

TRANSPORTATION

The compact and level nature of the French Quarter and downtown riverfront areas make walking and bicycling the preferred ways to get around for most visitors. As in other cities throughout the USA, public transit in New Orleans has deteriorated as transportation funds have been diverted to subsidize motorists. Hurricane Katrina was of course a blow to the city's transit systems. Nevertheless, visitors will find the buses, streetcars and ferries generally serve the most popular attractions. In fact, the streetcars and ferries themselves serve as attractions.

AIR

New Orleans is not a major airline hub and it is not a big center for national commerce, so direct flights are not always available, even from major travel centers like the Bay Area. International travelers will almost certainly need to change flights somewhere else within the USA before connecting to flights to New Orleans (and the connection may require an additional stopover en route).

The cheapest flights can often be found on the web. Sites worth checking include the following:

Cheap Tickets (www.cheaptickets.com)

Expedia (www.expedia.com)

Kayak (www.kayak.com)

Vayama (www.vayama.com)

Airport

Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport (MSY; ☎ 464-0831; www.flymsy.com) is in the suburb of Kenner, 11 miles (about a 20-minute drive) west of the city along the I-10 freeway. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the airport remained dry and its concourses served as an impromptu triage center. It's a small airport with only one terminal, so it's pretty easy to get around.

BICYCLE

On the positive side of the ledger for riders, New Orleans is flat and relatively compact. On the negative side are heavy traffic, potholes and bad neighborhoods, which make fat tires a near necessity. Oppressive summer heat and humidity also discourage a lot of bicyclists.

All state-operated ferries offer free transportation for bikes. Bicyclists board ahead of cars by walking down the left lane of the ramp to the swinging gate. You must wait for the cars to exit before leaving.

The **Regional Transit Authority** (RTA; ☎ 248-3900; www.norta.com) doesn't allow bikes on buses or streetcars.

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motor transport generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow jetsetters to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: lonelyplanet.com.

THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

Rental

Bikes can be rented for around \$25 a day at [Bicycle Michael's](#) (Map p81; ☎ 945-9505; www.bicycle-michaels.com; 622 Frenchmen St, Marigny).

BOAT

Ferry

The cheapest way to cruise the Mississippi River is aboard one of the state-run ferries. The most popular line, the Canal St Ferry, operates between Canal St and the West Bank community of Algiers from 6am to midnight daily. Another ferry stops at Jackson Ave, near the Irish Channel, and leads to the suburb of Gretna. The ferries are free for pedestrians and cyclists, and just \$1 for vehicles.

Riverboat

Visitors to New Orleans during Mark Twain's time arrived by boat via the Mississippi River, but for now, the days of paddle steamboats plying the Big Muddy are over. Majestic America, which operated paddleboat cruises for years on the historic *Delta Queen*, has ceased operations. Unless someone buys up the business, overnight cruises on the Mississippi are a thing of the past.

BUS

Local

The RTA offers bus and streetcar (see p238) services. Fares are \$1.25, plus 25¢ for a transfer. Service is decent, but we wouldn't recommend relying solely on public transport during a New Orleans visit.

No buses run through the heart of the French Quarter, so most visitors only use them when venturing Uptown or out to City Park. Convenient bus routes are indicated for

all parts of town in the introduction sections in the Neighborhoods chapter (p64).

Long-Distance

[Greyhound](#) (☎ 800-231-2222; www.greyhound.com) buses arrive and depart at [New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal](#) (Map pp86–7; 1001 Loyola Ave), which is also known as Union Station. It's seven blocks upriver from Canal St. Greyhound regularly connects to Lafayette, Opelousas and Baton Rouge, plus Clarksdale, MS, and Memphis, TN, en route to essentially every city in the USA.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Driving

A car is not a bad thing to have in New Orleans. Having one makes it *much* easier to fully experience the entire city, from Faubourg Marigny on up to Riverbend, and out along Esplanade Ave. If you are planning to spend most of your time in the French Quarter, though, don't bother with a car. You'll just end up wasting money on parking.

Drivers in New Orleans are not overly aggressive, although you can always expect the car behind you to get within a few feet of your rear bumper. It's just a herd impulse, though. Pause a few beats at a green light, and that same tailgater is likely to wait patiently for you to realize that the light has changed. On the other hand, drivers in New Orleans can't resist speeding up for a yellow light to make it through an intersection before the light turns red. More often than not, the light is red by the time they are zipping through, so don't rush into an intersection immediately after your light turns green.

Here are the main concerns to watch out for when driving in New Orleans. First: potholes. The city streets are in an atrocious state, and tires here have accordingly short life spans. Tricky left turns through very common four-way intersections, and the intersections themselves, can be a hazard. While stop signs are set out in residential areas, not everyone obeys them. New Orleanian friendliness can be annoying if people stop their cars in the middle of a narrow street to chat with someone – every New Orleans driver has a story about this incident. Finally, New Orleans drivers are terrible turn signalers. Try to keep your head from exploding the fifth time you get cut off.