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## **FUN THINGS TO DO IN NEW ORLEANS— THINGS THAT ARE FREE OR CHEAP!**

By  
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NOTE: Although this list was recently updated, it's best to call ahead and check days and hours of operation, admission fees, and current exhibits in case some things may have changed.

### **FRENCH QUARTER: SITES . . .**

**St. Louis Cathedral:** (525-9585, [saintlouiscathedral.org](http://saintlouiscathedral.org)) The oldest continuously active cathedral in the United States. On Jackson Square in the French Quarter. Open Monday – Saturday 9:00 to 4:00; Sunday noon – 4:00. Free self-guided tours. When docents are available, they may provide free tours also. **FREE!**

**Jackson Square**, in front of the St. Louis Cathedral, was built in 1718 as a military parade ground. Artists hang their paintings on the square's fences and entertainment is provided by innumerable musicians, mimes, tarot card readers, jugglers, and magicians who perform day and night on the pedestrian mall surrounding the square. **FREE!**

**Cabildo** and **Presbytere:** (751 Chartres Street, 568-5958, [www.crt.state.la.us](http://www.crt.state.la.us)). These two buildings are both National Historic Landmarks. They flank **St. Louis Cathedral**, on **Jackson Square**, and are part of the Louisiana

State Museum. The **Presbytere's** featured exhibits a "*Mardi Gras: It's Carnival Time in Louisiana.*" And "*Living with Hurricanes: KATRINA & beyond.*" The **Cabildo** is a National Historic Landmark constructed 1795-99. It was the seat of Spanish municipal government and the site of the Louisiana Purchase Transfer. Its exhibits cover "Two Hundred Years of Louisiana History," including a collection of Mardi Gras jewels. Open Tuesday – Sunday from 10:00 to 4:30. Admission Fee.

**Old U.S. Mint:** (400 Esplanade Avenue, 568-6993, [www.crt.state.la.us](http://www.crt.state.la.us)). Another National Historic Landmark, the Old U.S. Mint holds the distinct title of being the only mint to produce American and Confederate coinage. The Old U.S. Mint is currently the location of the Louisiana Historical Center, The New Orleans Jazz Club Collections of the Louisiana State Museum, and the new performing arts center. Here is a link to the Music at the Mint page for more information <http://musicatthemint.org/> Open Tuesday – Sunday from 10:00 to 4:30. Admission Fee.

**Tours of historic homes in the French Quarter:**

**Herman-Grimma House** (820 St. Louis St., 525-5661; [www.hgghh.org](http://www.hgghh.org) ) and **Gallier House** (1132 Royal St., 525-5661; [www.hgghh.org](http://www.hgghh.org)): Tours with emphasis on colonial N.O. culture and human adaptation to environment. Herman-Grimma House tours: Mon, Tues, Thurs, & Fri: Hourly tours 10:00 – 2:00; Wed tours by appointment; Sat: hourly tours 12:00 – 3:00. Gallier House tours: Mon, Thurs, & Fri: Hourly tours 10:00 – 2:00; Tues & Wed tours by appointment; Sat: hourly tours 12:00 – 3:00. Admission fee: \$12 per house.

**Madame John's Legacy** (632 Dumaine Street, 568-6968) is a National Historic Landmark built in 1789. One of the oldest homes in the Mississippi River valley, it is one of few remaining examples of early Louisiana Creole design. It also contains an art gallery featuring "Goin' Cross My Mind: Contemporary Self-Taught Artists of Louisiana." Madame John's Legacy is part of the Louisiana State Museum. Open Tuesday – Sunday 10:00 to 4:30. **FREE!**

**Faulkner House Books** (624 Pirate's Alley. 524-2940) where William Faulkner lived while writing his first novel. A national literary landmark. Now a bookstore for fine literature and rare editions.

**French Quarter Streets:** The most famous is **Bourbon Street:** Ignore your better judgment and talk a walk down Bourdon Street to observe its many bars, restaurants, music clubs and novelty shops. Noisy, raucous, bawdy, crowded at night. Children should visit before sundown. The police provide ample protection, but stay alert. The street is closed to make a pedestrian mall at night. **Royal Street** and **Chartres Street** are quieter and less crowded; they feature shops, antique stores, art galleries, and restaurants. **FREE!**

**New Orleans Jazz National Historic Park** (916 N. Peters Street, 589-4841, [www.nps.gov/jazz](http://www.nps.gov/jazz)). Very new national park. Live performances, lectures on jazz related topics, video documentaries, photo exhibits, bookstore, Ranger guided

and self-guided tours of historic jazz sites in the French Quarter. For a schedule of events go to: <http://www.nps.gov/jazz/planyourvisit/events.htm>. Open Tuesday-Saturday 9:00 to 5:00. **FREE!**

**Jean Lafitte National Park:** A national historic park and preserve with several units, some in New Orleans, others in Cajun country. **FREE!**

**French Quarter Unit** (419 Decatur Street, 589-2636 ext. 1, close to the statue of Bienville) has a "tour du jour"—daily, free walking tours led by National Park Service rangers, including the old cemeteries. Call to sign up for tours. Every day at 9:30 a.m., rangers lead riverfront history walks to the Mississippi River, just over the levee from the visitor center, to share the story of how the city began and grew. 25 free tickets per tour are given out beginning at 9:00 a.m. Walks last about an hour. First-come, first-served; each person wanting a ticket must pick up their own ticket. . Open daily 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. **FREE! No walk Friday, May 17, or Saturday, May 18; center closed.**

For a printable self-guided walking tour of the French Quarter go to: [http://www.neworleanscvb.com/includes/cms/pages/preview.cfm?page\\_key=D22BDA41-90BC-C16B-5BFD9A3C792FB19A](http://www.neworleanscvb.com/includes/cms/pages/preview.cfm?page_key=D22BDA41-90BC-C16B-5BFD9A3C792FB19A)

**Barataria Unit**, across the river, is about a 25-minute ride. (689-3690 ext. 10) Open daily 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Nice visitor center with exhibit and short film about the Cajuns; elevated boardwalk over marsh/swamp area; alligator sightings. Rangers guide both walking tours and moonlight canoe tours. **FREE!** Or for a fee, canoe rentals nearby.

**Flea Market:** At the French Market, near Decatur & Esplanade, on weekends. Neat souvenirs and nick-nacks. The **French Market** has fresh fruit and vegetables on sale daily.

**Gazebo Café** (1016 Decatur St., 525-8899) Provides outdoor seating with a garden atmosphere and specialty cocktails, seafood, salads, Cajun and Creole favorites, live entertainment featuring Jazz.

**Market Café** (1000 Decatur St., 527-5000) Dine indoors or outdoors on traditional New Orleans' cuisine and po-boys to live jazz. Serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Weekend breakfast buffet.

**Central Grocery** (923 Decatur St., 523-1620): A throwback to the French Quarter as Italian neighborhood, early 20th century. Still a working grocery; also take out. A muffaletta (sandwich with ham, salami, mozzarella cheese and green olives) from Central is an essential N.O. experience. Take out and eat on the levee for cheap fun.

**Cafe du Monde:** The coffee and beignet emporium on Jackson Square. Open every day, 24 hours. Very cheap.

**Woldenberg Riverfront Park** is a linear park and sculpture garden that overlooks the Mississippi River and stretches from Canal Street to Esplanade Avenue. Nice breeze! There is a wooden promenade section in the French Quarter behind Café du Monde called the **Moonwalk**. There is also a Holocaust Memorial sculpture and a large kinetic sculpture by local artist John Scott. **FREE!**

**Mississippi River Ferry Boat:** Take the **Algiers Ferry** (foot of Canal St. next to Aquarium) for a ride across the Mississippi River. **FREE!**

**Riverfront and Canal Streetcar Lines:** New, bright red, air conditioned streetcars run along the French Quarter and on to the Aquarium and the **Riverwalk** shopping complex. The streetcar system continues on Canal Street to join the St. Charles Avenue streetcar. The Canal Street line runs to **City Park** and the **New Orleans Museum of Art**. Streetcar fare is \$1.25.

**Audubon Nature Institute:** (565-3033, [www.auduboninstitute.org](http://www.auduboninstitute.org)) The Audubon Nature Institute is a family of ten museums and parks dedicated to nature.

**Audubon Zoo:** (6500 Magazine St., 581-4629) Located in historic Uptown New Orleans Audubon Zoo offers an exotic mix of animals from around the globe, engaging educational programs, hands-on animal encounters and lush gardens. Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 10:00 – 5:00. Admission: \$17.50 adults, \$12.00 children.

**Aquarium of the Americas:** (1 Canal Street, 581-4629) Located on the Mississippi River adjacent to the French Quarter, the Aquarium of the Americas immerses you in an underwater world with a Caribbean reef walk-through tunnel and a 400,000 gallon Gulf of Mexico Exhibit. Also has an IMAX theater. Aquarium hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 10:00 – 5:00. Admission: \$22.50 adults, \$16.00 children. IMAX theater hours (shows start every hour): Tuesday – Sunday, 10:00 – 5:00. Admission: \$10.50 adults, \$8.00 children. Admission to both aquarium and IMAX theater is \$29 adults, \$23 children.

**Butterfly Garden and Insectarium:** (423 Canal St., 524-2847) Located in the U.S. Custom House on Canal Street, you can explore North America's largest museum devoted to insects and their relatives, plus an Asian garden with thousands of butterflies. Voted "A top museum for you and your kids" by CNN.com, 2009. Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 10:00 – 5:00. Admission: \$16.50 adults, \$12.00 children.

### **Boat Tours:**

**Creole Queen Paddlewheeler** (587-1719, #1 Poydras at Spanish Plaza, RiverWalk) has a daily afternoon Chalmette Battlefield Cruise. It provides a view of the French Quarter and the Port of New Orleans from the river. Passengers disembark at the site of the 1815 Battle of New Orleans, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve. It is a 2 ½ hour cruise boarding at 1:30 daily; \$25 adults, \$13 children. The Creole Queen Paddlewheeler also has a three-hour dinner jazz cruise, boarding nightly at 7:00; \$40 without dinner, \$69 with dinner.

**Steamboat Natchez** (569-1401; ticket office located behind Jax Brewery in the French Quarter. Hours of operation are 9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.) Two daytime harbor jazz cruises, boarding at 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Cruise only-\$27.50 adults, \$12.25 children; Cruise and lunch-\$38.50 adults, \$20.25 children. One dinner jazz cruise boarding at 6:00 p.m. Cruise only-\$43 adults, \$21.50 children; cruise and dinner-\$72.50 adults, \$34 children

### **FRENCH QUARTER: . . . AND SOUNDS**

**Preservation Hall** (726 St. Peter, 522-284): Home for traditional N.O. jazz. Impressively elderly musicians rock the house. Next door to **Pat O'Brien's**. Shows begin around 8:00. Not fancy - few seats, lots of sweat (no air conditioning), but you sit up close to the musicians. Lots of fun. Open every night 8:00 to 11:00 p.m.. Lines form around 7:00. First come, first served for \$15 general admission. These tickets are available exclusively at the door on the night of the performance. The only advanced seating available is with the purchase of a BIG SHOT SPOTS, which are limited to eight seats per set at \$30 per ticket.

**Palm Court Jazz Cafe** (1204 Decatur St., 525-0200): A newer site for traditional jazz. Music in restaurant setting. Also has a record store. Generally the same group of musicians who play Preservation Hall. Air conditioned. Most seats are at restaurant tables; limited seating at bar. Open Wednesday – Sunday 7:00 to 11:00. Admission \$5. Reservations recommended dinner.

**Pat O'Brien's** (718 St. Peter St., 525-4823): Frequented mostly by tourists, but still a fun place. Huge outdoor courtyard and patio bar, main bar and piano indoors. Home of the Hurricane, a very potent rum drink. Next door to **Preservation Hall**. Mon-Thurs: open noon – 2:00 a.m.; Fri- Sun: open 10:00 a.m.-4:00 a.m. No cover for admission.

**Margaritaville Cafe** (1104 Decatur St., 592-2565): Both a music bar and restaurant, owned by Jimmy Buffett. Food is typical Gulf Coast. Local musicians perform here, R&B, roots music, etc. Music starts at 3:00 every day and goes until

10:00 p.m. during the week, until 11:00 p.m. on weekends; two to three bands every night. No cover charge for music – **FREE!**

**House of Blues** (225 Decatur St., 529-2583): A very expensive renovation of an old building, including an impressive collection of Southern rural and primitive art. Includes a bar, music hall, restaurant, and outdoor patio. The food is local and good. The music is mostly local "roots" stuff, R & B (rhythm 'n' blues), gospel, zydeco, Cajun, funk. Cover charge for music hall ranges from \$10 to \$25, depending on the artist. No cover charge for the patio or restaurant.

**Fritzel's European Jazz Pub** (733 Bourbon Street, 586-4800) is situated in a historic 1831 building in the heart of the French Quarter. It has live traditional jazz music and is popular with European visitors.

**Davenport Lounge** (located in the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, 921 Canal St., 5241331) During the day, the lounge offers a refined setting for Afternoon Tea, while at night, guests can order a classic cocktail and nibble on delicacies from the Lounge's revamped menu. Live entertainment by Jeremy Davenport is offered on Thursdays 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Fridays & Saturdays from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. No cover charge — **FREE!**

**Irving Mayfield's Jazz Playhouse** (located in the Royal Sonesta Hotel, 300 Bourbon St., 586-0300) A jazz club that showcases New Orleans' Jazz talent and serves cocktails and appetizers in a luxurious venue on the lobby level of the Royal Sonesta Hotel New Orleans. Shows begin at 8:00 p.m. No cover charge for music – **FREE –Except on Wednesdays, when Irving Mayfield play-\$15 cover charge.**

## **WAREHOUSE DISTRICT**

The Warehouse District is downtown, next to Central Business District, close to the Convention Center. The name derives from old warehouses recently renovated and turned into condos, apartments, restaurants, and art galleries. Center for art galleries, restaurants, hotels, bars.

**Contemporary Arts Center** (900 Camp St., 528-3805, [www.cacno.org](http://www.cacno.org)) Modern art museum and performing arts center in the Warehouse District. Lovely building, art exhibits, theater for live music and drama. Next to the D-Day Museum, one block off Lee Circle. Open Wednesday –Monday 11:00 to 5:00. \$5 General Admission, \$3 for Students & Seniors.

**Louisiana Children's Museum** (420 Julia St., 523-1357): Mainly for kids, of course, but a fun place for all ages; has a museum gift shop for the little ones on your gift list. Open 9:30 to 4:30 Monday – Sat, noon to 4:30 Sunday. Admission Fee: \$8 per person.

**The National WW II Museum (formerly the D-Day Museum)** (945 Magazine Street, Main entrance is on Andrew Higgins Drive, 527-6012, [www.ddaymuseum.org](http://www.ddaymuseum.org)): Commemorates the U.S. experience in World War II, with emphasis on the day (June 6, 1944) that allied forces landed in Normandy, France. Also includes exhibits on the war in the Pacific. A must-see for history aficionados. Museum exhibits and the Museum Store are open seven days a week, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm. Museum only \$22 adults, \$19 seniors, and students \$13.

**Ogden Museum of Southern Art** (539-9600, 925 Camp Street, across the street from the Contemporary Arts Center) The largest collection of Southern art in the world. Affiliated with the University of New Orleans and the Smithsonian. Collections, exhibits, and educational programs. Live music performances Thursdays from 6:00 to 8:00. Includes museum store and Center for Southern Craft and Design. Open Wednesday - Monday 10:00 to 5:00. Admission Fee.

**Art Galleries:** Several nice art galleries on Julia Street in the heart of the Warehouse area, between the 400-800 blocks of Julia Street. There is also an art gallery in the lobby of the **Renaissance Arts Hotel**, 700 Tchoupitoulas Street (613-2330). **FREE!**

**Michaul's Live Cajun Music Restaurant** (840 St. Charles Ave, 522-5517) or **Mulate's Original Cajun Restaurant** (201 Julia St., 522-1492): Both are restaurants with live Cajun music, and free Cajun dancing lessons beginning around 6:00. Mulate's is across the street from the Convention Center; Michaul's is close to Lee Circle.

**Crescent City Farmers Market** (corner of Magazine St. and Girod St.): Open air market on Saturday mornings from 8:00-12:00. Fresh vegetables and fruits, breads, homemade jams, etc. Also an outlet for sales by urban community gardeners. Great entertainment by local musicians and cooking demonstrations.

**Music Festival in the Downtown Development District:** Free music festival at Lafayette Square (500 block of Camp Street, across from the federal courthouse) every Wednesday from 5:00 – 7:00. **FREE!**

### **ESPLANADE AVENUE / FAUBOURG MARIGNY**

The back end of the French Quarter is Esplanade Avenue, the grand avenue of the wealthy Creoles. Many beautiful mansions. Here also begins the Faubourg Marigny, an interesting neighborhood that fancies itself more bohemian and hipper than the French Quarter.

**Frenchmen Street Entertainment District:** Begins at the corner of Esplanade and Frenchmen St. A happening place with lots of live music bars and several restaurants, including:

**Food:** Good traditional Creole soul food at the **Praline Connection** (542 Frenchmen St., 943-3934); more modern N.O. food at **Marigny Brasserie & Bar** (640 Frenchmen St., 945-4472). Also **Café Rose Nicaud** (632 Frenchmen St.), which serves breakfast every day until noon and until 2 PM on Friday, Saturday and Sundays and a delightful selection of sandwiches, salads and pastries. **Snug Harbor Jazz Bistro** (626 Frenchmen St., 949-0696) has food and music.

**Music:** Modern jazz and dining can be found at the **Snug Harbor Jazz Bistro** (626 Frenchmen St., 949-0696), N.O.'s finest jazz club. Ellis Marsalis (father of Wynton & Branford) is the patron saint and performs often. A younger crowd frequents **Café Negril** (606 Frenchmen St., 944-4744), a Caribbean restaurant with lots of live local music.

**Bicycle Michael's** (622 Frenchmen St., 945-9505): Bikes for rent.

### **CITY PARK AREA**

**City Park** (482-4888, [www.neworleanscitypark.com](http://www.neworleanscitypark.com)) bordered by City Park Avenue and Bayou St. John and running all the way to Lake Pontchartrain. One of the largest urban parks in the U.S., its 1,300 acres include the largest number of mature live oak trees in the world. Has a Botanical Garden, many art deco benches, fountains, and bridges from the Depression-era Works Progress Administration (WPA). The park has jogging tracks, canoe/pedal boat rentals, tennis courts, playgrounds, golf course, softball diamonds, batting cages, fishing, amusement park with kiddie rides, including a restored carousel and miniature train that tours the front of the park.

**New Orleans Museum of Art** (658-4100, [www.noma.org](http://www.noma.org)): In City Park. Open Tues. - Sun. New Orleans' oldest fine arts institution hosts an impressive permanent collection of almost 40,000 objects. The collection, noted for its extraordinary strengths in French and American art, photography, glass, and African and Japanese works, continues to expand and grow, making NOMA one of the top art museums in the south. Accessible by the Canal Streetcar. Open 11:00 to 6:00 on Tuesday through Thursday; open 11:00 to 9:00 on Friday; Open 11:00 to 5:00 on Saturday and Sunday. Admission Fee.

**Sculpture Garden** in City Park, next to the Museum of Art, has a world class collection of 50 modern and contemporary sculptures in a beautiful, 5 acre natural setting. Accessible by the Canal Street Streetcar. Open seven days a week, 10:00 to 6:00 on Monday through Friday and 9:00 to 6:00 on Saturday and Sunday. **FREE!**



**Celebration in the Oaks** (Nov. - Jan. only): Holiday celebration in City Park. Oak trees are decorated with Christmas lights - lovely. Drive through, or park and walk.

**Lake Pontchartrain:** City Park ends close to the lakefront. Lakeshore Drive hugs the lake and is a nice place for a scenic drive. One lane is closed for bikers, joggers, and skaters.

**Bayou St. John:** A green section of Mid-City, roughly between Bayou St. John and Esplanade Avenue. The nearby Continental Can Company (now a residential development) is home to several small restaurants, coffee shops, health food stores, etc.

**Mid-City Lanes Rock 'N Bowl** (3000 S. Carrollton, 861-1700): A unique combination bowling alley and live music hall with large dance floor. Serious dancers, great bands featuring the music of south Louisiana - Cajun, zydeco, blues, R&B. Thursday is always zydeco night, lots of fun.

## **UPTOWN**

Uptown includes several neighborhoods—the historic Garden District, Irish Channel, Audubon Park and Zoo, the University area around Tulane and Loyola, and Riverbend. A good way to access uptown is via the St. Charles Avenue streetcar. Take the streetcar from downtown and ride along St. Charles Avenue for viewing old mansions and universities and for entrance to Audubon Park.

**St. Charles Avenue Streetcar Line:** (RTA, 248-3900, [www.regionaltransit.org](http://www.regionaltransit.org)) The oldest U.S. line in continuous operation, still using the same cars designed in 1923 (which unfortunately are not air conditioned.) It runs from Carrollton Avenue along the entire length of St. Charles Avenue and connects at Canal Street with both the riverfront streetcar line and the line to City Park and the New Orleans Museum of Art. Fare is \$1.25. **Parts of this line are being repaired.**

**Garden District:** Historic district between St. Charles Avenue and Magazine Street, from Jackson to Washington Avenues. A concentrated area of fabulous antebellum homes, built by the Americans, considered “nouveau riche” by the somewhat snobby Creoles. No buses allowed, so the best option is to walk. Take the **St. Charles Avenue streetcar** and get off at First or Second Street, then just walk around. Or, get off at Washington Avenue and walk through the Lafayette Cemetery.

**Lafayette Cemetery** (1400 block of Washington Avenue), built in 1833 with lavish aboveground vaults and tombs. Featured in the film “Interview with the Vampire” based on the Ann rice novel. Open weekdays 8:00 to 2:30 and Saturday 8:00 to noon. The cemetery is **FREE!**

Or, you can take a tour with Save Our Cemeteries (525-3377) on Monday through Saturday at 10:30 a.m. There is a tour fee.

**Audubon Park:** Large, lush green space between St. Charles Avenue and Magazine Street, and continuing across Magazine Street to the river. It contains a 1.7 mile outdoor track for running, walking or biking, a newly renovated golf course, riding stable, and lagoons. The main entrance is on St. Charles Avenue across from Tulane University. It is on the St. Charles Avenue streetcar line. Behind the zoo, and across the railroad tracks, one can walk along Riverview Drive, a long stretch of land on the levee overlooking the Mississippi River. This area is referred to as The Fly, and is popular for picnics and pick-up sports. **FREE!**

**Magazine Street:** Street of dreams. Most eclectic street in a very eclectic city. It runs a long way, downtown to uptown. Best accessed by car, but there is a Magazine Street bus. Anything you want can be found here. Many antique shops, cheaper than the Quarter. Junk shops, punk shops, bookstores, coffee bars, live music, restaurants, art galleries. Impossible to describe.

**Riverbend:** The area where the streetcar turns ninety degrees off of St. Charles Avenue onto Carrollton. Many riders exit here to shop the small stores and eat. **Camelia Grill** (626 Carrollton Ave., 866-9573) is a favorite eatery, famous for breakfast. Also **La Madeleine French Bakery & Café** (861-8662) for soups, salads, sandwiches, and of course—pastries!

### UPTOWN LIVE MUSIC

**Tipitina's:** (501 Napoleon Ave., 895-8477) The classic home of New Orleans music. Still funky after all these years. A late night place; dancing, live music, mostly local and regional - R&B, blues, zydeco, swamp pop. Cajun music Sundays at 5:00. Some folks aren't too crazy about the neighborhood and prefer to take cabs instead of parking.

Other Uptown sources of live local music include the **Maple Leaf Club** (8316 Oak St., 866-9359), small but with a nice patio and lovely pressed tin roof. Music starts at 11:00 p.m. every night.

A Footnote about Food:

You may be wondering why there are so few restaurant suggestions. This is a task of such Herculean proportions that it's best not even to try. You will find many suggestions in other materials you've received, describing fine food options from the grandest cuisine in expensive restaurants to the more modest but equally good fare (in its own way) found in many neighborhood places. Bonne chance, et bon appetit!