

2011 | REGIONAL GUIDE
SOUTH

PROFESSIONAL INSPECTORS RATE 300+
HOTELS, RESTAURANTS AND SPAS TO MAKE
SMART TRAVEL DECISIONS EASY

MORE THAN 500 ANSWERS TO YOUR TOP
TRAVEL QUESTIONS

FORBES LISTS THE BEST SIGHTS,
ATTRACTIONS, SHOPPING AND MORE



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It is an exciting time to visit New Orleans. Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, or more aptly, the hapless Saints winning the 2010 Super Bowl, the city is experiencing a renaissance fueled by energetic newcomers and determined locals, both of whom are dedicated to making New Orleans a better place to live while preserving its heart and soul. As travelers who are lured back year after year for Mardi Gras, the Jazz Fest or the French Quarter Festival have learned, the music, cuisine and culture are a tasty, slow-cooked gumbo that can't be found anywhere else in the world.

The local music scene is jumping. Trumpeter Irvin Mayfield, the unofficial mayor of New Orleans, opened his swanky Jazz Playhouse smack in the middle of Bourbon Street, an area better known for less high-brow activities. The iconic Uptown club Tipitina's, a shabby clapboard building whose stage has seen a who's who of the world's most talented performers, is ensuring the city's homegrown musical future.

Not to be outdone, the city is teeming with new restaurants. Butcher Cochon, an urban love letter to Cajun country, and Domenica, a nouveau tribute to the city's Italian heritage, are just two of the restaurants that are providing foodies with more diverse choices. Also sprouting up are well-priced neighborhood eateries like Neyow's Creole Cafe in Mid-City. Its healthy helpings of delicious red beans and rice with grilled pork chops and other local standards may yet make it worth the trek across town.

But it is not out with the old and in the new. Many of the city's icons have been or are being lovingly restored. The Roosevelt, New Orleans' former grande dame of the hotel world, is back after a \$145 million renovation. Splendid in her finery, she is poised to once again be the backdrop for high-society high jinks, as well as the luxurious place for notable jet-setters to call home. Also on the horizon is the Saenger Theater, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Expected to open in 2011, it will be the anchor for an emerging live theater district on the edge of the Quarter.

Laissez les bon temps rouler once again. (Translation: let the good times roll!)

WHAT TO SEE

AMPERSAND

1100 Tulane Ave., New Orleans, 504-587-3737; www.clubampersand.com

Sophisticatedly naughty, this converted bank building features two levels, two bars, a huge dance floor, an outdoor courtyard and several sitting rooms, one in the former bank vault. Appealing to serious clubbers of all stripes, Ampersand offers DJs from around the world spinning music of the techno and industrial persuasion.

Friday-Saturday 11 p.m.

HIGHLIGHT

WHAT ARE THE TOP THINGS TO DO IN
NEW ORLEANS?HIGHTAIL IT TO THE
AUDUBON ZOO

Audubon Zoo is a whimsical experience, with towering palms and gnarled live oak trees lining the pathways, and a fountain with bronze elephants spouting water. Don't miss the eerie white alligator at the Louisiana Swamp exhibit.

SEE A FLASH OF THE
MAKING OF MARDI GRAS

Mardi Gras World gives non-natives an exciting behind-the-scenes peek at the floats that make Mardi Gras one of the greatest shows on earth. Watch the artisans in action and see some of the rolling works of art up close and personal.

TOUR THE MANSIONS IN
THE GARDEN DISTRICT

The Garden District neighborhood has some of the South's grandest mansions and most carefully preserved architecture. Entertaining tales of the goings-on of noteworthy inhabitants over the decades accompany tours of the Greek Revival, Italianate and Queen Anne Victorian homes, many of which are owned by local luminaries such as Anne Rice.

HEAR THE RHYTHM OF
THE CITY ON FRENCHMEN
STREET

Frenchmen Street, just outside of the French Quarter, is the city's musical heart and soul. On any given night, about a dozen clubs along three blocks feature homegrown acts performing everything from jazz to rhythm and blues to rock, with street musicians adding to the lively scene as you navigate from blaring trumpet to the next.

VISIT FAMOUS GRAVES AT
THE ST. LOUIS CEMETERY
NO. 1

St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 is the final resting place of some of the city's most famous—first mayor and sugar pioneer Etienne de Boré—and infamous—voodoo queen Marie Laveau—residents. A tour of the above ground tombs is the quintessential creepy New Orleans thing to do.

tone for the Spa at The Ritz-Carlton, New Orleans. This tranquil spa lets you relax and indulge like royalty—the treatment menu was inspired in part by favorite practices of French aristocrats. The Napoleon royal massage is a signature treatment that includes a heavenly citrus-smelling bath prior to a lemon-verbena-scented Swedish rubdown. The body treatments are superb, and the spa's magnolia sugar scrub gently exfoliates and polishes skin while the scent of Louisiana's luscious magnolias blend with botanical extracts for further relaxation.

SHOPPING

AIDAN GILL

2026 Magazine St., New Orleans, 504-587-9090; 550 Fulton St., New Orleans, 504-566-4903; www.aidangillformen.com

Being greeted by a well-coifed man in a bow tie sets the tone for this men's grooming store. Rows of expensive colognes from Scotland, England and Europe, shaving lotions, and boxed bars of luxurious soaps neatly line the shelves. Glass display cases showcase cufflinks, elegant ties and other must-haves for the proper gentleman. Be sure to make time for a hot towel shave in the shop's retro barbershop.

MARIE LAVEAU'S HOUSE OF VODOO

739 Bourbon St., New Orleans, 504-581-3751; www.voodoooneworleans.com

This little shop in the heart of throbbing Bourbon Street has a variety of voodoo-related items for those who really want to bring back quintessential New Orleans souvenirs such as handmade voodoo dolls and gris-gris bags. It is also a museum, so you can learn a little bit about what to do with those souvenirs when you get them home.

MIGNON FAGET

3801 Magazine St., New Orleans, 504-891-2005; Canal Place Shops, 504-524-2973; www.mignonfaget.com

Local designer Mignon Faget's sterling silver and gold jewelry is often inspired by New Orleans. A piece of wrought iron becomes a scroll cuff bracelet. A musical note becomes a pendant. A street car becomes a charm. But after 40 years of designing, Faget has moved beyond the fleur-de-lis, creating non-New Orleans jewelry collections, as well as adornments for the home. The common thread? All of her designs are exquisitely crafted and sophisticated in their simplicity.

PERLIS

6070 Magazine St., New Orleans, 504-895-8661; www.perlis.com

Perlis is the kind of place where a man can walk in during the height of carnival season, purchase a tuxedo the day before a ball and pick it up the next afternoon, expertly tailored. Its service and exquisite selection of high-quality clothes and shoes—Robert Graham shirts, seersucker and other summer suits, and its own line of crawfish logo polo shirts and shorts—have not gone unnoticed. Perlis consistently gets listed as one of the top men's stores in the country (even though it does sell women's clothes, too).

Hotel will be poised to become the crown jewel of both the city and the South when it completes major renovations to rooms and public spaces, though one could make the argument that the hotel is perfectly lovely as is.

322 rooms. Restaurant, bar. Business center. Fitness center. Pool. Pets accepted. \$251-350

RECOMMENDED

THE ROOSEVELT NEW ORLEANS

123 Baronne St., New Orleans, 504.648.1200; www.therooseveltneworleans.com

This icon reopened its doors in 2009, much to the pleasure of New Orleanians who had longed for festive evenings at the Sazerac Bar, as well as travelers who wanted to stay in the grande dame that has been the setting for some of New Orleans' tallest tales. Governor Huey Long may or may not have shot the bar, but one thing is for certain, The Roosevelt is poised to give the city's other luxury hotels a run for their money. Gleaming chandeliers shine above the terrazzo floors in the elaborate lobby. The tasteful rooms are a contemporary interpretation of the originals. With legends like Pete Fountain performing at the Blue Room, there is always something happening at the hotel. One major difference from the former days is that this time around, the place is all non-smoking.

504 rooms. Restaurant, bar. Business center. Fitness center. Pool. Spa. Pets accepted. \$251-350

W NEW ORLEANS FRENCH QUARTER

316 Chartres St., New Orleans, 504-581-1200, 800-522-6963; www.whotels.com

Unlike other W hotels, the French Quarter location departs from the brand. While the rooms have modern furnishings in a neutral palette, the historic buildings that house the hotel dictate a cozier feel. The alluring and large Italianate courtyard, with a pool and cabanas, is truly one of the loveliest in the city, anchoring the hotel and giving it a more welcoming feel. There is also an annex made up of four carriage houses with oversized rooms, exposed brick and local art, and with Jacuzzis in the two ground-floor rooms and balconies off the two upstairs rooms. The location, close enough to yet far enough away from the action, provides a peacefulness that many Quarter hotels lack.

98 rooms. Restaurant, bar. Fitness center. Pool. Pets accepted. \$251-350

WESTIN NEW ORLEANS CANAL PLACE

100 Rue Iberville, New Orleans, 504-566-7006; www.westin.com

The Westin's downtown location isn't the only reason business travelers give this upscale hotel a thumbs-up. They also like the oversized guest rooms and the work-friendly amenities, including direct high-speed Internet access, ergonomic work chairs and cordless telephones. The Westin's convenient location also appeals to leisure travelers. In fact, the hotel is located in the Canal Place Tower, home to the Shops at Canal Place, where visitors and locals like to go on spending sprees in the many top-name stores, including Saks Fifth Avenue. Everyone who beds down here appreciates the stellar views of the city from both the marble-adorned lobby (on the tower's 11th floor) and the rooms that rise above it.

438 rooms. Restaurant, bar. Business center. Fitness center. Pool. \$151-250

brunch draws both locals and visitors to its tables.

American, Creole. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, Sunday brunch. \$36-85

RECOMMENDED

COCHON BUTCHER

930 Tchoupitoulas St., New Orleans, 504-588-7675; www.cochonbutcher.com

There is no place quite like Cochon Butcher in or out of New Orleans. The industrial-looking space, cool in its urban sparseness, houses both a butcher shop and small restaurant that is really no more than a few tables with stools, and the aptly named Swine Bar. Chef Donald Link is the brainchild behind the concept. A native of southwest Louisiana, he decided it was time to bring authentically smoked and cured pork, game and duck to big-city dining. The result: some of the most delicious food for the price in the city. Sharing a selection of small plates is the way to go, because you don't want to miss anything. Sample the specials of the day, but be tempted by the duck pastrami sliders and the pork belly on white bread with mint and cucumbers. There is a surprisingly respectable, if limited, wine list, as well as a terrific selection of beers and a full bar.

Cajun. Lunch, dinner, Sunday brunch. \$15 and under

DOMENICA

The Roosevelt, 123 Baronne St., New Orleans, 504-648-6020; www.domenicarestaurant.com

Located in The Roosevelt hotel, the contemporary Italian Domenica is the latest feather in chef John Besh's hat. His executive chef, Alon Shaya, spent a year traveling throughout Italy's countryside, learning firsthand from culinary artisans how to cure meats, prepare fresh pasta and make limoncello so that it tastes like it comes from the old country. Pizzas baked in a rotating wood oven, the only one in the United States, are a specialty. The salumi, featuring house-cured meats, are creatively served on a cypress plank with or without imported cheeses, olives and roasted vegetables. The option of small plates provides an opportunity to sample a few dishes, especially if you're sharing. Try the meatballs on polenta (a not-too-dense veal pork combo); delicately fried squash blossoms stuffed with local goat cheese; or a classic veal with lemon and arugula. The almost exclusively Italian wine list is carefully laid out by region and reasonably priced. The modern Venetian glass chandeliers, brown leather chairs and artfully divided space makes Domenica a chic dining experience.

Italian. Lunch, dinner, brunch. \$36-85

HERBSAINT

701 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans, 504-524,4114; www.herbsaint.com

Herbsaint chef Donald Link is arguably the best in town, a claim the restaurant could also make. The food, with nods to both New Orleans and France, is absolutely delicious. There are standout dishes throughout the menu, such as Louisiana shrimp with tasso and grits, and a grilled and sliced rib-eye with sea salt and steak frites. The cool bistro vibe matches the urban location in the Warehouse District. The professional waiters are knowledgeable and friendly.

French, Southern. Lunch, dinner. Closed Sunday. \$36-85