New Orleans: Traveling With Spirits

By Angela Ash



There are some people who travel a bit differently than others. Sure... they pack their suitcases the same, find the best deals for airfare, and they even make sure to bring a warm jacket for the possibility of a cool evening. However, this is where the similarities end. While most people are visiting the aquarium or the art museum, they are doing something of an altogether different nature. They are searching for the oldest cemetery, the most eclectic historical museums, and the buildings whose lore cause locals to cross to the other side of the street when they pass by in the moonlight.

If you are one of these discerning travelers, then you are in luck... for no other city in the known universe possesses a supernatural quality of this caliber.

Welcome to New Orleans!



If you have ever been to New Orleans, you will undoubtedly agree that there is a "feeling" to the place that can not easily be described. It is exotic and exciting, while somehow also managing to feel oddly familiar. It draws you in like a good book, but then quickly reminds you that this is like no piece of fiction that you have ever read before. This beautiful, mesmerizing city seems to exist behind a mysterious vale... just waiting for the eager, curious travel to pierce its darkness.

And in an attempt to completely immerse oneself into every supernatural facet that the city holds, setting up your "home base" at a cookie-cutter, chain hotel just will not do. A quick search online will reveal that many accommodations not only refuse to shy away from queries about things that go bump in the night, but they openly promote that their establishment is indeed "haunted". One such property immediately comes to mind, as that I can personally authenticate that you may very well be sleeping with spirits.



In a city where historical gems sit on every street corner, the Hotel Provincial shines like a beacon, tempting travelers to venture in from the heat to experience a serene oasis... just two incredible blocks from Bourbon Street.

It seems almost like a magical spell has been cast on the property, because you can literally leave the hotel and be in a lively bar in two minutes flat. However, once within the welcoming walls of the Hotel Provincial, a quiet courtyard just begs for you to visit... preferably with good reading materials, and the refreshing swimming pools just tease you to take a plunge, even if you have to dry your hair again before dinner. And all the while you have the magnificent sense of "being in the center of it all", while still hearing nothing but the clip clop of horse carriages going down Chartres Street.

Sounds like a dream? Well, wake up, because the Hotel Provincial will completely entrance your mind, body, and spirit... leaving you anticipating your next visit before you even leave! But again, this could just be the "captivation" of the place, or even those who came before you... still unwilling to leave the grounds.

The Hotel Provincial offers absolutely exquisite accommodations, with the history of yesterday mixing with the comforts of the modern age. Entering each room feels like stepping back into a previous century, with the decor

reminiscent of a time gone by, but with reminders like complimentary WI-Fi to jolt us back into this decade.



Even in the daylight, the Hotel Provincial has a certain "feeling" about it. When climbing the stairs, you may find yourself pausing to look over your shoulder, almost certain that something or someone is at the foot of the steps, quietly watching your ascent. Odd little things may happen within your room, like objects being moved about... taken and then replaced in the strangest ways. A soothing humming is often heard, which is altogether understandable, as that a portion of the hotel has served as a war-time hospital, and perhaps a few of the nurses have hung about... comforting guests and sometimes even digging through their makeup bags, only to spill the contents all over the floor.

But if the hotel is a bit "off" during the day, then prepare for a drastic change once night has fallen. When the moonlight shines into the windows, and shadows seem to pace... breaking the stream of light with

their movement, a definite presence is often felt, or even occasionally seen.



It was on an evening such as this, that I was actually awakened in the middle of the night, only to view what appeared to be a soldier in a dark uniform at the end of the bed. I may have eagerly brushed this off as a figment of my imagination, had I not glanced over to see my husband, sitting upright in the bed next to me... staring at the exact same thing. The figure wavered for a moment, almost as if fused with static electricity, and then disappeared.

It seems that sightings of this nature are not altogether rare at the Hotel Provincial. In fact, nearly every employee has a story to tell... while it may be regarding the appearance of a full-bodied apparition, or the complete rearranging of the furniture in a room, as they were away for just a few moments.

Whatever the experience, guests keep coming back, whether it is to revel in the luxurious offerings of the property, or to take their chances with the spirits.

Visit Hotel Provincial for more information online, or call 504-581-4995 to plan a stay to remember!



When visiting New Orleans, historic museums and buildings are part of everyone's itinerary. Neglecting such treasures is like leaving without having beignets.

While it may be difficult to decide which properties to visit, the fascinating Hermann-Grima should be an obvious choice. Located right in the French Quarter, this magnificent structure gives visitors a peak into the lives of the people who lived and worked within its walls.

But, it may also offer a peak into the spirit realm.

Built in the early 1800s, it is certain that this house has seen numerous events that may bind a person to this home, even after they have crossed

over from the world of the living. Occupied by two families, the Hermanns and the Grimas, it is theorized that a handful of its inhabitants are still hanging about.

Employees avoid certain rooms at dusk, and they have all felt their fair share of tugs, pokes, and pinches. However, a lot of their tales focus around the doorknobs. Yes, this may be a strange form of communication from one side to the other, but it has been pretty effective thus far. One tour guide was certain that a particular door was locked, until she heard the click of the door unlocking, when there was no one in the adjoining room to turn the key. Other reports of doors not shutting or doorknobs refusing to lock or seeming to unlock all of their own accord trickle down through the staff ever so often... just in time to always remind everyone that there is indeed a "presence" within the Hermann-Grima House.

And if you follow things of a darker nature on the small screen, then you may also recognize some of the interior settings from FX's *American Horror Story: The Coven*
... right inside of the Hermann-Grima House. Also, step into the garden, and see if these surroundings seem a bit familiar.

Visit the Hermann-Grima House for more information online , or call 504-525-5661 to plan a tour today!

Now, New Orleans has no shortage of businesses or private residences that make your skin crawl simply by walking past them. Whether you are interested in the torturous mayhem that occurred within the walls of the LaLaurie Mansion, or the vampire-like escapades of Jacques St. Germaine, true life is definitely stranger than fiction in the French Quarter. While you can attempt to locate such places through the assistance of online search engines, there is no way you are going to find them all, or ensure that you are receiving the full story behind the story... with all of the blood curdling details. It is then that you need a professional, someone who possesses the knowledge and the skill to actually leave you breathless as she recounts the haunted past of New Orleans. In short, you need Bloody Mary .



Bloody Mary is a native of New Orleans. In fact, she can even trace her bloodline back to the early 1700s... right here in the Crescent City, where she offers her services to locals and visitors alike. Bloody Mary is a spiritual healer, a historian, a guide and storyteller, an author, a mystic, and an authentic Voodoo Queen.... just to name a few. If you are in New Orleans in search of the supernatural, then you haven't found it... until you meet Bloody Mary.

Offering a wide variety of public tours, Bloody Mary and her team of expert tour guides take you into the true heart and soul of New Orleans. While

many tours focus on a small area of the French Quarter, Bloody Mary's range is expansive, offering patrons the opportunity to see parts of the nearly mythical city that they could only envision. Because she knows that your time is precious, Bloody Mary also offers private tours, where you can focus on particular areas or legends that you wish to explore. There is NO better way to see the darker side of New Orleans!

Check out Bloody Mary online to see the services that she has to offer, or call 504-915-7774.

We have already mentioned beignets once, as that they are a quintessential part of New Orleans. These doughy, sweet pieces of perfection are a food group all their own in the Big Easy.

They can be found at a few locations in New Orleans, but do not be fooled. Cafe Du Monde and Cafe Beignet are the best by far. Don't be caught with anyone else's beignet in your mouth. It might be illegal in the French Quarter.

However, the patrons of one of these two eateries, who do not shy away from powdered sugar all over their clothes, also seem not to be too frightened of the other-worldly guests that still yearn for beignets from the other side.



Cafe Du Monde has been serving delicious sweetness since 1862 in the French Quarter. Hundreds of employees have surely passed beneath its green striped awnings. However, one seems to wish to continue to observe the confectionary joy that the cafe brings to its patrons. The waiter is extremely friendly, showing great pride in his employment, as he happily takes the orders of waiting guests. The problem arises when the beignets never arrive, and no one has any idea where or why their "waiter" has vanished.

Apparently, the eateries of the French Quarter are an extreme draw for paranormal activity. Guests definitely seem to report getting a different type of "spirit" with their meal.



The Court of Two Sisters is a New Orleans tradition, and it is definitely the place to be for a relaxing, Jazz Brunch every day of the week!

You may choose to dine inside, or out… in the fabulous courtyard. And the buffet is about as endless as three plates can contain. There is always a fresh array of various fruit, an omelet or eggs station, and everything from carved turkey breast to jambalaya.

And the ambiance is just not able to be compared. The sweet sound of live Jazz flows throughout the courtyard, as you attempt ever so earnestly to eat every bite on your plate. (Ssssh... plates).

In fact, if you are caught dead anywhere else for brunch, then just pack up your bags and go home. However, "being caught dead" is just what the namesakes of this restaurant continue to do... night after night.

Emma and Bertha Camors once owned a shop on this exact spot, from which the Court of Two Sisters derived its name. The sisters were inseparable, and they actually died within months of one another during the winter of 1944. It seems that this close kinship remains even in their afterlife, as guests often see them in the evening, sitting side by side in the courtyard.

For more information, visit the Court of Two Sisters online or call (504) 522-7261.



Chartres House is a favorite for locals in New Orleans. With its charming, welcoming dining spaces and menu full of comfort food, it isn't difficult to see why many people can't get enough of their delicious cuisine and

expertly mixed libations. And apparently, even death can not stop them from a visit.

With its historical look and feel, it is easy to see why spirits from another era may wish to hang about for the scenery. However, the apparition most seen is a male from the 1970's, who died from a gunshot wound. The second floor dining room, once an apartment that was impossible to rent, seems to be his usual hangout, with those passing below often catching a glimpse, as he looks out the window onto Chartres Street.

Visit Chartres House for more information online , or call 504-586-8383 to make your reservation today!



It is a nearly impossible feat to visit New Orleans and not reserve a table at Antoine's.

Operated in the French Quarter for 174 years, by the fifth generation descendants of the Alciatore family, Antoine's is a staple for white-linen dining, paired with impeccable service that can make every patron feel like a visiting dignitary.

Their French-Creole cuisine is quite synonymous with the Big Easy, and it attracts diners from all over the globe.

It even attracts some from beyond the grave.

Many patrons of this popular establishment see a lot of strange things at Antoine's, but with a dining area called the Mystery Room, it seems that the folks at Antoine's are not adverse to the occasional odd occurrence. The Mystery Room could be entered through a secret door in the women's restroom during Prohibition, where they could have an entirely different type of "spirit" poured into their coffee mug. When asked why they may be behaving a bit unusual, or when questioned as to the contents of their cup, they would only answer "It's a mystery", thus dubbing the space the Mystery Room.

However, this is not the only mystery at Antoine's. It seems that silverware seems to mysteriously disappear, and I don't mean into someone's pocket. A spoon may be on your saucer one moment, and the next it just seems to have vanished. Many guests have even seen the shadow of what appears to be a dark, male waiter walking away... obviously still trying to provide the level of service that diners at Antoine's have become accustomed to receiving.

Visit Antoine's Restaurant for more information online, or call 504-581-4422 to make a reservation.

If you are up for a few more "haunted eats", then be sure to show up with an empty stomach at this next establishment.



Just when you think that the food in New Orleans can not possibly get any better, Dickie Brennan unveils Tableau to the dining scene in the French Quarter. Right in Jackson Square, his latest offering temps locals and visitors alike with this magnificent brand of Louisiana Creole cooking.

Tableau is housed in a portion of the historic Le Petit Theatre, which was built in New Orleans in 1916. In purchasing a part of this building, the theatre has experienced many upgrades that would not have been possible otherwise, and shares the courtyard and lobby with the restaurant, literally infusing the "feel" of the theatre into Tableau.

Le Petit Theatre has always been known as one of the most haunted buildings in New Orleans. With its long history, it has definitely seen plenty of real-life tragedies that rival those acted upon its stages. Sightings from patrons range from Civil War soldiers to nuns, but none seem to be as frequent a visitor as the young actress, who fell to her death from the catwalk above the main stage.

It seems that quite a few of these old theatre haunts have taken up residence at the new Tableau, because the sightings and experiences have

already come pouring in.

A manager at the restaurant shares that employees specifically do not like to go alone to the private dining rooms upstairs. They seem to always feel like someone is behind them, or they find themselves nearly sprinting for the staircase, after they have finished their work. There have also been numerous stories of glasses or bottles moving of their own accord, or doors refusing to shut or open.

While discussing these experiences, Kathy, one of our journalists, keeps feeling some sort of presence behind her... so much so that she even peers out of the third floor window beside her... just to ease her nerves. While still in the room, we notice that, in a photograph that has just been taken, there is an unmistakable "figure" in the window that could not have been a reflection... seeming to peer in to hear the stories of the supernatural events at Tableau. The manager quickly flings open the door, just to illustrate that there is no way that a flesh and blood human could be outside of that window.

Oddly enough, this is also the room that would have opened up directly onto the main stage, where the actress met her untimely end.

Whether you decide to visit to see what you may experience, or you just want a really good steak, check out Dickie Brennan's Tableau for more information online, or call 504-934-3463 to reserve your table today!



A visit to New Orleans without rolling down the mighty Mississippi River

would be like leaving Mardi Gras without any beads. And what better way to see its splendor than on the last authentic steamboat to traverse its waters!

The Natchez offers a variety of cruises, whether you would like to experience a casual lunch buffet while taking in the sights, or tap your toes to a lively Jazz cruise.

However, visitors aboard the Natchez often get a little more than the ticket price includes.

Those aboard mostly report seeing a young man walking up the stairs, often right in front of them, to literally disappear into thin air. Others have seen a man in uniform standing at the buffet, quite seemingly out of place, only to walk away and dissipate into the Louisiana night.

Visit the Steamboat Natchez for more information online, or call 569-569-1401 to plan your cruise on the mighty Mississippi!

** Now, you may be wondering what is the best way to travel about between one spine-tingling haunt to the next. The French Quarter is an area that is truly best explored on foot. However, when your legs begin to stop cooperating, or you have quite a few blocks to cross, City Sightseeing has their shiny red buses driving the streets, stopping near 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. 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.**

For more information, you may visit them online , or call (504)207-6200.

For assistance in planning your adventure to New Orleans, visit the New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau . They can assist with anything from finding that perfect hotel to the best haunted bar for a late night drink!



New Orleans can not be compared to any other city in the universe. Its culture seems to be injected into its food, its music, and even into its spirits. After visiting this energetic, mysterious city, it is easy to see why so many do not wish to depart... even in death.