

NEW ORLEANS: What's Cookin' in the Big Easy!?

(Note: This is only a sample tour)

Day 1: Depart for the "Big Easy". Discover the **French Quarter**, the cultural epicenter and oldest neighborhood. The French Market features retail shops, performance venues, scenic walkways, public art, restaurants and cafes. Relax at Café Du Monde. The open air historic **New Orleans** café serves only the famous chicory coffee and beignets, a puffy donut heavily doused with powdered confectioners' sugar.

Day 2: Today visit **Jackson Square** and St Louis Cathedral, one of the oldest churches in the country. See two **Louisiana State Museums**, the Presbytere and the Cabildo. This afternoon is your **Culinary Walking Tour**. Learn about the cuisine of the region. Interspersed with interesting facts about the city and its colorful history, learn the difference between Cajun and Creole cuisine and the history behind all the food delights that New Orleans is famous for. Learn about some of the best restaurants in the city and sample iconic foods - gumbo, po'boys, jambalaya, pralines, and mufaletta. Tonight experience **New Orleans Jazz at Preservation Hall**.



Day 3: The New Orleans **Hop on Hop Off bus** is a great way to see the main sites of the city. Hop off at the National World War II Museum for a visit or perhaps you may prefer the Ogden Museum of Southern Art. Hop off in the **Garden District** for a guided walking tour of the area. These lovely old homes are reminiscent of the days of sugar and cotton plantations. See homes of celebrities such as Sandra Bullock, John Goodman and Anne Rice. Enjoy a po'boy sandwich before you complete your bus loop. Stop at St Louis Cemetery No 1 Basin Street Station and visit one of NOLA's most famous cemetery where Voodoo Queen Marie Leveau was buried. Because water filled the graves before coffins could be lowered, tombs are built above ground.

Day 4: New Orleans is known for its unique culinary style. This morning enjoy a cooking class. This afternoon enjoy the ambiance surrounding Jackson Square: the **street performers, fortune tellers and musicians provide nonstop entertainment**. Meander your way to Royal Street and wander its pedestrian zone enjoying the shops and entertainment. Tonight meet your guide for **two fun filled hours of ghost and vampire stories**.



Day 5: Visit **Mardi Gras World** a New Orleans tradition. Carnival is a season of balls and parades organized by Carnival "Krewes". Later board the Canal Street Streetcar for City Park. Streetcars have been an integral part of the public transportation since the early 19th century. Disembark at The Besthoff Sculpture Garden, one of the most important sculpture installations in the US and is home to over sixty sculptures. It is set in a stunning environment of meandering footpaths. You may wish to inquire at the information window about the free audio tour of the Sculpture Garden which is accessible through cell phones and highlights twenty of the sculptures in the Gardens.

Day 6: The **New Orleans Center for Creative Arts NOCCA** offers instruction in culinary arts. Today visit the school and enjoy a culinary seminar. This afternoon visit two of the historical homes left in the French Quarter or visit the Presbytere which houses a permanent exhibit about the history, pageantry and diverse traditions that surround Mardi Gras. In addition, the Museum houses the multimedia 'Living with Hurricanes' which tells the story of the history, science and human drama about living with hurricanes on the Gulf Coast. Later relax for an afternoon coffee and some live jazz music in **Music Legends Park**, an open air courtyard that celebrates the city's musical heritage with plaques, art and statues of some of the notable jazz artists.



Day 7: No trip to Louisiana is complete without exploring the swamps and the land of **Antebellum Plantations**. Smell and feel the swamps. Amid the moss laden cypress trees, marshy reeds and waterways lurks alligators, turtles, wild pigs, raccoons, fish, birdlife and snakes. See a real Cajun swamp community accessible only by water and where folks live their lives off the swamps. Then it is off to the world of times gone by in Plantation Country. Few authentic plantations have survived but the ones that remain are reminiscent of Southern Belles and gentlemen plantation owners. Most are still fully functioning sugar cane plantations. But most plantations survived on the lives and labors of enslaved people who were kidnapped from the ancestral homes. Learn what life was like on these less than fortunate people. Tonight board one of the last authentic steamboats on the Mississippi River. Enjoy a **2 hour jazz river cruise**.

Day 8: Today unfortunately you must head home but depending on your flight times you may have the morning to do some last minute shopping for souvenirs such as tasty pralines, hot sauces and spice rubs.

TOUR INCLUSIONS

- Return airfare to New Orleans
- Coach transfers
 - o Return airport
 - o Full day to swamp tour and plantations
- 7 nights hotel accommodation with private facilities
- 7 Breakfasts
- 2 lunches
- 3 dinners
- Guided walking tours
 - o Culinary Tour with tastings
 - o Garden District
 - o Evening Haunted New Orleans tour
- Entrances/visits:
 - o Mardi Gras World
 - o One way ride on Streetcar
 - o Hop on Hop Off Coach
 - o National World War II Museum or Ogden Museum of Southern Art
 - o 2 cooking classes
 - o Visit to New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA) and culinary seminar
 - o Swamp Tour
 - o Plantation Home and Grounds
 - o 2 historical homes in French Quarter or Presbetyre
 - o Preservation Hall for performance
 - o Evening River Jazz Cruise
 - o Entrance to Ogden Museum of Southern Art with evening musical performance

