

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

Steve Brockmeyer
stands tall on being
the big cheese.



THE ART OF INTEGRATION
Nothing thwarts a merger faster than poor blending of firms.

FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES
The X-Men of the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation take Manhattan.

SOAR SUBJECT
New, lighter corporate jets promise efficient, less infuriating travel.



FOCUS ON

New Orleans

AS RENOWNED LOCAL AUTHOR WALKER PERCY once declared, "New Orleans is America's lone international city." While Katrina sadly washed away much of this beloved city, it could not expunge her soul, an exotic concoction of Creole, Italian, French, Spanish and African cultures slowly cooked in a cast iron pot like a caramel roux and served up to visitors with grace.

In the French Quarter, reggae, Latin and jazz emanate from Café Brasil, the smell of freshly baked croissants wafts from Croissant D'Or, and laughter peals from Galatoire's every time the door swings opens.

Visit New Orleans. You will fall in love all over again.

ATTEND

Risk Insurance Management Society

April 29–May 3

Morial Convention Center

www.rims.org

Jazz and Heritage Festival

April 27–May 6

www.nojazzfest.com

LODGING

THE RITZ CARLTON'S \$106 million renovation marks their commitment to the rebirth of New Orleans. Ideally located on the edge of the Quarter, it has infused this historic landmark with southern charm and has enhanced the rooms with luxurious amenities. The Garden District's antebellum mansions were the inspiration for the décor and furnishings. Comfortably elegant rooms boast 400-count Frette sheets, Bulgari amenities and Rain Forest showerheads. Zydeco brunch is served on Sundays, and you can even get a Voodoo Love massage at the award-winning spa. Lagniappe (Cajun for a little something extra): pet-friendly. **921 CANAL STREET**, 504.524.1331, WWW.RITZCARLTON.COM

WINDSOR COURT HOTEL long ago set the standard for luxury in a city of middling, tourist hotels. A serene oasis in the central business district, but only blocks from Bourbon Street's 24/7 party, this is the choice for the discerning traveler who desires exceptional service and a refined atmosphere. Admire the original art that graces the walls of the Polo Lounge while nursing a cognac and listening to the tinkling of the ivories. The majority of rooms are suites with either a private balcony or bay window overlooking the skyline. The two spectacular penthouses on the 22nd floor have their own landscaped terraces. Lagniappe: golfing privileges at English Turn Country Club.

300 GRAVIER STREET, 888.596.0955, WWW.WINDSORCOURTHOTEL.COM

Celebs like Elizabeth Taylor regularly check into **THE AUDUBON COTTAGES AT HOTEL MAISON DE VILLE**. Why? Each individually decorated, antique filled cottage has a walled garden that provides the utmost privacy. But any guest will revel in the authentic French Quarter experience—gracious service, genteel atmosphere and chef Greg Picolo's exquisite Creole cuisine. **727 RUE TOULOUSE**, 800.634.1600, WWW.HOTELMAISONDEVILLE.COM

DINING: NEW ORLEANS

BUSINESS LUNCH

Friday lunch at **GALATOIRE'S** is one of the quintessential New Orleans dining experiences, more like a cocktail party than a restaurant meal. No reservations. The queue for one of the coveted downstairs tables starts at about 10:45 a.m., but once you claim your table, it's yours for the afternoon. Start with a brandy milk punch and progress to definitive versions of Creole classics such as fried eggplant and pompano topped with crabmeat. **LUNCH, DINNER TUES.–SUN.**, 209 BOURBON ST., 504.525.2021, WWW.GALATOIRES.COM

BAYONA, housed in a 200-year-old Creole cottage just north of the pandemonium of Bourbon Street, serves chef Susan Spicer's

superb New American cooking in an atmosphere that's sophisticated and comfortable. Such dishes as smoked quail salad with bourbon molasses vinaigrette and grilled duck breast with pepper jelly glaze combine a New Orleans sensibility with an international flair.

LUNCH WED.–FRI., DINNER TUES.–SAT., 430 DAUPHINE ST., 504.525.4455, WWW.BAYONA.COM

BUSINESS DINNER

Chef John Besh's acclaimed **RESTAURANT AUGUST** may well be the best place to eat in New Orleans—elegant atmosphere, polished service and the cooking of a master chef who combines the best of local ingredients and traditions judiciously and deliciously. Don't miss the gnocchi

with blue crab as an appetizer or the Creole cream cheese panna cotta for dessert.

LUNCH FRI., DINNER MON.–SAT., 301 TCHOUPITOULAS ST., 504.299.9777, WWW.RESTAURANTAUGUST.COM

COMMANDER'S PALACE, the grande dame of New Orleans restaurants, was closed for a year after hurricane Katrina, but it's back stronger than ever and continues to be New Orleanians' favorite spot for special occasion dining. There's no better place to try the classics of New Orleans cooking—turtle soup, shrimp and Cognac over grits, and Commander's famous bread pudding soufflé. **LUNCH, DINNER DAILY**, 1403 WASHINGTON AVE., 504.899.8221, WWW.COMANDERSPALACE.COM

CITYZEN'S chef Eric Ziebold

serves some of the city's most ambitious and most successful modern American cooking. The three- and five-course tasting menus change frequently.

DINNER TUES.–SAT. **MANDARIN ORIENTAL HOTEL**, 1330 MARYLAND AVE., S.W. 202.787.6006 WWW.MANDARINORIENTAL.COM/WASHINGTON

ON YOUR OWN

The Cajun cooking of the bayou country is spicier and homier than the city Creole cooking of New Orleans. **COCHON**, located in the warehouse district, features the Cajun cooking chef Donald Link grew up with—boudin, andouille, smoked bacon, head cheese, crawfish pie and roasted oysters—served in tapas-size portions.

SHOPPING

PERLIS—Only in a city where debutante balls are a social staple could a man walk into a store the day before the Millennium and pick up a tailored tuxedo the next morning. True story. That store was Perlis, haberdasher to New Orleans' society crowd and one of the best men's stores in the world. Salesman Patrick McCausland will literally size you up as you walk in and perfectly fit you with a blue cashmere blazer. Whether traditional or contemporary, exquisite taste and quality prevails: Hicky Freeman suits, Robert Talbott ties, Zanella trousers. Lagniappe: lifetime complimentary alterations with every purchase. **6070 MAGAZINE STREET, 504.895.8661, WWW.PERLIS.COM**

MIGNON FAGET—Once to the delight of every doyenne in Mignon Faget's Creole cottage, a shopper had the good fortune to hear these words: "Honey, money is no object." Her head spun like a Mardi Gras Indian. Fleur de Lis earrings in 14-K gold? A charm bracelet with pelican, alligator and crawfish dangling from the sterling silver chain? Perhaps an oyster brooch with a fresh water pearl? Your challenge will be finding a piece you do not want. Fifth generation New Orleanian, Mignon Faget, has distilled the essence of the Crescent City into her designs. Her latest collection, "Ironworks," is inspired by the ornamental architectural detail that, thank goodness, still graces the city's antebellum homes. Lagniappe: a selection of baby gifts.

3801 MAGAZINE STREET, 504.891.2005, WWW.MIGNONFAGET.COM

LUNCH, DINNER MON.-SAT., 930
TCHOUPITOULAS ST., 504.588.2123, WWW.COCHONRESTAURANT.COMSHELL.NET

With owner JoAnn Clevenger in the dining room and chef Ken Smith in the kitchen, **UPPERLINE**, located in a sprawling townhouse with an eclectic collection of local art, is unsurpassed for hospitality or for its imaginative treatment of New Orleans classics. It's hard to get past the seductive appetizer list. How to choose between the "original" fried green tomato with shrimp remoulade or duck and andouille etouffée with corn cakes and pepper jelly?

DINNER WED.-SUN., 1413 UPPERLINE ST., 504.891.9822, WWW.UPPERLINE.COM

FROM BASQUE TO 'TEN CANOES' (AND A FAMILY CRUISE SANDWICHED IN BETWEEN)

[LUXURY]

Savor a **MICHELIN STARRED EXPERIENCE** while traveling through Spain's fabled culinary and wine regions on Artisans of Leisure's Food & Wine of Spain private tour. This gourmet romp through Andalusia, Catalonia, La Rioja and the Basque Country will leave you gastronomically giddy.

The highlight? Hard to say. Dining on gazpacho with olives and lobster at the Michelin starred Restaurant Akelarre? Shopping for fresh ingredients at one of Barcelona's local markets and then learning to prepare classic Catalan dishes with a private chef? Staying at Hotel Marques de Riscal, Frank Gehry's architectural foray into luxury hotel design? Or perhaps tasting the fine wines of the vineyards and bodegas of Jerez de la Frontera, the sherry capital of the world?

Since this is a private tour, it is just fine if you choose to relax in a seaside, whitewashed village, glass of manzanilla in hand. All hotels are five-star on this stunning gourmet adventure.

800.214.8144, WWW.ARTISANSOFLEISURE.COM, \$12,250 PER PERSON



[FAMILY]

REUNITE AT SEA—The cruise line for the discriminating traveler is now the cruise line for the discriminating family of travelers. Ultra-luxurious Crystal Cruises is dedicating a page on their Web site to help you plan the perfect "Family Reunion Cruise." A little known secret: Their exceptional service, spacious staterooms and dazzling array of entertainment is not just for adults. From grandchildren to grandparents, there is something for everyone.

Children can visit the captain on the bridge or revert to landlubber

behavior in the Sony Playstation stocked playroom. Adults can savor an exclusive wine-maker dinner in the private Vintage Room. With menus to suit everyone—vegetarian, gluten-free and low carb—it doesn't matter who is on what diet. And no need to mingle with the masses as you motor to shore on your private family excursion.

But depending on who is attending your family reunion, maybe the best perk is, as Crystal delicately puts it, "the opportunity of being together yet apart." Cruise on either the 940-guest Crystal Symphony or the 1,080-guest Crystal Serenity to the Caribbean or Mediterranean for seven days or two weeks. **888.799.4625, WWW.CRYSTALCRUISES.COM**

[ADVENTURE]

TIAMO RESORT ON THE PRISTINE BAHAMIAN ISLAND OF SOUTH

ANDROS The award-winning film 'Ten Canoes', a humorous take on Aboriginal life 10,000 years ago, has spawned an award-winning travel experience from adventure tour operator Venture North. Their exclusive "Ten Canoes 8-Day Cultural Odyssey" journeys through some of the most pristine areas of Australia's Northern Territory to the Ramingining community where 'Ten Canoes' was filmed. The tour provides an intimate glimpse into Aboriginal social life and cultural traditions and the opportunity to meet the cast of the movie.

Experience authentic Australia with indigenous Australians as you hike through the inland wetlands of the Arafura Swamp, fish with a spear, spot one of hundreds of species of birds and collect Bush Tucker (native foods). This Australian safari offers surreal landscapes, indigenous culture and curious wildlife with the added bonus of ancient rock art all bundled up in a rugged off-road, four-wheel drive adventure complete with tented camps and lodges. **+618.8927.5500, WWW.NORTHERNAUSTRALIA.COM, PRIVATE DEPARTURES,**

PRICE UPON REQUEST



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Leisure Travel
MAKING TRACKS | CARRIE WILLIAMSON



NEW YORK Near the top of any list of the best restaurants in America, chef Eric Ripert's Le Bernardin offers an unbeatable combination of sophisticated atmosphere, near-perfect service, and a seafood menu that is a marvel of freshness, innovation and good sense. The prix fixe menu allows choices from sections titled "Almost Raw," "Barely Touched," and "Lightly Cooked." A tasting menu is also available. **LUNCH MON.-FRI. DINNER MON.-SAT., 155 WEST 51ST STREET, THE EQUITABLE BUILDING, 212.554.1515, WWW.LE-BERNARDIN.COM**

HONG KONG Hong Kong is in love with its 1930s art deco past, but it's hard to find an authentic—rather than recreated—example of the time, and it's even rarer to find it combined with an authentic dining experience. The Luk Yu Tea House, located in the central district, serves dim sum, the tea snacks beloved by Hong Kong natives, along with hard-to-find varieties of tea. Its dining rooms, with individual wooden booths, spittoons, ceiling fans and stained glass windows, are packed at breakfast and lunch with regulars. Waitresses carry metal trays with dim sum selections and sing out their names. In spite of the crowds and cacophony, the place is a favorite of central district businessmen. Go during the day for atmosphere or at night for a more relaxing experience and an English menu. **DIM SUM 7 A.M.-MID-AFTERNOON DAILY. DINNER UNTIL 10 P.M. 25 STANLEY ST., 852.2523.5463**

MIAMI BEACH Acclaimed restaurateur David Bouley has opened his first restaurant outside New York at South Beach's Ritz-Carlton Hotel. Called David Bouley Evolution, the spectacular deco-style restaurant is designed by Jacques Garcia, also the architect for Bouley's Danube in New York. The menu is French and Japanese—not a fusion of the two, Bouley insists—with ingredients from top-flight regional growers and purveyors. Service is polished and attentive; the wine list is extensive. It immediately joins the top rung of Miami restaurants.

RITZ-CARLTON SOUTH BEACH, 1669 COLLINS AVE., 305.604.6090, WWW.BOULEYEVOLUTION.COM

e thomashead@mac.com

DISCERNING TRAVELER

ENCAPSULATING BEAUTY—

Is it not enough that frequent flying wreaks havoc on our skin? Now we can't even carry on lotions to counter the dehydrating effects unless we calibrate them to three ounces. And with the constant packing and unpacking of toiletries, we often leave our favorite behind. Inspired by these issues after years traveling to set locations with husband and actor, Dustin, Lisa Hoffman has devised a simplified, on-the-road beauty regimen. Lisa Hoffman "Night and Day" 24 Hour Skin Care Line offers anti-aging cleansers, toners, moisturizers and serums in airtight, numbered plastic vials ("so there's no wondering whether you should put your cream or serum on first," she says). They contain the right amount for a single use and are guaranteed "lab fresh"—your guarantee for a fresh face. A seven-day supply of 24-Hour Skin Care Packettes with a linen drawstring travel bag costs \$120 at Bergdorf Goodman or WWW.LISAHOFFMANSKINCARE.COM.

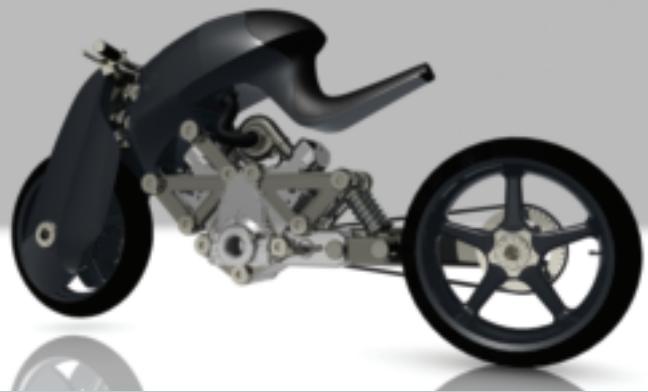
LUGGAGE FREE, HASSLE FREE—

Checking bags ranks high on the list of travel annoyances. Lost luggage aside, increased security and baggage restrictions have made the process even more cumbersome. The solution: Luggage Free. This luxury shipping company provides door-to-door service for your luggage, golf clubs, skis, strollers and all sorts of items so, as they say, you can "pack heavy and travel light."

Contact LF at least 24 hours prior to pick up. Delivery time to your hotel, villa, cruise ship or office: two days for domestic and seven to nine for international. Unlike many competitors, they wrap your luggage in a protective, heavy-duty plastic wrap and ship to more than 110 countries.

800.361.6871, WWW.LUGGAGEFREE.COM, RATES BY THE POUND

FAST TRACKS



Life in the Fast Lane

CONFEDERATE MOTORCYCLES: REBEL WITH A CAUSE

The Renovatio, literally Latin for "Renewal," is Confederate Motorcycles' love letter to New Orleans. Headquartered there until Hurricane Katrina forced relocation to Birmingham, Ala., founder Matt Chambers was determined to recommit his company to designing individualistic, high performance motorcycles. "This bike celebrates recovery and the revival of the all-American motorcycle. Its design is pure and minimal. And to drive it, an all-American engine—classic Detroit muscle!" And muscle it is. Katech, the leader in advanced racing engines, has hand-built (like the bike) a V-twin engine that produces 135 horsepower and explosive torque. By bolting it directly to the front and rear of the bike, they have eliminated a heavy frame, making for a graceful yet exhilarating ride. Coming in 2007; will be priced upwards of \$69K. **205.324.9888, WWW.CONFEDERATE.COM**

BRIEFCASE

Travel in style: **THE PENINSULA HONG KONG** has rolled out a new fleet of 14 Rolls-Royce Phantoms in their signature Peninsula green to ferry you to and from the airport, meetings, shopping. >> After being left in the jetstream by competitors, **AMERICAN AIRLINES** is spending \$20 million to upgrade first class on domestic long haul flights to include flat screen TVs and personal entertainment systems. >> Calling all urban, design-conscious travelers: **WALLPAPER MAGAZINE'S** new **CITY GUIDES** promises "the best, the most exciting, the most beautiful." >> It's true you do have to go through Atlanta to get to heaven or hell: FAA ranks **HARTSFIELD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT** number one in take-offs and landings.

FREQUENT FLYER TIPS AT 35,000 FT. Put your name on the outside of your laptop or learn the hard way that many laptops do indeed look alike when the Transportation Security agent holds two identical iBooks in his outstretched hands. You will have to turn them on to determine which is whose. >> Have problems with your flight? Call the airline directly instead of waiting to speak to a beleaguered agent. You can often quickly assess the status of a delayed flight on the phone while sipping your beverage of choice at the bar and watching fuming fellow passengers in the customer service line. >> Want to arrive on time? Travel in the morning and avoid the domino effect of delayed flights that occur throughout the day.