

Welcome to New Orleans

*The things that make life
worth living – wine, song and
feasting – are the humid air
New Orleans breathes.*

Epicurean Appetite

We hope you're not reading this at home or in an airport. We hope you're *actually in* New Orleans. Because if so, you're about to eat better than any armchair traveler, plus most of the rest of the world. When it comes to food, New Orleans does not play. Well, OK, it does: it takes a playful attitude to ingredients and recipes, mixing (for example) alligator sausage and cheesecake into a dessert fit for the Gods. But it creates this mind-meltingly rich food with enterprise, innovation and a dedication to perfecting one of the USA's great indigenous cuisines, a culinary aesthetic that will leave you snoring in the happiest of food comas afterwards.

Celebration Seasons

We are not exaggerating when we write the following words: there is either a festival or a parade every week of the year in New Orleans. Sometimes, like during Mardi Gras or Jazz Fest, it feels like there's a new party for every hour of the day. At almost any celebration in this town, people engage in masking – donning a new appearance via some form of costuming, while acting out the Satyr-side of human behavior. But the celebrations and rituals of New Orleans are as much about history as hedonism. Every dance here is as much an expression of community spirit as it is of joy.

Unceasing Song

New Orleans is the hometown of jazz, but neither the city nor the genre she birthed are musical museum pieces. Jazz is the root of American popular music, the daddy of rock, brother of the blues and not too distant ancestor of hip-hop – in other words, all the styles of music that have been the defining beat of global pop for decades. And every variety of music we mentioned, plus a few you may never have heard of, is practiced and played here on every corner, in any bar every night of the week. Live music here isn't an event. It's as crucial to the city soundscape as the streetcar bells.

Candid Culture

There aren't many places in the USA that wear their history as openly on their sleeves as New Orleans. This city's very facade is an architectural study par excellence. And while Boston and Charleston can boast beautiful buildings, there's a lived-in, cozy feeling to New Orleans that's easily accessible. As a result of this visible history there's a constant, often painful dialogue with the past, stretching back hundreds of years, a history that for all its controversy has produced a street culture that can be observed and grasped in a very visceral way.



Why I Love New Orleans

By Adam Karlin, Author

In New Orleans, it's all about beauty and experiencing the divine through mortal senses. There's joy, from great food to the best concert of your life, and serenity, in the shade between live oaks, or watching fireflies on Bayou St John. Whichever way of being I choose to be for the day, New Orleans indulges me. Basically, I like traveling with soft eyes, eyes that see as a child, with wonder. This town gives me soft eyes the moment I step out the door.

For more about our authors, see p256.