

TheTravelBite.com's First-Timer's Guide To New Orleans



Where To Stay

For my first time in New Orleans, I wanted to be walking distance to all the action, but not so "in the middle of it all" that lively Bourbon Street would keep me up all night. Located on Camp Street street in a quieter part of town, but still only a 5 minute walk to the French Quarter is International House Hotel. You know how I love boutique hotels! The rooms here were groovy and modern, with Aveda Bath Amenities, speedy Wi-Fi, and fresh coffee, fruit, and granola bars available downstairs in the morning to give you a healthy start to your day. There's also a cozy little bar that's the perfect place to sip a night cap and wind down for the evening.

Where: 221 Camp St, New Orleans, LA

Web: ihotel.com

Where To Eat - The Classics

This is the toughest decision you'll make in New Orleans -- where to eat! There are so many great restaurants and never enough time. If it is your first visit to New Orleans, here's a short list of some classics you absolutely can't miss.

Cafe du Monde

This legendary cafe has been open since 1862 and is a must for first-timers, though there are a few other places in town where you can also order delicious beignets. What's a beignet? It's a square, French bread doughnut that's deep fried and covered in powdered sugar. A few things to note about Cafe du Monde: bring cash and get there early. I walked down to Cafe du Monde from the International House Hotel around 7:30 a.m. and it was perfect timing. I grabbed a seat (*it's first come, first serve*), put in my order, and by the time my cafe au lait and beignets arrived a line was already starting to form. They're popular! After breakfast, take a walk to the back of the cafe and peek into the window to see the beignets being made.

Where: 800 Decatur St, New Orleans, LA

Web: cafedumonde.com

Tips: Bring cash as they're cash-only. Go early and seat yourself! Try both chicory coffee and a cafe au lait.

Arnaud's

Located right on the corner of Bienville and Bourbon is a classic Creole restaurant that was opened by a wine salesman named Arnaud in 1918. It's the perfect place to immerse yourself in the food, music, and architecture that made New Orleans

famous. During dinner, a jazz band playing classic jazz music serenaded me, and my server even added some tunes with a harmonica he wore on his wrist. There's no experience like Arnaud's in this world. As far as food goes, one thing you must try is their Soufflé Potatoes. They're like delicious puffed pillows and it's impossible not to eat the whole plate. I also highly recommend their alligator sausage and any of their fish fillets dressed up Creole style. Also, before you leave, head upstairs and check out their kitsch Mardi Gras museum.

Where: 813 Bienville Ave, New Orleans, LA

Web: Arnaudsrestaurant.com

Tips: Call ahead to make a reservation.

Brennan's

This classic Creole restaurant opened in 1946 and is famous for their legendary dessert, Banana's Foster, cooked table-side. So, when visiting the birthplace of Banana's Foster, I think it's completely acceptable to order dessert for breakfast. At least, that's what I did! They're well known for their brunch, boozy Bloody Mary's, and eggs Benedict too. In fact, their morning cocktail list is quite fun. They call them, "Eye Openers." But you could also visit for lunch or dinner. Wine Enthusiast just named Brennan's one of America's 100 Best Wine Restaurants and their seafood menu looks amazing.

Where: 813 Bienville Ave, New Orleans, LA 70112

Web: arnaudsrestaurant.com

Tip: Call ahead to make a reservation. And definitely order the Banana's Foster.

What To Eat

Since there is so much to eat, the best way to get a little taste of it all is to take a food tour with Dr. Gumbo. He has a great Food History Tour where you'll learn about all the different cuisines and nationalities that influenced the food scene in New Orleans, you'll also learn the difference between Creole and Cajun, and you'll get to check off a bunch of great eats from your food bucket list. Definitely arrive hungry as Dr. Gumbo will take you to seven locations, each with a hearty bite to try. Want to know what you should have on your New Orleans food bucket list? Here's a short list.

- Pralines
- Chicory Coffee
- Po' Boys
- Beignets
- Gumbo
- Muffuletta
- Étouffée
- Boudin
- Banana's Foster

Web: doctorgumbo.com

Tips: Wear comfortable shoes and bring a bottle of water.

What To See

So after all the food, of course there are a few things you need to add to your list of places to see in New Orleans. Sprinkling these sites into your itinerary will also be great for logging some miles on your walking shoes after indulging in such deliciously decadent cuisine as described above. There's so much fun history in this city and it's fun to walk around the French Quarter to look at the architecture. But I also encourage you to venture out just a little to see the Garden District which includes celebrity homes (any Sandra Bullock fans?), cemetery tours, and even a food museum.

Carla's Cemetery Tour

No trip to New Orleans is complete without a cemetery tour! And guess what, it is just a myth that they're all above ground because the city is below sea level. Learn about this and more from the most knowledgeable (and funny!) guide I met, Carla Bouillon. Her cemetery tour is a bargain too at only \$5! I was so impressed that I stuck around and went on her Garden District tour too.

Where: Lafayette Cemetery, 1400 block of Washington Ave, New Orleans

Web: phantomsfactsandfolklore.com/tours.html

Jazz At Irin Mayfield Jazz Playhouse

If you're looking for a classic jazz lounge with great cocktails and mesmerizing music, this is the place. There's no cover charge, but there is sometimes a wait. It's worth it.

Where: The Royal Sonesta, 300 Bourbon St, New Orleans, LA

Web: sonesta.com/royalneworleans

Southern Food & Beverage Museum

This is the first museum I've seen of it's kind, dedicated to preserving the history of southern food and culture. You'll find everything here from antique appliances, vintage labels, and even an absinthe bar display. Definitely take the time to walk through the museum and read the information provided to learn about the different ethnicities, farmers, and inventions that shaped southern cuisine.

Where: 1504 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd, New Orleans

Web: natfab.org