

New Orleans

Thursday, February 9th - Monday, February 13th

\$2575 Single Occupancy (-\$250 if sharing a room or flying on own)

Includes: round-trip airfare, hotel at the 4-star Historic Le Pavillon Hotel, lunch OR Jazz brunch AND dinner daily, included tours, taxes, fees.

NOTE: Group size is very important on this trip and will determine a few of our restaurants. Please let me know as soon as possible if you are joining us and please note there is also a chance that this sells out.

New Orleans, “NOLA,” “The Big Easy,” a city by many names, all conjuring the jovial “Laissez les bons temps rouler!” (“Let the good times roll!”) attitude toward life. New Orleans is filled with scrumptious French-inspired Creole and Cajun food, live jazz, hundreds of street performers, parades and an appreciation for all the temptations of life. New Orleans is one of the world's most fascinating cities, truly a unique melting pot of culture, food and music. It is one of America's most culturally and historically rich destinations and is by far a favorite place to visit. It is full of history and charm, infused with French, Spanish, Caribbean and American flavors and known as the birthplace of Jazz. Originally built around it's port and the original French Quarter, the city's neighborhoods radiate outward and blend into one another. Each has its own vibe, architecture and history. I have visited “NOLA” 9 times, and each time I discover a new area, a new restaurant and a new scene!

New Orleans has its own brand of food, music and art. The people there march to a slightly different rhythm and know how to live life to the fullest. There are great restaurants all over the USA, but the entire world knows that there's nothing like the cuisine in NOLA. Whether you're enjoying a muffuletta on a street corner or dining at a century-old Creole restaurant or having a Sunday Jazz Brunch, you are guaranteed to eat well in this town.

We will be staying at the 4-star historic and beautiful **Le Pavillon hotel**, conveniently located in the Central Business District, 5 blocks to Bourbon Street, the start of the French Quarter. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this Beaux Arts hotel is furnished with antiques and beautiful works of art. Built in 1907 and recently purchased in 2015, Le Pavillon is undergoing complete gut renovations of its rooms and hallways. We will be one of the first in the new rooms! Fodors states- “One of the most regal hotels downtown offers romantic spaces, attentive service, and high-ceiling, in history-filled surroundings with magnificent chandeliers that adorn the European-style lobby, a handsome collection of artwork lines the corridors, and the marble railing in the Gallery Lounge is originally from the Grand Hotel in Paris.” Frommers says “One's chin may rise a centimeter or two when entering Le Pavillons soaring lobby, with crystal chandeliers overhead, plush Oriental rugs underfoot, enormous marble pillars, and ornate carved ceilings. It's a Historic Hotel of America and famous for late-night peanut butter and jelly service (silver platter and all), with a hot chocolate nightcap.” Photos of the hotel lobby attached.

Itinerary- Note: this is the current itinerary that I am putting together. It is subject to change based on group size, factors out of my control, flight changes, weather or any other reason. **Everything in bold is currently confirmed** (but can change based on logistics).

Restaurants: I confirm and book restaurants LAST as group size plays a major role in where we can dine, but I am holding reservations at a few places right now and talking to many others. Do not book this trip based on a guarantee we dine here as these are subject to change, but “currently” the bold restaurants are on the agenda.

- **Commanders Palace-** This was voted most popular restaurant in NOLA for 18 years, James Beard Foundation Most Outstanding restaurant for 6 years and 2016 restaurateurs of the year. 28 on Zagat.
- **GW Finns**, New Orleans #1 restaurant on TripAdvisor, Zagat 27- “Creative” presentations of fish resemble fine art at this high-end French Quarter restaurant helmed by the outstanding Tenney Flynn, who can make a seafood lover out of anyone.... including hard-core foodies.”

- **Emeril's Delmonico-** Zagat 4.4/5- "Emeril Lagasse's Lower Garden District Creole take on a steakhouse whisks diners away on an amazing journey of spice and flavor with magnificent and innovative dishes." His highest ranked NOLA restaurant.
- **Court of Two Sisters Jazz Brunch-** Zagat says, "Just plain magic rave fans of this romantic French Quarter institution, where a gorgeous, vine-draped courtyard and a dining room reminiscent of a fine French home play host to a daily Creole buffet of staggering proportions and daily live jazz to fill your soul."
- **Arnauds-** Jazz Lunch

Guided bus tour of the city- Get an overall view of NOLA on our 3-hour private guided bus tour. We start with a brief walk (10+ min) around the Garden District, an elegant neighborhood filled with 19th Century mansions as well as some of the city's best and trendiest restaurants and bars. Our guide will show us its beautiful homes and talk about the districts history, then we will explore Lafayette cemetery, the oldest of the seven city-operated cemeteries in New Orleans and the most filmed cemetery in New Orleans. We then hop on the bus and go up St. Charles Avenue along the route of the historic streetcar, the oldest operating passenger railway system in the world. As we go through the city, our guide will explain the history and some cultural subjects such as the jazz scene, the Cajuns, mardi gras and voodoo. We make a stop at City Park for a brief tour in the NOMA Sculpture garden, #13 place to visit (TripAdvisor.) From the bus, we will have an overview and see parts of the French Quarter, the French Market, Café du Monde, Joan of Arc statue, Jackson Square, Frenchman Street & much more.

French Quarter and optional St Louis Cemetery walking tour- This famous area was settled by the French in 1718 and is the original city of New Orleans. It became part of the USA when Napoleon sold it in 1803. You will still find in this section a strong European, French and Caribbean look and feel with some of the classiest venues in America to some of its trashiest dives, a haven where world famous chefs, world class musicians and worldly bartenders ensure the historic neighborhood thoroughly delights all who have the pleasure to spend time here. Everyone from the drinkers on Bourbon Street to the antique shoppers on Royal Street to the foodies seeking some of the best Cajun food are found in the French Quarter. Here you'll see Jackson Square, St. Louis Cathedral, beautiful homes next to bars blaring top-notch jazz all day long. After this tour is over, our guide will take those interested on an optional tour of the St Louis Cemetery- Established in 1789 in what was then the swampy outskirts of the city, St. Louis Cemetery is the oldest cemetery in New Orleans. In a city known for beautiful above-ground cemeteries, this is where it all started. Centuries-old neglected tombs crumble beside beautifully restored ones, and saints and angels are revered alongside voodoo queens, politicians, fallen soldiers, musicians, eccentric millionaires, civil rights pioneers, and the enslaved. Only licensed tour companies can visit this cemetery.

New Orleans School of Cooking- This is a private hands-on cooking class for our group (not a demonstration by a chef). Since 1980, this cooking school has been teaching Creole and Cajun cooking to visitors from around the world. Their entertaining cooking class is in an old molasses warehouse that was built in the early 1800s in the heart of the French Quarter. We will learn the basics of Louisiana Cooking in a way we will never forget. This is a highly interactive class, where we cut, season and sauté a complete dinner with an expert Creole / Cajun chef, and afterwards sit down and enjoy the meal. This is a multi-course Louisiana style menu and we will take part in cooking Southern dishes such as Shrimp Remoulade, Crabmeat Ravigote, Corn & Crab Bisque, BBQ Shrimp & Grits, Chicken & Cajun Smoked Sausage Jambalaya and Bananas Foster (a substitution for the soup / entree courses for vegetarian, vegan or gluten free is available with 2 weeks' notice). This menu is subject to change and just an example of what they offer for us to cook.

Plantations Tour and Swamp-Boat Ride- While most southern plantations were known for producing cotton, Louisiana plantations grew rice and sugarcane. **Oak Alley** and **Laura Plantations** are THE two most famous New Orleans area plantations. Our tour starts off with a guided scenic drive out of New Orleans and along the shores of Lake Pontchartrain to visit these two famous plantations on the west bank of the Old River Road. The first stop is at Laura Plantation, the Creole plantation, where

our guide transports us with dramatic detail into the charmed, yet, tragic lives of four generations of Creole owners and their slaves. After touring the main house, we head onto the grounds, surrounded by sugarcane fields and 12 buildings that are all found on the National Historic Register. The tour concludes inside one of the 1840s slave cabins where sugarcane workers lived until 1977. A short drive upriver brings us to Oak Valley Plantation where a delicious southern lunch buffet from their top rated restaurant featuring Louisiana dishes is included (no alcohol). Then we have a guided tour of Oak Valley Plantation admiring this jewel of Greek Revival architecture. Guides in period costumes will bring to life the stories of generations who lived on this land and they will share every detail of this mansion's history since 1830. We then drive south to a Cajun village in the Louisiana swamp for a slow and peaceful covered 90 minute Cajun Bayou Boat ride on a covered pontoon boat in the remote cypress swamps. The "Bayou Boeuf" area offers some of the most spectacular wetland scenery of all the Louisiana swamps, marshes and bottomlands. Your Cajun guide, a fifth generation professional alligator hunter and fur trapper, shares his knowledge of the swamp, reptiles, healing plants, dangerous snakes and exotic birds.

The National WWII Museum OR Ogden Museum of Southern Art- The National WWII Museum is a remarkable must-see attraction that illuminates the American experience during WWII. ***Ranked the #1 Attraction*** in New Orleans on Trip Advisor and recipient three years in a row of the Travelers' Choice Award, the Museum brings history to life with moving personal stories and powerful interactive displays. This Museum is ranked the **#4 Museum** in the United States and **#11 museum** in the world by TripAdvisor. The National WWII Museum was named by USA Today as the #1 Best Place to Learn U.S. Military History in the world and designated by Congress as America's official museum about World War II. Or choose instead to visit the Ogden Museum of Southern Art which is just a short 2 min walk away- Celebrating the art, history and culture of the American South, the dazzling Ogden Museum of Southern Art opened in 2003 in the historic Warehouse Arts District. The Museum is home to the largest and most comprehensive collection of Southern art in the world, showcasing art from 15 Southern states and the District of Columbia. Named an affiliate of The Smithsonian Institution in 2001, it was the first museum in Louisiana to receive this prestigious designation. Please tell me the museum you choose. The group will split up into who chooses which museum (advance notice of this is needed).

Multiple JAZZ Brunches- There will be a jazz brunch or two on the trip- New Orleans Style.

As with our other trips, I will also put together optional events and tours for you to do on your own if interested or you might see them added to our itinerary if we have time. These are just a few:

Music Tour- This will most likely show up on our itinerary, I am just working out the time details to see where it will fit. It will be either this or "hop" of a few Jazz Clubs in the French Quarter. This is not a music club tour, this is a guided tour through the French Quarter, across Rampart Street and into Louis Armstrong Jazz Park to a place called Congo Square where American music was born. Our guide will divulge his inside knowledge of the music scene and give us recommendations of where to go. The Music Tour tells the amazing 300-year history of New Orleans' birthing of jazz, nurturing of rhythm 'n' blues and the hits from America first rock 'n' roll recording studio. The music that made NOLA reaches back to 1750s when French colonists granted slaves the freedom to sing on Sunday. The tour discusses everything from opera, gospel, jazz and songs sung by bawdy sailors in saloons near the Mississippi River docks. With every story, our guide will play a snippet of music related to that story.

Parade Watching- Luckily for us Mardi Gras is NOT happening this week, but for 2 weeks leading up into Mardi Gras there are various parades around town. This weekend we will try to catch a peak at one of them. Our Saturday night dinner is not set yet, but I will try to locate us at a place near this parade. If so, we will definitely be viewing this. If you never have seen a parade in NOLA, you are seriously missing out. Saturday February 11th, the parade called "Krewe du Vieux" is at 6:30pm in the French Quarter. This is a raucous, art-inspired, free spirited parade. In 2006, this was the first parade to march post-Katrina, and garnered national attention for its tenacity and

lightheartedness in the face of tragedy. That year's theme was "C'est Levee." This parade is noted for wild satire, adult themes, and political comedy (can you imagine it this year after the election?) as well as for showcasing some of the best brass and jazz bands in New Orleans. Listening to a New Orleans brass jazz band parade around the streets of the French Quarter, is a life time memory!

- 1) Voodoo Tour- Our guide has a decent amount of voodoo knowledge and we are visiting 2 cemeteries with her, but as far as an all-inclusive voodoo tour, we might not have time for this. Again, still working out time details.
- 2) Harrah's Casino- NOLA has a Casino right in the heart of the Central Business District.
- 3) Mardi Gras World- This is a warehouse guided tour where they build all the Mardi Gras floats. Since Mardi Gras will be 2 weeks away, these floats will be almost finished and you can see crews working away. Not currently on our agenda, but an interesting visit for those who want to skip the Museum or another event.
- 4) Jazz Night- I am in conversation with a few Jazz clubs one being Preservation Hall. Tickets do not go on sale until mid-December for this location. This may be an optional event as it will start too late for some or not fit in with our dinner schedule.
- 5) Ride the streetcar to and from an event as that is a fun experience.
- 6) Bourbon Street and Frenchman Street Nightlife.
- 7) Happy Hour in NOLA- NOLA is known to have some great happy hour's. Let's find some as a group.

