

# Vacation Guide

## Find old world charm in New Orleans

New Orleans, in Louisiana on the shores of the Mississippi River, is one of the most intriguing cities in North America. It is the home of Mardi Gras, Creole cooking, Dixieland jazz and the controversial Louisiana Superdome.

The French Quarter, or Vieux Carré, which is the centre around which the city grew, is an enclave of about 70 blocks that comprised the original settlement. Walk along its narrow streets today and only the signs in English make you aware that you are not strolling through some old European city.

Paradoxically, the architecture is more Spanish than French. The original settlement burned down in 1788 in a conflagration that destroyed 850 buildings and it was rebuilt during a time when French-speaking New Orleans had come under the rule of Spain. Many of the houses, built in the Spanish style, surround interior courtyards with gardens, fountains and shade trees. The exteriors of the houses are notable for the decorative wrought-iron and cast iron railings that enclose balconies overlooking the street.

The French Quarter is now given over almost entirely to tourists. It is a teeming agglomeration of antique and gift



A well preserved pre-19th century carriage and a decorated horse take tourists through the French Quarter.

stores, specialty shops of every description, bars and restaurants. The city is reputed to have more restaurants per capita than any other in North America. They are famous for their gumbos which are soups made with shrimp, chicken or sausage, and their turtle delicacies and crayfish bisque. The lowly breakfast beignet, which is a kind of donut, is unique to the city.

Taking leisurely strolls along its streets is the best way to see the French Quarter but an even easier way is to take a ride in one of the horsedrawn carriages that start out from Jackson Square.

The square, which is the cultural centre of the French Quarter, is now a garden enclosed by iron railings. Originally it was the Place d'Armes, a dusty parade ground laid out in 1721. In recent years it has become the French Quarter's equivalent of the Left Bank in Paris and is thronged with sidewalk artists and itinerant musicians.

The main architectural feature of the square is St. Louis Cathedral, which was built in 1724 but underwent major modifications in the middle of the last century. It is now largely Spanish in style, which has made it a favourite

subject with photographers.

At one side of the cathedral is the Cabildo which dates from 1794 and was a meeting place for the Spanish legislature. At the other side is the Presbytere, built in 1813, which was used mainly as a courthouse. The two buildings now house the Louisiana State Museum.

Immediately in front of Jackson Square is the dock from which you can take a ride along the Mississippi aboard a conventional steamship or an oldtime sternwheel paddleboat of the kind that has plied the river for more than a century.

Close by is the recently renovated French market which now houses shops and restaurants and is famous for its fresh Louisiana-grown oranges and strawberries.

New Orleans is world-renowned as the place where jazz originated. Jazz is still a big attraction to the city. A stroll along Bourbon Street on any evening is an experience. It resounds to Dixieland jazz, progressive jazz, funeral jazz and the blues, played in tiny clubs and bars.

Virtually every show in the city features jazz but the place to go to hear it played as it was before the days of rock groups and electrically amplified instruments is Pre-

servation Hall. A different band performs every night, and the musicians, many of them in their 70s, still play in the old style. Line up at the door, throw a dollar into a bucket, and you can sit on long benches or stand around to hear 45 minutes of jazz as it was played by the original musicians.

New Orleans has many other attractions in addition to the French Quarter.

The revolving cocktail lounge on the 33rd floor of the International Trade Mart is the place from which to get a panoramic view of the city. It is especially interesting at night.

The city also has a wealth of museums including the Louisiana Wildlife Museum, the New Orleans Jazz Museum, a Maritime Museum, a Confederate Museum and a Museum of Art.

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