square-feet of slots and table games, dining and entertainment.

### Children's Activities

The Audubon Zoo, at the rear of Audubon Park, and its sister site, the Aquarium of the Americas, at the Riverfront, are excellent family diversions. Both facilities are impressive showcases of creatures found regionally and across the world, including such rarities as white tigers and 450-pound sharks. The Aquarium of the Americas is also home to New Orleans' IMAX theater.

Outdoor enthusiasts can choose between two gorgeous oak-filled parks: Audubon Uptown or New Orleans City Park in Mid-City, the nation's fifth largest urban park. Both public greens offer golf courses, play areas and horseback riding.

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### Things to Do Insights

New Orleans is not a big city, but it does have an extensive and dynamic history that can overwhelm the first time tourist, but there are many venues for visitors to successfully experience one of the most captivating places in the world.

**Cabildo** Near Jackson Square Park, you can tour the Cabildo, where the official transfer of the Louisiana Purchase took place, and St. Louis Cathedral, the oldest cathedral in the United States. Dine at Antoine's. To get a feel for 18th Century living, tour the Old Ursulines Convent and Madame John's Legacy, the city's oldest buildings.

**Musee Conti Wax Museum** Visit the Musee Conti Wax Museum, then the Historic Voodoo Museum, and the Germaine Wells Mardi Gras Museum above Arnaud's Restaurant on Bienville. Mardi-Gras paraphernalia and memorabilia are also on display, along with an impressive jazz exhibition, at the Old U. S. Mint.

**Magazine Street** Walk down Magazine Street and browse the many shops.

Then walk over to Julia Street, an area recently dubbed the Arts District in honor of the Contemporary Art Center, which honors local artists with exhibitions and performances. Dine at Casamento's. Two major museums in this area are the National D-Day Museum and the Confederate Museum. After browsing the eclectic shops and galleries along Magazine Street, walk a few blocks over to St. Charles Avenue and catch a ride on the famous New Orleans Streetcar. Sit back and enjoy the voyage along the most scenic avenue in the city in one of these ancient streetcars which are an integral part of the city's history.

**Garden District** This is a gorgeous area of the city, lush with crepe myrtles, magnolia trees, and jasmine bushes. It is truly a stroller's paradise. There are also many small galleries in this area. Visit the Davis Gallery, the Cole Pratt Gallery and the Mario Villa Gallery. Dine at the Upperline Restaurant. Also be sure to check out the displays at The George & Leah McKenna Museum of African American Art.

**New Orleans City Park** Louis Armstrong Park is a nice place to spend a few hours. The St. Louis Cemetery Number Two is on Esplanade Avenue, just before New Orleans City Park. Grab a bite at Venezia. The Park is home to the New Orleans Museum of Art and the Botanical Gardens.

New Orleans has a long list of commercial tour packages that cover every conceivable angle of the city's historical highlights.

**Walking Tours** Magic Walking Tours( +1 504 588 9693/http://www.neworleansmagictours.com/) Haunted History Tours( +1 504 861 2727/http://www.hauntedhistorytours.com/) Historic New Orleans Walking Tours( +1 504 947 2120/http://www.tourneworleans.com/)

**Wildlife Tours** Cajun Pride Swamp Tour( +1 800 467 0758/http://www.cajunprideswamptours.com/)

**Culinary Tours** New Orleans Culinary History Tours( +1 504 427 9595/http://www.noculinarytours.com/)

**Bus Tours** Gray Line Tours( +1 504 569 1401/http://www.graylineneworleans.com/)

**Boat Tours** Robin Street Wharf( +1 504 522 2551)

**Ghost Tours** Haunted History Tours( +1 504 861 2727/http://www.hauntedhistorytours.com/)  
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### Travel Tips

#### Getting There

##### Air

Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport(MSY)+1 504 464 0831http://www.flymsy.com/

MSY is located 11 miles from downtown and services the following airlines:

Air Canada(+1 888 247 2262/ http://www.aircanada.ca/) Air Tran(+1 800 825 8538/ http://www.airtran.com/) American Airlines(+1 800 433 7300/ http://www.aa.com/) Continental Airlines(+1 800 525 0280/ http://www.continental.com/) Delta Airlines(+1 800 221 1212/ http://www.delta-air.com/) Frontier Airlines(+1 800 432 1359/ http://www.flyfrontier.com/) Jet Blue(+1 800 538 2583/ http://www.jetblue.com/) Midwest Airlines(+1 800 452 2022/ http://www.midwestexpress.com/) Northwest Airlines(+1 800 225 2525/ http://www.nwa.com/) Southwest Airlines(+1 800 435 9792/ http://www.iflyswa.com/) United Airlines(+1 800 241 6522/ http://www.ual.com/) U.S. Airways(+1 800 428 4322/ http://www.usairways.com/)

##### From the Airport

**Car Rental:** Car rental desks are located in baggage claim. Companies include: Alamo(+1 800 327 9633/ http://www.alamo.com/) Avis(+1 800 331 1212/ http://www.avis.com/) Budget(+1 504 467 2277/ https://rent.drivebudget.com/) Enterprise(+1 800 7368 2227/ http://www.enterprise.com/) Hertz(+1 800 654 3131/ http://www.hertz.com/) National(+1 800 227 7368/ http://www.nationalcar.com/) Thrifty(+1 800 847 4389/ http://www.thrifty.com/)

**Taxi:** Taxis line up outside baggage claim and a cab ride should cost around USD28 to the Central Business District, or USD12 per person for three or more passengers.

Yellow Checker-Cab(+1 504 525 3311) Big Easy Dispatch Service(+1 504 488 1234) White Fleet Cabs(+1 504 948 6605)

## New Orleans Snapshot continued

Ride Shares: Airport Shuttle  
+1 866 596 2699<http://>

[www.airportshuttleneworleans.com/](http://www.airportshuttleneworleans.com/) The Airport Shuttle is a 24 hour door-to-door transport company covering destinations in New Orleans proper. Fares are USD15 one way/USD30 return and most shuttles depart every 15 minutes.

Airport Limousine+1 504 305 2450<http://www.airportservice.com/> Airport Limousine transportation can be arranged at one of the desks in baggage claim. Rates to downtown start at USD35 per person.

Bus Service: Jefferson Transit(+1 504 364 3450/ <http://www.jeffersontransit.com/>) Sends the E2 back and forth from the airport to the CBD every 20 minutes from 5:10a until 6:40p for a price of USD1.10.

Reliant Transportation Group(+1 866 925 8110/ <http://www.relianttransportation.com/>) Provides transportation from Louis Armstrong International Airport to Baton Rouge and various points in between. Prices start at USD90 one way, and a 48-hour reservation is required.

Greyhound Buslines(+1 504 525 9371/ <http://www.greyhound.com/>) Pause at the

airport for pick ups to long haul destinations around the region.

### Highway

To reach the Central Business District, follow either the Airport Highway(Hwy 61) or I-10(via the Airport Access Road) west into downtown. Except for rush hours, the journey is relatively quick.

### Getting Around

The city of New Orleans is serviced by Jefferson Transit(JET) and Regional Transit Authority(RTA). Buses run anywhere from every 10 to every 20 minutes, and fares around town cost USD1.25 for one ride to USD12 for a three day pass. For line and schedule information, call+504 737 9611 or visit<http://www.jeffersontransit.com/>.

Another great option is the Streetcar. There are three streetcar lines which serve uptown, downtown, and some of the French Quarter. These lines run through very scenic areas of the city and provide access to many attractions. Visit [www.norta.com](http://www.norta.com) for further information.

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## Fun Facts

**New Orleans State:** Louisiana **Country:** United States of America

### New Orleans by the Numbers:

Population: 223,338(city); 929,554(metropolitan area) Average January Temperature: 51°F/ 11°C Average July Temperature: 82°F/ 28°C Average Annual Precipitation: 61 in/ 155 cm New Orleans had the first Opera house in America. The total length of canals in New Orleans supasses Venice, Italy

### Quick Facts:

Time Zone: GMT-6, CDT(Central Daylight Time) Electricity: 110 volts AC, 60Hz, standard two and three pin plugs Country Dialing Code:+1 Area Code: 504

### Did You Know?

New Orleans is called the Crescent city because the city proper is shaped like a crescent. The nickname"The Big Easy" comes from the city's history of jazz and was the name of a dance hall in the early 1900s.

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