

New Orleans... Revisited



By Tim Ash

There are very few places in this world that take hold onto your spirit... pulling... dragging... until your body gives in and boards a plane or drifts onto the open road. When you find it, such a place is mesmerizing... nearly bewitching. You can't keep your mind focused on any other destination, because it always creeps in somehow... with a whiff of food or a riff from a trombone, transporting you instantly back to a street corner that you will never forget.

New Orleans hold this magic. I brighten up at the mere mention of the name, or I find myself in passionate conversation with complete strangers who mention beignets in passing conversation. New Orleans gets into your blood. Many have made the southern visit and never returned to their apartment in the city. One day this will happen to me. I have absolutely no doubt.

Planning a visit to New Orleans is both thrilling and all-consuming. There are so many wonderful things to do, and so many places to just "be". I

have always said that your accommodations are the most important part of the planning process, but in New Orleans, that will never be more true. This is the place where the historic meets down-home comfort, where the electric meets a lazy drift down the river, and where a three day whirlwind can turn into a seven day adventure right before your eyes. This is New Orleans, and there is nothing in the world like it.



With a literal plethora of accommodations to choose from in the Crescent City, making a decision is never easy. An endless number of factors come into play... such as convenience, amenities, ambiance, service, and of course, the swimming pool. In New Orleans, there is also a fine line between being close to the action and being IN the action. The ideal scenario would be a beautiful location, steps from Bourbon Street and other French Quarter attractions, with the peace and quiet of a plantation home along the river. Sounds impossible, right?

Well, allow the [New Orleans Hotel Collection](#) to make you a believer with their nearly unbelievable array of properties. If you are looking for a magical getaway, you have arrived. This hotel collection consists of the Bourbon Orleans, the Crowne Plaza New Orleans Airport, Dauphine Orleans, Hotel Mazarin, Wyndham Riverfront Hotel, Hotel Le Marais, and the [Audubon Cottages](#)

. Each property is unique in what it offers the discerning traveler.

However, I can hold out no longer. I can not wait another second to describe the historic brilliance that are the [Audubon Cottages](#) .

Once behind its beautiful gates, time seems to stand still, and there is not

even a peep from nearby Bourbon Street. Seven cottages, fresh from a multi-million dollar restoration, beckon its visiting inhabitants to experience the epitome of "living it up" in the French Quarter. With personal butler service, anything you may require is right at your fingertips, including complimentary continental breakfast delivered each morning.

Each cottage could easily double as a private residence, complete with surprising touches that really make it feel like home. Coffee, tea, bottled water, and soft drinks are replenished every day, and the complimentary wireless internet allows you to check email, look up flight information, or (gasp) do a tiny bit of work.

And if a purely fantastic swimming pool can make or break your hotel stay, you will be pleasantly surprised! This saltwater beauty is said to be the oldest saltwater pool in New Orleans. Really... how cool is that?

The attention to detail is so above industry norm that it is almost difficult to explain. The [Audubon Cottages](#) must be experienced... lived in... appreciated... before you can even begin to understand the difference between this French Quarter oasis and a standard hotel. In short, the cottages will completely blow you away.

And as if the cottages were not enough, [May Bailey's Place](#) is located right next door, and is a gorgeous venue to have a drink... or two. Wait... I am being terribly conservative. With expertly crafted concoctions, you may find yourself an instant "regular", and you may not be alone.

[May Bailey's Place](#)

has been featured on the Travel Channel on Ghost Adventures, and you may find that you have a friend from another plane sitting next to you on the bar stool. Have an open mind, because you never know who or what might buy your next drink!

While staying in New Orleans, I can not recommend enough that you make the [Audubon Cottages](#) your home away from home, and, if you may seek alternate options, look within the [New Orleans](#)

[Hotel Collection](#)

and have the experience of a lifetime!

For more information, please visit [online](#) , or call (504)561-5858.



□ New Orleans is known for a LOT of things, and that's without even touching Mardi Gras and King Cake!□ So now that we have already mentioned ghosts, it would be terribly remiss not to encourage everyone who steps foot into the French Quarter to take a ghost tour.□ Any city with the history of New Orleans is bound to have their share of spirits, and there are very few things that can chill to the bone like hearing a tale of paranormal proportions while standing in front of the exact location where it all occurred.□ (A full moon gracing the night sky also never hurts.)

Putting all of this into the mix, there are dozens of companies that offer ghost and vampire tours, often making it□ extremely difficult to actually narrow the field down when you may not know all of the facts.□

But the French Quarter Phantoms have made it easy. Voted the number one haunted tour in New Orleans, they have plenty of accolades to back that up!□ And while many companies only offer ghost tours, the French Quarter Phantoms boast a myriad of other tour options.□ Yes, you needn't ask twice. I will tell you all about them!□

The Ghost & Vampire Tour is a walking tour that meanders through the dim lit streets of the Quarter, stopping at the buildings that have seen the most tragedy, the most terror, and more times that not, the most ghosts.□ For nearly two hours, guests will hear spine tingling tales that are actually

historically accurate, as you move from murder, to disease, and often to the completely unexplainable.□

You can also take a walk through St. Louis Cemetery #1, the oldest working cemetery in New Orleans, in the daytime walking Cemetery Tour.□ (I would also bet that it is the most haunted!)□ You will see the final resting place of Marie Laveau, the Voodoo Queen, and learn all about the special way that New Orleans buries her dead.

The True Crime Tour is something unique that is offered, and it specializes on the murders, piracy, and other atrocities that have occurred in New Orleans throughout her storied past.□ You will hear about the Mafia, the infamous Axeman, and things that will literally make your jaw drop.□ As with anything else, New Orleans never does anything half way... crime included.□

Now, plenty of people have visited New Orleans and have never stepped foot in Treme', which is a terrible travesty.□ If you would like to see why HBO created an entire series dedicated to the place where music fills the air and creeps into the souls of its inhabitants, then Tour Treme' is for you!□ You will experience the birthplace of Jazz, see the Tomb of the Unknown Slave, and hear the history of the Mardi Gras Indians.□ You will also learn of the culture that makes this one of the most interesting neighborhoods in the entire country.□

And the French Quarter Phantoms do not stop here. They also offer custom and private tours.□ (I think they tend to be over-achievers!)□

But it isn't the unique, creative tours alone that really seem to set this tour group apart.□ Their educated, charismatic guides will "hook" you with the first tour.□ Anyone can memorize an encyclopedia full of facts, but without the art of story-telling, you may as well be in a lecture hall.□ These guides are friendly, funny, and can spin a tale that will make you keep your hotel light on!□

For more information, please visit [online](#) , or call (504)666-8300.□



I have been privileged to visit New Orleans on several occasions, and while I could never EVER say that anything was lacking, I often wondered why I never saw the big red bus. You know the one I am talking about. You see them in the large cities. They are synonymous with London, but it didn't take long for other cities to begin adopting the double-decker buses for their own.

And what could possibly make New Orleans more fabulous? Yup... City Sightseeing has their shiny red buses driving the streets, stopping at all of the major tourist attractions, as well as giving you a bird's eye view of areas you've never seen, but should! See the French Quarter, the Garden District, bustling Canal Street and vibrant Rampart Street, and everywhere in between.

City Sightseeing buses are the first thing I look for when I visit a city. They give you a fantastic overview, helping you to plan what to visit and what to see. And once you know, you can hop on and off as many times as you like! You can even be spontaneous and jump off to visit a cemetery, and then back on to catch lunch in the Warehouse District. The choice is always yours! Not only can you ride the entire length of the route to hear the wonderful narrated tour, but you can use the bus as transportation back and forth to your hotel, or for a mid-day run to the casino. The options are endless.

But speaking of gambling, I will bet that this will be the best addition to

beautiful New Orleans for a very long time. After all, it is difficult to improve upon perfection!

For more information, please visit [online](#) , or call (504)207-6200.



Now that you probably have your bearings, it's time to dig a little deeper into what New Orleans has to offer, and the births and events that have shaped it into the city that we see before us today.

Gray Line, the world's leader in sightseeing, offers an adventure that **MUST** be taken when visiting New Orleans. I say "must" because there are things that you may "like" to do while here, but there are very few things that almost seem to be a prerequisite. This tour is one of those things.

The Hurricane Katrina Tour takes its guests on a small coach tour through the devastation that ripped through this beautiful, brave city in 2005. Hear from an actual eye-witness regarding the storm, its aftermath, and what the city has done to rebuild. You will hear about the origins of this city, drive by a levee that was breached, and actually see reconstructed neighborhoods in the Ninth Ward, Lakeview, Gentilly, and St. Bernard.

No amount of reading or watching documentaries can prepare you for what you will see with your own eyes. You will pass through streets where a house is completely rebuilt, but the adjacent lot is completely bare, where a

home has been completely leveled to the foundation. You will pass by the inhabitants in these areas, and you will see people who persevered. You will be touched, and this experience will make you completely view New Orleans in a new, more appreciative light.

For more information, please visit [online](#) , or call (504)569-1401



Now, another thing that you can not escape in New Orleans is Jazz, and why would you want to? The Big Easy Jazz Tour is the perfect introduction to Jazz, and to New Orleans itself! Throw on your beads, and be prepared for a night of revelry... Gray Line style!

Sometimes it is difficult to decide just where to go for good music. It seems that everyone has a recommendation, and they are rarely the same. This is a walking tour that will take out the guesswork, as well as provide you with some insightful information on how Jazz began.

You will visit two destinations where you will hear Jazz at its best, performed by some of the area's absolute best local musicians. You will have reserved seating, which if you've ever visited a popular place along

Bourbon, is priceless. You will also receive one complimentary drink, as well as a choice between another cocktail or cafe au lait and beginets. The tour includes a visit to the Musical Legends Park, where you can view and take photographs with the bronze statues depicting some of New Orleans' very own celebrities.

If you are interested in great music, perfectly mixed drinks, and a nice little history lesson, then this is the tour for you!

For more information, please visit [online](#) , or call (504)569-1401



And now some relaxation is in order!

Jazz music is playing, the smell of jambalaya is in the air, and the breeze off the Mississippi is in your hair. Are you in a special part of paradise, specially reserved for those who would rather be in New Orleans? No... you have merely boarded the Creole Queen!

The Dinner Jazz Cruise is the perfect way to compliment any visit to New Orleans. This gorgeous Paddlewheeler sails down the Mississippi River, offering up a delicious Creole buffet, complete with gumbo, baked chicken, beef brisket, and jambalaya. And would any feast be complete without bread pudding?

The decor of this unbelievable vessel is reminiscent of a time long gone, when a leisurely drift down the river was the norm. And the lovely promenade on the top deck is the most wonderful place to enjoy a drink, while taking in the panoramic views of the city.

And then there is the music. This Jazz band is superb! Often even taking requests, they literally fill the night with music, with couples swaying to the sound.

When you find yourself in New Orleans, make sure to also find yourself aboard the Creole Queen!

For more information, please visit [online](#), or call (504)587-1719.

You can never even touch the tip of what New Orleans has to offer with one, two, or even three visits! As Marc Becker, the Area Director of Sales and Marketing for the [New Orleans Hotel Collection](#), so eloquently suggested, one should take a piece of paper and fold it into sections to provide columns. One should include the things that you happen upon that you wish to experience on a future visit in one column. One should include the things that **MUST** be experienced again in another column. More columns may be provided for attractions and tours that probably won't fit into the next trip, but must definitely make it into another visit. I am pretty sure that I always end up with a few more columns than he originally had in mind, but then again, I have been utterly possessed by this beautiful city!

And if you need a little planning help, make sure to visit the [New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau](#)

. These people are SO friendly that they will feel like family, and they will make the planning process a piece of cake... King Cake, to be exact.

So head on down to New Orleans, and experience the trip of a lifetime. Chances are, I'll be there, too. I can't seem to stay away!

For information on places to dine in New Orleans, read:

[New Orleans... EATS!](#)