

New Orleans: The City That Care Forgot

by Heather Macdonald, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Carefree New Orleans has long been a favorite travel destination for college students, singles, and party seekers of all kinds, especially at this time of year when Mardi Gras is in full swing. But those who look beyond Bourbon Street to see what the rest of the city has to offer are rewarded with an area rich in history and culture.

In the past year the city of New Orleans has struggled to rebuild the areas that were devastated in 2005 by Hurricane Katrina. We're making progress, but progress is slow. The good news is that the French Quarter, the Central Business District, the Garden District and other uptown areas are all ready and waiting for you to come and experience our charming and diverse city.

One of the greatest parts of New Orleans is the fantastic food and restaurants. With a culinary heritage that combines French, Spanish, Creole, African, and Caribbean flavors, there is something for every palate. The old line Creole French restaurants like Arnaud's offer up some classic old world food. If you go to Arnaud's you have to try the duck with blueberry sauce and make sure to save room for dessert or at least a signature coffee drink. Seafood is a big part of New Orleans cuisine and I love Acme Oyster House for their red checkered table cloth atmosphere and great oyster po-boys (fried oysters dressed with lettuce, tomato, and mayo and served on French bread). If you'd like something a little classier . . . say with linen napkins, head over to GW Fins where they fly their seafood in fresh daily from all over the world. Others to try are Cuvee for classic French with a twist and Stella for a French and Asian fusion meal. Expect to pull out the wallet at both of those locations and return it to your pocket much thinner.

If you still have the energy to explore after indulging in our wonderful food, consider a visit to Jackson Square. If dining out isn't your cup of tea, but say, reading the tea leaves is, plan a visit to the fortune tellers at Jackson Square. While you are there check out the artwork of fantastic local artists who display their work daily on the fence. There are more artists out on the weekends and when the weather is good. New Orleans also has a number of shops selling "authentic" voodoo charms and whatnot. My favorite is Voodoo Authentica on Dumaine St.

If the artists on Jackson Square have piqued your interest you might want to stroll down Royal Street and pop into any of the galleries there

who are truly in need of business right now. I love the Rodrigue Studio which features the famous "Blue Dog" paintings. In addition, you can take a ride out to City Park and visit the New Orleans Museum of Art, or to Lee Circle, which houses the Ogden Museum of Southern Art. They have recently had some wonderful exhibits showcasing storm photographs and art made from the rubble left by Hurricane Katrina.

One of my favorite places to go is the National World War II Museum. It was originally known as the D-Day Museum, but it has expanded so much in recent years that the Smithsonian has changed its name. You can explore the European and Pacific fronts of the war and take a guided tour if you so choose. This stop is especially popular with teenage boys!

Please come and see everything New Orleans has to offer. We are a city on the rebound, but we're certainly not going to give up and we look forward to welcoming you!

[Jennifer and Dave's Note: The phrase "The City That Care Forgot" has long been a nickname of New Orleans -- if this sobriquet puzzles you, it's supposed to refer to the easy-going, carefree nature of many of New Orleans' residents.]

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