

New Orleans History & Attractions

As you travel through New Orleans you are experiencing a city of unique culture and traditions. A French Canadian named Sieur de Bienville started building New Orleans in 1718. Since he knew there were problems with flooding due to the low elevation, he had levees built to protect his new town. The force of the Mississippi River against these levees has caused New Orleans to rebuild again and again, right up to the present day.

Bienville wanted New Orleans to be as close to the water as possible to make it easy for people from all areas to come and trade coffee, sugar cane, and grains in the city. Due to its vibrant trade, New Orleans became a powerhouse of diverse cultures, as French, Germans, former African slaves, Acadians, and Haitian immigrants brought their unique traditions to the city. The various groups that flocked to New Orleans gave rise to new types of music, food, and languages. Jazz and soul characterizes the music; Cajun and Creole Cuisines incorporate slow cooking and spice; and the language is a unique mix of many dialects.

New Orleans has been struck by severe hurricanes since its early days. After the Civil War the Army Corps of Engineers took on the assignment of building greater levees that would protect the city from constant flooding. When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in August 2005, large portions of the city were flooded. Because of the deep love and passion that residents of New Orleans have for their city, many of them decided to stick out Hurricane Katrina, but this decision proved to be detrimental for most, and fatal for some. If you take a hurricane tour of the low-lying areas of New Orleans you can see the evidence of Hurricane Katrina's wrath; the homes that still stand are the symbol of great tragedy that the residents endured. Look closely at these homes and notice the water lines towards the roofs of the houses – an amazing sign of how high the water rose. But there has been tremendous progress made in restoring the city. Not even something as powerful as Hurricane Katrina could stomp out the spirit of New Orleans.

Even with on-going repairs to the city, New Orleans shows its character through its architecture, music, foods and people. To catch the flavor of New Orleans, take a ride around town in an old fashioned street car. The Canal Street line runs between the French Quarter and downtown New Orleans. The St. Charles streetcar line takes you from downtown to the Garden District with views of many Victorian mansions built in the 1800's...and the Riverfront line

travels by the Riverwalk Shopping Center, Harrah's Casino, Jackson Square, and the French Quarter.

Jackson Square is at the heart of the French Quarter and is situated right outside the St. Louis Cathedral and the Cabildo, which was the seat of the old Spanish government. Jackson Square is a beautiful place to take pictures and shop at the small kiosks that sell anything from magic tricks to paintings. In the French Quarter, you can buy such things as t-shirts, fine artwork, and exquisite foods. While strolling through the French Quarter listen to the street performers, and enjoy the Spanish architecture.

New Orleans has a wide variety of foods and you can get a taste for the delicious cuisine at some their world class restaurants. These restaurants serve food from all over the world, but if you are looking for more of a local flavor, the French Quarter is where you want to be. Here they serve Creole foods that boast delicious herbs and spices. Other foods include New Orleans' own poor-boy sandwich, a take on a

submarine sandwich, or a muffaletta - an Italian sandwich with olive dressing. If you are in the mood for something sweet, be sure to order a round of café au lait and beignets, a sugary deep-fried donut.

To escape the bustling city, take a leisurely bus ride outside the city limits to the swamp lands which make southern Louisiana famous. In these swamps you can see local vegetation and wildlife, including an alligator if you're lucky! Whatever you choose to experience in this vibrant city, you'll find that the spirit of New Orleans is something undeniable and unique.

Source(s):

Hoffman, Eva. "A Guidebook to Amtrak's Sunset Limited." Flashing Yellow Guidebooks, Golden, CO, 2009.

www.amtrak.com

www.neworleans.com

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