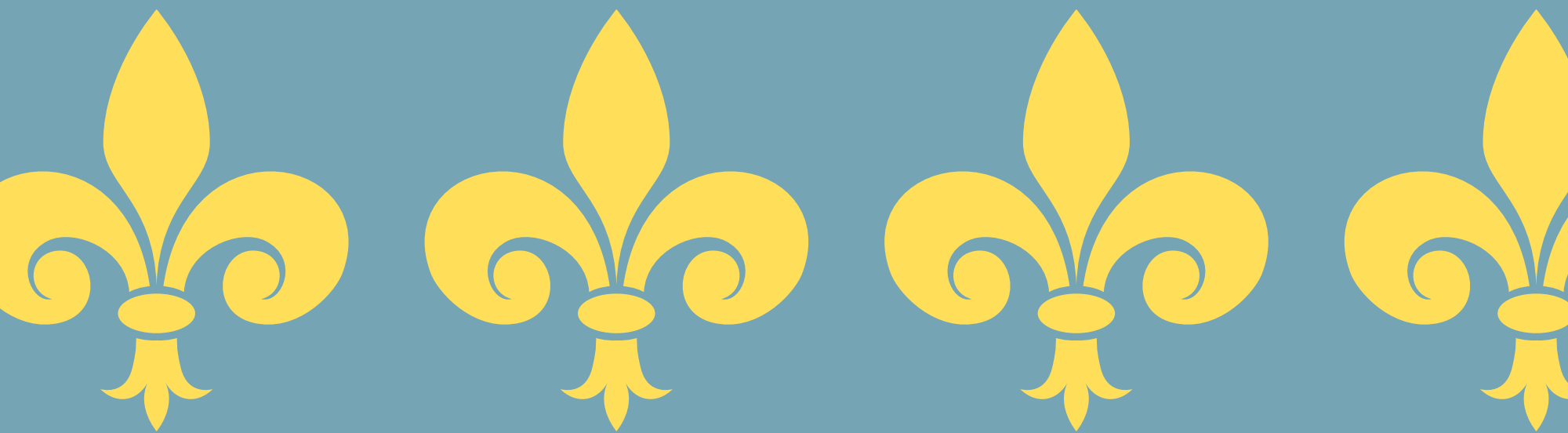


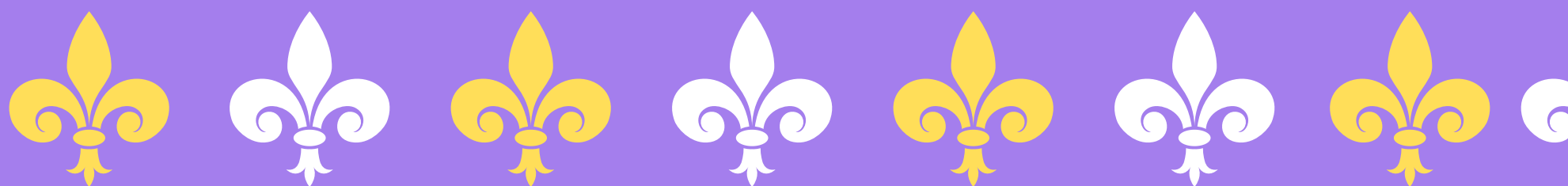
New Orleans: “An American City Like No Other”

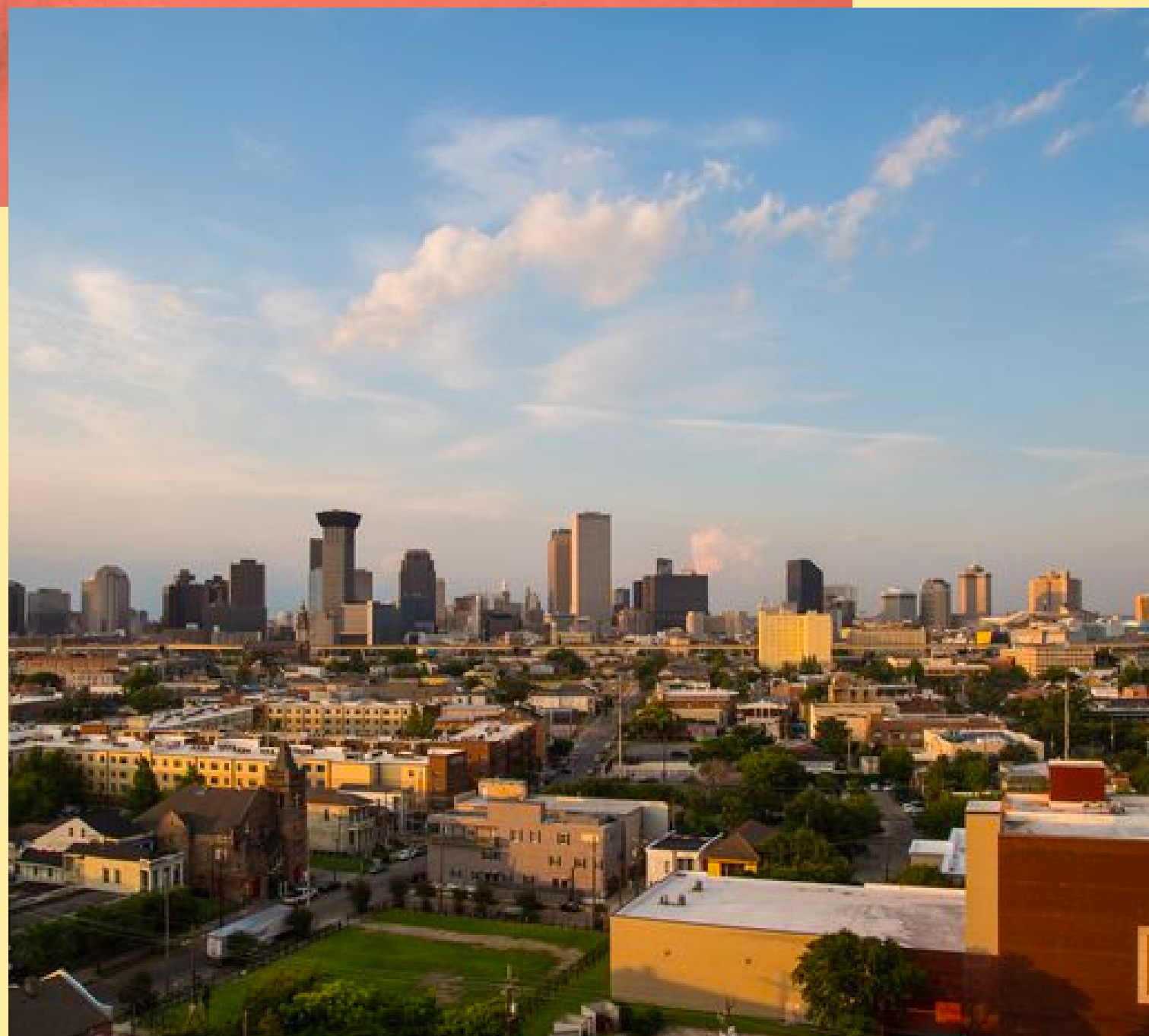
LILY CLAYTON HANSEN



WELCOME TO NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans, wild, weird, dark, and distinctive, feels like a place where anything can happen. Upon exiting the plane at the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport, you immediately know you are in a different kind of city. Oftentimes referred to as the most European place in the States, New Orleans is quite frankly, magical. It is the place to party hard, fall in love, make new friends, eat and drink your face off, and most likely, lose your credit card. (Hey, it happens to the best of us, so carry two just in case.) Do your best to hang onto your plastic, heart, and most of all senses (as crime is high in this city) and just enjoy yourself. The people of New Orleans who have been through so much tragedy truly embody the phrase “joie de vivre.” Come here for a few days when you’re looking to unwind and remember what life is all about: savoring the moment. The people here have been through so much that they don’t let a fleeting spark of happiness pass them by. (And that mentality is infectious to say the least.)





Immediately, upon arrival the city greets you with open arms from the taxi and Uber drivers, all of whom are excited to share their “how I landed here” story. New Orleanians are passionate about their city like no other—particularly those who are born and raised there and have been through the wringer with the ultimate modern tragedy: Hurricane Katrina. However, they do not let life-destroying events bring them down. That is not the New Orleans way. Instead, they cope with the hardships of life by coming together, celebrating, and staying in the present. The people of New Orleans know all too well that things can change in a split second and one should just enjoy them. Arrive in the evening so you can miss the daytime airport traffic, get a good night’s sleep, and hit the streets early the following day.

While most people want to hit the French Quarter immediately (and should, as the incomparable, can’t-believe-my-eyes debauchery is worth taking your camera out for) there are plenty of charming neighborhoods scattered throughout the city. The heart and soul of New Orleans is its historic homes, lively jazz clubs, restaurants where you can try local delicacies like jambalaya and gumbo, and its cultural offerings, which range from top-notch art galleries and museums to eerie favorites like the New Orleans Historic Voodoo Museum. The New Orleans you want is the one you decide upon. Whatever you’re in the mood for, this enclave has got it.

Fortunately, New Orleans is filled with carefree, helpful, fun as hell true-blue party people who love to share their favorite spots and/or gossip about what is happening in the ‘hood. Of course, they also live for the bar scene whether it involves bottles of wine, a beer (domestic or local- no judgments here,) cocktail, or the local tourist favorite: The Hurricane. (Be careful with that one as it is known to knock the boots off of even the savviest of boozers.) Partying is the way of life here; however, great conversations can still be expected. New Orleanians may seem like frat boys and girls right off of the bat however, when one looks beneath the surface, they have depth. They want to chat about astrology signs, local politics (be prepared as this conversation can become vicious,) and the universal problem: romantic relationships. Go to a pool hall to make new friends like “that” (snap your fingers) however, be careful as these people are skilled at their game! New Orleans is a city that goes beyond Southern hospitality but rather is a place where you can make real, lifelong friends who will tell you what is up, whether you like it or not! (From what streets to avoid to what Enneagram signs to steer clear of, the New Orleanians will give it to you straight.) The authenticity of New Orleans is intoxicating and is why so many visit and then decide to move there later on. They know in a world of fickle people that the New Orleanians have their back.

Go to New Orleans with someone that you already love, someone you want to get to know better, or a group of friends with whom you want to make unforgettable memories with. Or, buck the system and go solo to fall in love with yourself. Whoever you choose as your travel partner, just remember to unwind while also watching your surroundings, and enjoy the ride.

Thrilling, colorful, tragic, and inspiring, New Orleans has character in spades. The city, which exudes a rich sense of place, was founded by Indigenous people who called it Balbancha (“the land of many tongues,”) when they started to occupy the rich delta lands between the Mississippi River. The Indigenous came there for the exact same reason that the Europeans would later on: the abundant ecological resources and convenient network of easy-to-navigate rivers, bayous, and bays.

Claimed for the French Crown by explorer Robert Cavelier Sievr de la Salle in 1682, La Nouvelle-Orleans was founded by Jean Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville in 1718. Next, engineers laid out a grid of streets originally called Place 'd' Armes, now known as Jackson Square, which is still the epicenter of New Orleans proper. Jackson Square is now known as the "Old Square," or the focal point of the modern-day French Quarter where tourists come to sightsee during the day and then let their freak flag fly high at night. The new outpost became the capital of Louisiana in 1723—the same year that France relinquished power over the state to Spain to keep the territory away from Great Britain, winners of the French and Indian War. For the duration of the 1700s, Louisiana was known as an unofficial Spanish colony.

From there on out, New Orleans operated as a critical trading and cultural partner with countries like Cuba and Mexico. During this transition state it became a true blue city as marked by new urban infrastructure to accommodate its large population of slaves.

Two disastrous fires in 1788 and 1794 only spurred the city's metamorphosis, destroying over 1,000 French-style buildings. While devastating on the surface, there was a silver lining: new architectural codes were implemented and splendid Spanish colonial-style structures were put in place including the Carbildo (now the Louisiana State museum,) which sits directly in front of Jackson Square. Other Spanish aesthetic contributions to New Orleans are as follows: wrought-iron balconies, courtyards, above-the-ground cemeteries to protect the city's deceased from frequent floods, and the city's earliest expansion: The Central Business District, still one of the city's most happening neighborhoods today. The Spanish also liberated lots of slaves resulting in colored people having more, much deserved freedom.

In 1800, the Spanish gave Louisiana back to France only to have Napoleon sell the entire colony, a few years later back to the US as part of the Louisiana Purchase. Even when the entire state renounced its French colony status, Louisiana's residents still held tightly to their Francophile ways including the language, customs, a complex social system, and a fondness for epicureans. This population of French blooded people became known as Creoles. Today, they are praised for having created the cosmopolitan high-society lifestyle that New Orleans is known for. That air of old world sophistication that still permeates New Orleans today.

New Orleans history is also defined by pirates, most famously Jean Lafitte and his brother Pierre. The siblings were drawn to the territory because of its flow of goods between the Gulf of Mexico and Port of New Orleans. Tradition holds that Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop Bar, one of the oldest bars in America, served as the pirates' base.

Another emblem of New Orleans culture is Mardi Gras, an annual, highly anticipated celebration that was first recorded in March 1699. Mardi Gras officially became a holiday in 1718 in the form of public festivity and private costumed balls. Still one of the country's most wild affairs, Mardi Gras wasn't taken seriously until the mid 1800s when a group of Anglo Americans introduced formal parades and elaborate floats. Oftentimes referred to as the "greatest free show on Earth," it is still one that locals look forward to attending and tourists flock from all over to witness. Although it is the time where the pickpocketing rate is the highest, people still come to Mardi Gras to snag free beads, glimpses of naughty, topless party goers, see how many "hurricanes" they can slam, and to experience some of the most scandalous parties around. Bring some friends that you trust to this wild event who will abide by the principle, "What happens in New Orleans, stays in New Orleans!" Be wary of posting too much on Instagram.

The Antebellum period first arose in mid 1800s New Orleans as sparked by the tremendous wealth generated by sugar cane and cotton plantations. Dockworkers transferred the cargo from steamboats to large ships so the products could reach the global market. Bankers, merchants, and financiers worked in tandem on the business side marrying finance and logistics in New Orleans for the first time. Millions were made all around, much of which went directly to the aristocratic population. Though elegant in a Great Gatsby sort of way, the Antebellum period had its dark side as New Orleans was one of the nation's busiest slave market hubs.

In 1840, the ever booming New Orleans was coined the third largest city in the nation, the largest in the South, and the fourth busiest in the world. Yet, as the city gained momentum, a power struggle broke out between the Creoles in the French Quarter and Anglo-Americans in the affluent Central Business District and the Lower Garden District. While New Orleans has always been one of the most integrated Southern cities, racial tensions still persist today. It is simply a fact of a city that was built on slavery.

Post World War II, New Orleans blossomed from a business-centric city to a proper tourist attraction with visitors from all over coming to hear jazz and learn about voodoo, outsider art, and architecture.

Yet, it is food and drink, New Orleans' long-term love affair, that is the reason to visit this romantic city. Libations and cuisine are at the heart of any New Orleans social affair. The people of New Orleans take their hospitality as seriously as local politics. White tablecloths, hyper attentive service, and local delicacies such as jambalaya, crawfish etouffee, gumbo, and red beans and rice are worth your plane ticket to New Orleans. (They are also a hot topic of debate as New Orleanians can get heated about who has the best po' boy or praline.) Ask any New Orleanian what they ate over the weekend in order to spark a lively conversation. They will happily tell you about the rooftop bars they went to on a Bumble date, the dishes they shared, and which moo-moo they selected on Monday morning in order to discreetly hide their mischievous behavior. (Or, buy a baggy t-shirt if you're a boy as these are plenty in New Orleans gift shops.)

However, guilt never crosses anyone's minds here when trying local delicacies—and rooting their friends to do the same—but rather, encouragement. New Orleanians love to eat more than anyone and will encourage tourists to break out the plastic and order anything that can fit onto their plate. Bring a notepad and pen when going to restaurants because in addition to giving their menu spiel, servers also love to talk about their new favorite spots. Make a list and save half for later on. You'll be back in no time. Trust us.

One reason to come back to New Orleans every spring is Jazz Fest, first established in 1970. Decades after Mahalia Jackson and Duke Ellington appeared as its first guests, Jazz Fest has become a renowned cultural showcase that includes genres beyond jazz including gospel, Cajun, zydeco, blues, and R&B. Playing Jazz Fest has been called “the honor of one's career” by many for its noble mission to preserve one of the most beloved genres of music in the city that it was born. Come here to see real deal musicians and hear stories about how Fats Domino, Harrick Connick Jr., Eric Clapton, Robert Plant, Phish, the Preservation Jazz Hall Band, and even the Alabama Shakes blew the stage to smithereens. Book your accommodations early as prices are frighteningly high during this legendary festival. (Do not let this deter you- just get in line early!)

peaking of scary, voodoo is still one of the major draws to New Orleans. Voodoo has been around since the 1700s when slaves from the western coast of Africa first infiltrated the New Orleans landscape with their ceremonies and practitioners. Voodoo was first infused with the local religion of choice, Catholicism, which is why it is a spiritual practice about connecting with the dead.

Visiting cemeteries such as St. Louis and Lafayette are popular activities in New Orleans. (Similar to how it is a must-see to leave flowers at Jim Morrison's grave at Pere Lachaise in Paris.) Another par for the course activity, if you are open-minded, is telling ghost stories on the street. New Orleanians love to sit on their stoops and tell you about the friendly Caspers that inhabit their houses—and of course, what objects they like to move around. (Those spirits can be naughty for sure!) Walk slowly down Governor Nichols Street so you can catch a local in the eyes and politely ask them what spirits are currently inhabiting their historic homes. They will be more than happy to indulge you for a half hour—or longer—and even begin introducing you to other neighbors with similar stories. (Bring a water bottle as you'll be sitting on their stoop talking and sweating for awhile.)

After that free entertainment (save your pennies for drinks later on as they do add up!) head over to the tiny, yet impactful Voodoo Museum in the French Quarter. In New Orleans, the deceased are just as valued as the living, which is exactly the core principle of voodooism: spirits, rather than “one” God, as is the tradition in most religions, are the sole thing that inhabits our daily lives. As explained at the Voodoo Museum, New Orleanians stay connected to the deceased through rituals such as dancing, chanting, and the use of talismans. You can also read about voodooism's history at this lovely museum and check out various artifacts from Africa, Haiti, and naturally, your new backyard. The Voodoo Museum, located between Bourbon and Royal Streets, also offers a plethora of cemetery and ghost tours and access to services from readers and practitioners. We recommend taking the cemetery tour to learn about New Orleans's famed above-the-ground graves, referred to as “Cities of the Dead.” (The burial plots resemble city grids giving these well laid-out cemeteries their affectionate nickname.) As distinguished by rusty, decorative ironwork, statues, crosses, and sun-bleached tombs New Orleans's cemeteries carry a sense of mystery that is intriguing rather than morbid. While not always open to the public, the cemeteries of New Orleans are a must see and one of the original flavors of the city's culture. It is fascinating to see the shallow burial plots firsthand, which are a necessity because of the soggy grounds that come from frequent flooding. New Orleans's above-the-ground cemeteries are yet another nod to the city's creativity—they figured out quickly that if graves weren't above ground they would float away!

In recent years, New Orleans has cemented its reputation as a survivor, being hit by a great deal of tragedy and coming out swinging. Hurricane Katrina, one of the most noteworthy modern natural disasters, ravaged the city destroying 80 percent of New Orleans proper. Hundreds of people died in the flooding and others waited days before they could be rescued. A year later, only half of the city's residents had returned, many of them traumatized having seen their family homes swept away before their very eyes. The tropical cyclone which claimed more than 1800 lives is still the story New Orleanians tell again and again. Though unquestionably devastating to the landscape and economy, Hurricane Katrina seemed to give the city an even stronger stamina. The tightly knit community is bound together by an unbreakable bond. Since, New Orleans has been able to overcome other defeats like Hurricane Ida in 2021 and the ongoing effects of Covid-19.

Thinking positively is the New Orleans way as that is the only way the city sustains hope. The people are a great example of how to thrive in spite of hard times and stay happy no matter the circumstances.

Speaking of the weather, New Orleanians are tough as many grew up having “hurricane parties” at their homes. Natural disasters do not faze locals unless they are eroding entire parts of the city. There is no getting around it; the New Orleans climate is oppressively hot especially in the summer when you sweat through your shirt within seconds. Fortunately, the winters are short, cool, and only a touch windy, offering a nice reprieve from the stove-like summer climate. The best times to visit are as one would think: from late March to mid-May and September until mid-November. Do not visit in July unless you are acclimated to tropical climates or are willing to get heatstroke. For early risers, New Orleans is an ideal destination as the sun usually presents itself around 6:30 AM on average. (Equally, this can be annoying if you have behaved badly the night before so have an aspirin and some coconut water by your bed.) Force yourself to get up early to take advantage of the sunlight and take an afternoon nap.

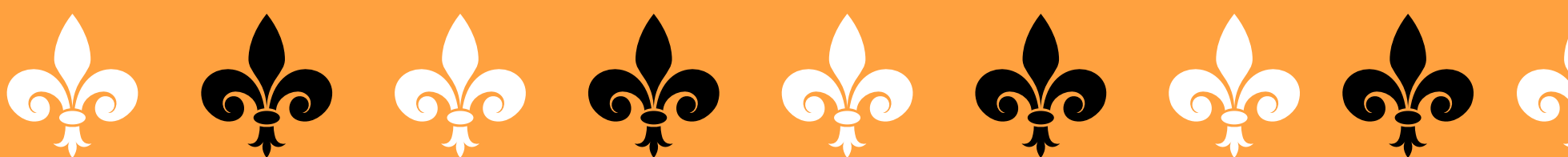
Carrying a water bottle—or three—in New Orleans is essential and easy to do as there are convenience stores everywhere. Hydrate frequently as you will perspire at an unthinkable rate and do not want to get woozy when you could be having fun. Yet, do not worry about sweat stains or wearing all white (and definitely don’t wear all black!) because the people of New Orleans have zero shame when it comes to perspiring, especially in the muggiest of weather. Show off those pit marks with pride but have three glasses of water to every one of wine otherwise your hangover will hate you the following day. (We warned you!)

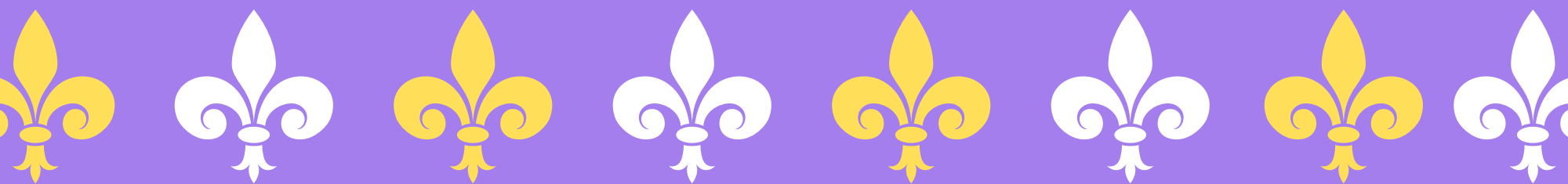
When it comes to those who love to walk, the topography of New Orleans is ideal. New Orleans is protected by levees and seawalls for storm surges, yet much of the city is below sea level. Most importantly, it is pedestrian friendly meaning if you like to travel by foot this is the place for you. Much of New Orleans is flat versus hilly like San Fran or Los Angeles, meaning you can easily hoof it from one neighborhood to the next without getting tired. This is perfect because picturesque New Orleans is meant to be seen from street level. Do take an Uber between the Central Business District and the Warehouse as the walk in between is a bit sketchy. (Don’t risk getting robbed as it is not worth it!) Take the same approach when visiting must-see Treme, which is simply a hike from downtown and not the safest. Fortunately, Ubers are cheap and easy to snag. Splurge and then save some cash later by doing your bar crawl on foot.

It is recommended to stay in the French Quarter at an Airbnb or one of the many beautiful hotels quite simply because it is centrally located to any and everything. To get from point A to B if you are not on foot, street cars are the way to go. They are “so New Orleans” and fun to ride to your next destination; a charming, iconic, and convenient way to experience the city. Four distinct lines all begin downtown and for less than a buck fifty you can save your money for more exciting things—food and drink. There are also 34 bus lines that run 24 hours a day. Bikes are another option for getting around town and are perfect for those short trips when you don’t feel like popping for a cab. Thanks to the New Orleans Bike Share program you can reserve a vehicle ahead of time. Lastly, if you’re not down for physical activity or waiting for public transportation, Pedi cabs are omnipresent and a fun way to experience New Orleans life with the voice of a chatty tour guide in your ear. Just remember to wear your highest SPF, sunglasses, and baseball cap otherwise you will get burned—badly! (Remember who told you.)

2 Days in New Orleans Itinerary:

Be prepared to party hard, fall in love with the most European city of the South, and eat and drink to your heart's desire. The New Orleanians know how to let loose and we guarantee their uninhibited spirits will rub off on you. (That's a good thing as we all know that the modern world is too uptight.) In a world of "the same," New Orleans will leave you wondering was I in a dream? Yet, you weren't. Rather, you had experienced the effects of an incomparably intoxicating, invigorating, unique, and ethereal city whose timeless nature will always be en vogue. Drink your weight in water, keep an eye on your coin purse, and don't forget to fit in some culture. (We know it's hard with all the bars but at least try.) Allow this centuries-old, cosmopolitan city—with an edge— to suck you right in.





DAY ONE:
Getting
acclimatized
to this
romantic,
moody, and
slightly
naughty city

As you awake in the morning in the French Quarter, allow the new and old to envelop you. Palm tree-lined streets, neon signs, and murals galore compose the landscape. The dynamic scenery makes it impossible to be in a bad mood, even if you didn't get enough sleep the night before! If you are in New Orleans during the week, be sure to stroll through the Central Business District before breakfast. The chicly dressed gentlemen and women will inspire you to dress a little more dapper in your own life.

If you aren't already staying here, pop over to St. James Hotel in the AM to view the stunning lobby and courtyard. This historic and opulent hotel, originally built in 1833 as a meeting place for local merchants and tradesmen, is about as refined as it gets. The staff is also a hoot and a half—unusually laidback for a hotel of this caliber. The super friendly St. James team will give you a hug if you're a regular or a welcome tour if you're a newbie. (Ask for Miss Vicky, the sweetheart concierge.) Attached to this Magazine Street hotel is Chophouse New Orleans, a classic steakhouse with the best blue cheese martini around. Their melt in your mouth steaks are equally ideal for creatures of habit. If you have time, we recommend dining here while in town.



From here, walk a few blocks down Magazine Street to The Ruby Slipper Cafe. This popular French Quarter breakfast spot is always busy, even on a Monday at 8AM. Yet, don't be intimidated because this darling restaurant with its classic chalkboards listing the daily specials is worth the wait. If you feel like being a rebel, have breakfast at the bar and a beer while you're at it. (Side note: no one will judge you because this is New Orleans!) While this place tends to skew towards an older crowd, it still attracts a hip bunch like the pink-haired hostess. If you're nice to her, she'll get you a seat on the patio where you can commune with a healthy mixture of locals and tourists, people watch, and drool over your biscuits and gravy. Come early, grab a coffee, and have a chat. You will get some insider's tips on what bar to hit that evening!

From here, keep walking down Magazine Street towards the city center. Yet, pace yourself as the charming shop window displays are worth taking a gander at. This signature New Orleans feature, almost an unintentional nod to Andy Warhol's obsession with them, further indicates the city's devotion to aesthetics—no matter the setting.

Whether you're an intellectual or not, Beckham's Bookshop, owned by longtime business partners Alton Cook and Carey Beckham, is worth a pop inside. The book lovers opened their doors 43 years ago on Royal Street. Their second location has a solid selection of second hand New Orleans and American history books, cookbooks, novels, and more. (They also have one of the cutest shop cats around.) History buffs, go to see the Justinian Law Code published in 1663 by the Emperor of the Rome empire. The sweet shop owners will be happy to tell you about it as well as their new favorite reads.

After all of that shop talk it's time for a snack. Head a few blocks down to Southern CandyMakers who recently celebrated their 30th anniversary and were awarded "Best Praline" in the US. Fudge, toffees, brittles, turtles, and King Cakes, made specifically for the Mardi Gras season, will undoubtedly infuse your sugar buzz. This family restaurant, owned by Miss Dana and Mr. Robert Thompkins, treats customers in the exact same, congenial way when they are here. Ask the friendly, youthful staff for recommendations on what caramel corn and cotton candy to bring back home to your peeps. Plus, if you get home and have a hankering, the shop will ship select products to your home.

After snagging some nibbles go see the most famous statue in New Orleans, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville who founded and served as the city's governor. (And take a quick rest in this tiny, triangle-shaped park because your legs might be tired.) Snap a few pics and then head across the street to the Cigar Factory. This popular shop, which always has Cuban music playing in the background is a fun place to watch cigar rollers at work. (Plus, it is way more exciting than the Sephora across the street.) Chat with the friendly shopkeeper about the history of the space and how the Factory, established in 1999 by a woman, is the only place in the US that still rolls cigars on premise. All four rollers, Dominican by heritage, have been at their craft for decades. One of their wives even contributes to the final step: putting the cigar bands on. True blue fans must check out the historic boxes in the back that date back over a century. Don't forget to purchase at least one cigar from Nicaragua (the number-one seller,) Ecuador, Brazil, or Connecticut. Live a little. Your lungs will forgive you.

From here, take a walk down the side streets of the French Quarter to see stunning architecture with eclectic shops below them. Dodge the myriad tourist shops unless it is Dixieland Factory Outlet, which has a decent selection of cheesy tees, Mardi Gras-style tutus, and all the cozies you could ever dream of. If you're thirsty, grab a bottle of water at one of the many convenience stores or, liquor as they probably have your poison. If you're suffering from heatstroke, as New Orleans is HOT, stand underneath one of the awnings where sprinklers cool you off. (Good thinking again ingenious New Orleans!!)

Once you are done walking around, Betty's Bar and Bistro located at Burgundy and St. Peter is a perfect place to stop for a midday drink, or cocktail, or shot because hey, this is New Orleans. This gay neighborhood bar established in the 1980s is considered the epicenter of the queer community, but is also just as welcoming to straights. Here, vodka soda is the "gay water" but if you fancy something else the convivial bartenders are happy to oblige. Betty's is open all day and even hosts a drag show with a new performer every Sunday. Come here to support the LGBT community and also interact with folks of all walks of life. Betty's proprietor also owns Ambush Publishing, a gay publication, which has been around since the 70s and is one of the only in the city

From here, walk to The French Market where you can chat with visual artists, chefs, and purveyors selling a wide variety of wares. This open air market was formerly a trading post for American Indians as well as a slave selling hub. Now, it is a chipper, creative, and free-spirited space to hang and have a reasonably priced lunch. As the oldest continuously running market in the country, The French Market's cheese and wine, oysters, muffalettas, spices, and crepes are worth braving the crowds for. Sit en plair air for ideal people watching and chat with the friendly vendors if you're feeling lonesome. (Or, need a break from your traveling partner.)

Decatur Street, just down the way from the Market, is another source of free entertainment. Filled with insanely talented jazz street performers dressed to the nines and selling CDs out of antique suitcases, Decatur Street is special. Bizarre specialty shops such as a year round Christmas store are also intriguing. Yet, it is the immense talent that performs for tips that is the reason to go. Check out Alicia Renee, aka "Blue Eyes: (believe it or not, those babies are real unlike Nikki Minaj's) who has traveled as far as Switzerland and Dubai to perform. The singer studied opera before transitioning into her current jazz-R&B hybrid and kills it every day. As someone who has been performing since age two, Blue Eyes is an example of the extreme talent that New Orleans has to offer.

Side note: Decatur Street also has public restrooms, perfect for a relief after all that water.

After you take care of business, take an Uber to Pecche for the best lunch of your life. Preferably get a reservation in advance because this place is popular! A great spot for a biz lunch and drink (or two or three because the servers aren't counting.) Pecche is an ideal spot to relax and indulge. Go here if you want to impress that special someone or, after visiting the nearby World War II Museum. The servers do an excellent job educating you about the menu but aren't all up in your grill. Equally, the kitchen team caters to any dietary restriction and their fare is delicious yet not an arm and a leg. Order any of the seafood as well as the beef tartare and gumbo, both of which will knock your socks off. The presentation is lovely and the room is quiet enough so you can actually hear yourself. (A rarity in rowdy New Orleans.) Though not the cheapest, Pecche gives you bang for your buck and most importantly, a taste of the real New Orleans.

After Pecche, go home and take a nap. You will need it for your afternoon of shopping on Magazine Street, the best place to boutique crawl in New Orleans.

Slow Down is an independent department store, run by artists, that features three shops in one. Come here for vintage clothing, to see exquisite reverse glass art by local artist Megan Barnes, and to purchase affordable jewelry by Nelson Bay Beads. If you have kids or are expecting, drop by Pippen Lane just down the street for a top-notch selection of high-end children's clothing, toys, and furniture. For those who like to do good with their money, check out The Good Shop whose proceeds go to Hurricane Katrina victims. The Good Shop is an excellent place to buy ethical goods by local makers, and support the community. During your shopping excursion, make sure to pop into the sunshine-hued French Truck Coffee for a cuppa tea or joe. This adorable coffee shop also supplies brews to local fine dining favorites like Commander's Palace, which is a wonderful place to have dinner if you feel like splurging. From there if you are feeling feisty, stop at boutique Pop Culture Nola, which sells original designs as well as their own personal eponymous brand. Their rainbow-hued designs represent the philosophy that we are all one and everything we have is within us. Come here for sage wisdom from the shopkeepers, dusters (but not your granny's,) brightly colored sunglasses to keep that Nola sun off your face,

Red Slipper



Peché



Hotel Ponchartrain



Garden District



Cigar Factory



and sequin t's for your night out. Other stores on Magazine Street that are worth flexing your plastic at are Funky Monkey for hard-to-find vintage styles and Namaz, which offers a great selection of club clothes. If you get hungry along the way, get your French on at Sucre for some of the most delectable macarons around and Empanola for their "love-made" empanadas. (They are, truly.)

After shopping, meander around the legendary Garden District to see some of the most beautiful, historic homes around. The homes in this neighborhood are a site for sore eyes and while walking tours are available, you can easily find gems minus a guide. Walk down any street and be prepared to be amazed at the million-plus dollar homes complemented by some of the lushest gardens around. While any block is worth checking out, be sure to add the following to your list: Water Robinson House, the Payne-Strachan House, the Brevard-Rice House, and the Joseph Carroll Carriage House, all built in the 1800s. This neighborhood is perfect for adventurous folks who enjoy exploring on foot.

After your home tour, it's cocktail hour! Go have a drink at popular rooftop bar Hot Tin at the artsy, funky, and chic Pontchartrain Hotel. (Just a hop, skip, and a twirl away.) The cocktail lounge's antiques are more fun to look at than your iPhone so take them in. Plus, the views of the city will blow your mind. This is a great place to take selfies with the skyline as your backdrop and get a little loose before dinner. If you have a moment, stop downstairs at the main restaurant where walls of collaged artwork line the walls. The servers will proudly tell you what's what as well as the hotel's storied history. This stunning hotel is also a hotbed for interesting folks from all walks of life.

While there are almost too many dinner options to count in New Orleans, the latest hotspot is San Lorenzo & Paradise Lounge at the Vincent Hotel. (Right in the Lower Garden District, the hotel is just a short Uber ride away and also includes a pre and post-dinner cocktail lounge and French Vietnamese-style cafe and bakery. The grounds are amazing so try to walk around before or after your meal.) San Lorenzo's cool, hip, and yet classic white tablecloth environment feels modern, rather than stuffy. Though somewhat pricey, the mains are robust and the appetizers perfect for sharing. You can't go wrong with the grilled creyole oysters, octopus, linguine, or literally anything from the raw bar. Ask the sweet as pie servers for recommendations who will bubble over with glee to guide you and your gang through the menu. The food is so good they don't have to fake any enthusiasm. Furthermore, the tables are so close that it is easy to make new friends. Have a martini, a chat with your neighbors about all the cool sites you saw that day, and shove that delicious food in your face. You'll need a good base for your next stop!

After your belly is full, take a cab to Frenchmen Street where you can spend an entire evening meandering from bar to bar. (And if you get the munchies later on, grab some snacks as the neighborhood is known for its late-night eateries.) Oftentimes called "the family friendly version of Bourbon street," Frenchmen Street is sophisticated as opposed to cheesy. For those that aren't down to stay out until the wee hours, entertainment starts early—around 6PM. However, for the true blue party people you can rage here all night. This walkable neighborhood, which borders the French Quarter, has bar after bar of live music ranging from jazz to blues, reggae, and rock and roll. You really can't go wrong here; however local favorites include the BMC Balcony Music Club, Spotted Cat, Snug Harbor, and Maison where the real people of N'awlins hang.

St.Vincent

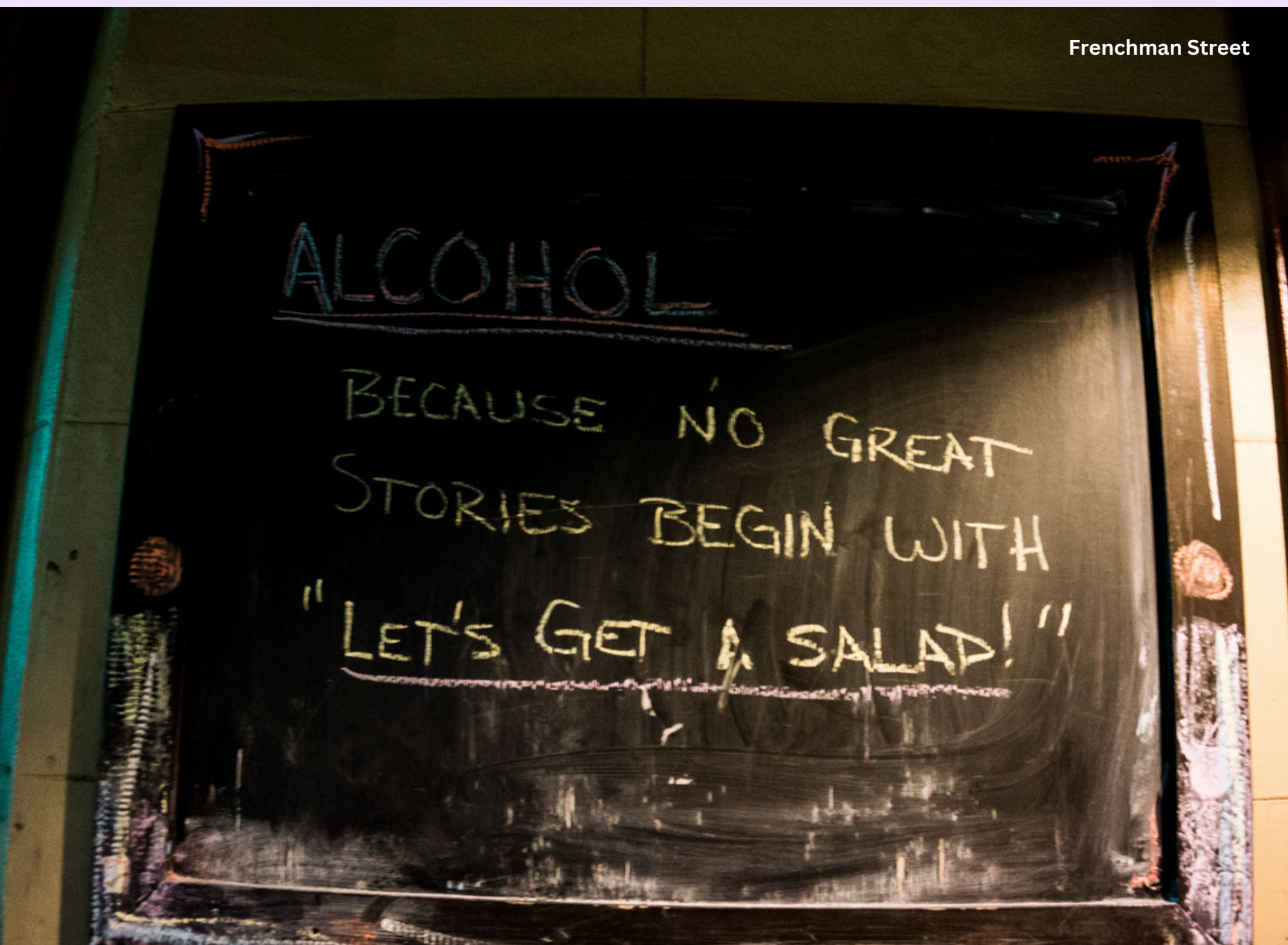


Frenchman Street

The BMC Balcony Music Club, whose tagline is “Where Grown Folks Come to Play” (whatever that means) is particularly chic with its beautiful brick walls, red curtained stage, old fashioned cigarette machine, and fabulously dressed patrons. Come here to shoot the breeze with the band after their set and sassy bartenders who are quick with a quip. Yet, your real mission is to stop talking, shake your booty, and vibe out to dixie lane jazz bands who leave blood, sweat, and tears on the stage. Piano Man G’s seductive stage skills and vocals will get you in the mood— if you know what we mean.

From there, mosey down the street to your next destination and take in the informal street festival ambiance of the neighborhood. (Bands perform en plein air as people dance, make out in doorways, and double fist beers—or cocktails if you’re really ambitious.) Brave the line at The Spotted Cat to hear some of the best jazz around. The intimate setting, strong drinks, lively, very intoxicated crowd (watch your glass because the rambunctious patrons may accidentally knock it out of your hand,) and tremendous talent will have you forgetting what bar you were supposed to go next. Stay here for a few sets and soak in what makes New Orleans great: the jazz music for which the city is famous worldwide for. Though Frenchmen Street tends to appeal to a more cosmopolitan crowd, it still has a charmingly seedy, anything goes NOLA vibe. Once you’re tuckered out, take a cab home as the neighborhood is a bit sketchy at night. As unsafe as people will make New Orleans out to be, just keep your wits about you. Like any major city, don’t get too drunk, try to start fights, or walk around with your wallet hanging out and you should be just fine.

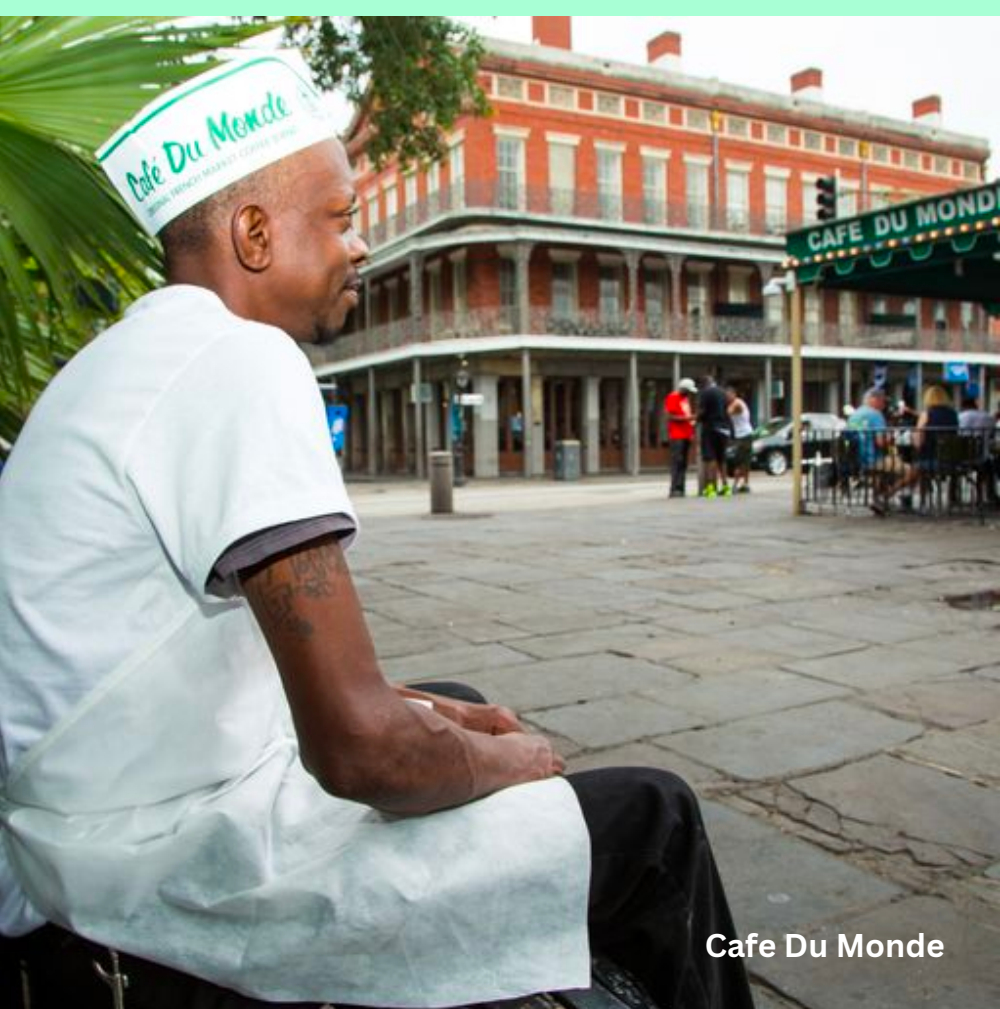
Frenchman Street



DAY TWO: Eat, Walk, Drink, and Repeat



After all of that sauce you'll need two breakfasts; one to cure your hangover and the next to grease your insides for some more partying this evening. Take a shower, throw on a t-shirt and shorts (light, reflective colors, not dark remember,) and walk to Cafe Du Monde. Perhaps the most famous beignet place in America, this massive, outdoor cafe is poppin' morning, noon, and night. (Literally, it seems to get busier as the day goes on and tourists realize they need some white powdered sugar in their lives.) Force yourself to get there around 8AM and check your email while waiting in line. When you finally make it to the front, order a coffee for dipping. Even for haters who want to dislike the popular tourist attraction, the beignets (and coffee, which is your morning sauce) are as good as they say. Make sure to grab some extra napkins unless you have no shame about wiping powdered sugar on your shorts. The kids next to you are doing it so why not? No judgment here!



Before your sugar high crashes, walk down Decatur Street to Café Maspero for a breakfast of champions. While there are restaurants in spades around the French Quarter, most are tacky and cater to drunk tourists. Café Maspero does not. This is a place where locals have pledged their allegiance since 1971 for its affordability, tastiness, and true to New Orleans cuisine. Café Maspero also serves \$1 daiquiris, which will save you some cash so you can order the following (and no we're not joking:) beignet fries, alligator bites, a po' boy sandwich, gumbo, shrimp jambalaya, fried alligator, and red beans and rice with smoked sausage. Yum, yum, yum. While that sounds like a lot, the smorgasboard will help you rebound (along with a Bloody Mary, naturally) from your night out before. Definitely chat with the servers who are all sweet, hilarious and happy to give you some recs on what bars to visit that evening.

Now that you've decided your day will consist of eating, drinking, and walking, stop back at your accommodations to put on sneakers. From here, you'll be walking across downtown to the Warehouse District, one of New Orleans's hipper, newly gentrified areas. This cool, chic, and, no bones about it, expensive area is home to some of the city's best art galleries and museums. Take your most sophisticated friend, convince someone to tag along who could care less about culture and educate them, or go solo for a day of education and beauty. It's a nice reprieve from all the nonstop partying. (And good for your brain and imagination, too!)

Stop one will be the multidisciplinary Contemporary Arts Center, one of the first structures you see upon entering the Warehouse District. Totally of its time and directly across the street from the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, you can hit both in a single afternoon— and still have time for the high-end galleries on Julia Street. The CAC hosts exhibitions that feature local, national, and international artists. Plus, with community-oriented services, such as artist residencies, a coffee shop, and even a coworking space they are committed to bringing the city together across the board. Come here to see art of all disciplines as well as interactive exhibitions that will get you out of your head.

Next, walk across the road to the stunning Ogden Museum of Southern Art where it is easy to spend an afternoon. Founded in 1999, the Ogden holds the most thorough collection of contemporary Southern art that dates back to the 1880s. The popular tourist attraction is built around an original collection of 600 works lovingly curated by art appreciator Roger H. Ogden. Once his private collection became too overwhelming, Mr. Ogden created more space in the form of a five-floor museum. With outsider art as the permanent collection and a rotating selection of photography, paintings, sculpture, and mixed media, the Ogden truly has it all. The museum is also beautifully designed by architect Erroll Barron and fun to walk around. Make sure to check out the rooftop patio for another great photo opp and the exquisite gift shop whose coffee table book selection is killer. This is also a great place to buy souvenirs or a gift for a loved one.

After your two museum experiences, head a few blocks over to Julia Street to see some of New Orleans' finest independent art galleries. Though New Orleans wasn't always known as an arts mecca, in recent years it has become a breeding ground for many successful creatives. They value the support of the city and the city loves them right back. The art scene of New Orleans has an energy of one that is on the brink of national recognition.

Callan Contemporary should be stop one on arts row. With its high ceilings and stark white walls, this no-frills room is a perfect backdrop for the emerging and midcareer American and international artists on display. With a penchant for abstract, figurative, and sculptural art, this sophisticated gallery feels more NYC than NOLA. Callan takes Julia Street to the next level and is the place to go to see who's going to blow up next.

Just a few doors down is the half a century old Arthur Rodger Gallery. Before opening the massive 7,000 square foot space, the owner worked in special education. After mortgaging his home to open Arthur Rodger, he worked sunrise to sunset to keep the doors open. Helping local artists has always been his passion. Today, the owner and curator is recognized as always being ahead of the curve and someone who is gifted at generating contemporary art dialogues. Arthur Rodger is a place where clients come to learn about new artists that they can't find at local auction houses. Some popular names that have exhibited include Ida Kohlmeyer, George Dureau, and Big Chief Demonde, all of whom Rodger is happy to tell you about. Talking to him is like engaging with a walking encyclopedia.

From here, visit the more down-to-earth LeMieux Galleries, owned by dynamic duo Christy Wood and Jordan Blanton. After taking over the gallery from the previous owner who opened it in the late 80s, Wood and Blanton decided to showcase art at a wide range of price points. Their goal is to make art by Louisiana and Southern artists accessible to all economic statuses. LeMieux is known for narrative art that doesn't take itself too seriously. Even if you aren't there to buy, you will still be welcomed with open arms by the owners who are warm and love to educate. The best part is that LeMieux has a frame shop in the back meant to make your new piece look as posh as possible.

After your art adventure take an Uber over to Treme to see the New Orleans African American Museum. While the original campus, which opened in 1996, is now closed for renovation the current museum operates directly across the street. For five dollars, you can see the current exhibition and support the New Orleans African American community. The gallery directors are a basin of knowledge so take your time asking them questions about the museum's mission and history—they love talking about it. With a mixture of historic and contemporary art by local and national artists, the New Orleans African American Museum offers tourists a great taste of the immense talent within the population. Directly across the street, the historic garden is a must. It houses the Treme Murals Project, which pays homage to community and household name leaders that have contributed to the beloved neighborhood over time. Finish up your tour with a contemplative seat in the garden at artist Paul Stephen Benjamin's gazebo, "Yesterday We Said Tomorrow." Sitting in this altar, dedicated to the elders in the neighborhood, will certainly spur some deep thoughts about the rich history of New Orleans. If you have time, visit the Petite Jazz Museum next door and chat with Al Jackson, a local celebrity and go-to source when it comes to the beloved genre.

After your cultural indulgence in Treme, walk around the neighborhood to look at the historic homes. They are as lovely and impressive, albeit on a smaller scale, as any in the Garden District. The best part is that Treme is a family-oriented neighborhood where most of the residents hang out on their stoops. It's easy to chat with the locals about their commitment to the area or something as simple as their favorite coffee shop. Make this neighborhood a must-stop on your trip as it is one that will support the too-often snubbed African American population.

If you get thirsty or need a quick snack, hit up Ruth's Cozy Corner owned by the lovely Jafar Abo Haroun who will fix you up right with a delicious cup of coffee (sweeter than normal but appropriate for the kind as can be shop owner.) This neighborhood convenience store is also a local hang where you can meet moms, kids, and all sorts of characters and get a glimpse into the real NOLA.

Now that you're hydrated, call an Uber to your next destination, fine dining gem Dickie Brennan's Steakhouse. Located near Bourbon Street, this stunning establishment is about as chic as it gets. (Feel free to wear a suit and tie or a cocktail dress as Dickie's loves when you get all dolled up!) Also lucky for customers, the kind, passionate, and gentile owner drops by often and is always willing to shake a hand. This is the place to have dinner before you party and get a taste of the gentile ambiance New Orleans is known for. While you can't go wrong with anything cooked by executive chef Grant Wallace, the escargot, bacon duck poppers with jalapeno, fried oysters with mcelheney sauce, and crab cake (the establishment's number-one seller) are to die for. Wallace uses corn rather than breadcrumbs in his crabcakes meaning they are gluten free, healthy for your gut, and most importantly, have more meat. After you've indulged in a classic cocktail, ask to chat with sommelier Chris Schneider. He will steer you towards the right vino to complement your Louisiana wagyu and potatoes au gratin or house filet with spinach Madeleine. To take advantage of the fresh catch, brought in daily, and steak options, which are clearly the star of the show, chef Wallace offers this pro tip: order meat as your entree and seafood as the appetizer. He also insists that you throw your calorie counter out (cut yourself a break and remember all those miles you walked earlier) and order a slice of chocolate mud pie. It is like a Mississippi mud pie— but better. Other options by pastry chef Caroline included layered coconut cake with meringue and white chocolate bread pudding. Just remember to loosen a button after leaving.

For your final evening in New Orleans, it's a must to check out the city's dive bars. Here, even the chicest of residents love their hole-in-the-walls which they often pair in one evening with the city's high end rooftops. However tonight you're just going to go casual because you did fancy with dinner.

The Faubourg-Marigny district has a few dives within walking distance from one another, all of which can be hit in a few hours. Begin at King Pin whose sweet lead bartender, Jesse Denison, keeps the local boys in line. (And boy, do they get wild so be prepared!) Bar goers who live "a bee's dick away" love this spot. This neighborhood gem attracts everyone from rock stars to attorneys and plumbers who are not afraid to start a conversation. Order a drink, buy a pack of smokes out of their machine if that's your thing, and play some shuffleboard with your new friends. Come here if you want to slam some reasonably priced drinks, see whether you suck or not at darts, and possibly get proposed to. When these drinks get a few in them they get frisky! Also, if it's nice outside the patio is where everyone and their mother is at.

Post King Pin it is mandatory to check out one of New Orleans's famed 24-hour bars because where else can you get a tequila at all hours of the night?

Take a stroll through the lovely as it gets neighborhood on your journey to Le Bon Temps, which holds court on a street corner. Once you meander through the saloon-like fortress, it's time to practice your pool skills, listen to music by one of the local bands, or chat with Natalie, the beautiful, curly-cued bartender. However you swing it, Le Bon Temps, housed in a former Italian grocery store, is fun—especially when you've had a few. The Thursday night house band, Soul Rebels, is a local favorite. Get there early because they tend to pack the house.

Now it's time to practice some restraint and go home because you have to catch your early morning flight tomorrow. (Or, if you feel like behaving badly, stay out all night because you're in New Orleans so who cares, right? Similar to the flight home from Vegas, everyone will be hungover.) If you're feeling rambunctious or rebellious, go to Voodoo Two Lounge in the heart of the French Quarter for a nightcap. Right off of Broadway, this local hang is filled with fun servers who just got off the clock and want to talk smack about the drama at their one bar. Chaps who dress like pirates also hang at the bar, sipping whiskey, and freely giving advice about what horoscope signs to avoid. Come to this intimate, neighborhood lounge for one last New Orlean's hurrah. The menu of egg rolls, mozzarella sticks, and french bread pizza is pretty run of the mill but it works for a 2AM snack if you feel the munchies coming on. Plus, it's late so lower your standards. Lastly, when you're leaving do not forget your credit card! This is a common last-night mistake made in New Orleans and you will be kicking yourself tomorrow morning at the airport.



YOUR MUST-DO NEW ORLEANS LIST:

Historic Voodoo Museum
Contemporary Arts Center
Ogden Museum of Southern Art
Callan Contemporary
Arthur Rodger Gallery
LeMieux Galleries
New Orleans African American Museum
Petite Jazz Museum
Chophouse New Orleans
The Ruby Slipper Cafe
Southern CandyMakers
Betty's Bar and Bistro
The French Market
Pêche
French Truck Coffee
Commander's Palace
Sucre
Empanola
Hot Tin
San Lorenzo & Paradise Lounge at the Vincent Hotel
BMC Balcony Music Club
The Spotted Cat
Snug Harbor
Maison
Cafe Du Monde
Café Maspero
Dickie Brennan's Steakhouse
King Pin
Le Bon Temps
Voodoo Two Lounge
Beckham's Bookshop
Cigar Factory.
Slow Down
Megan Barnes
Pippen Lane
The Good Shop
Pop Culture Nola
Funky Monkey

