

SUN TRAVEL ONLINE

New on our websites:

Stick with your resolutions at these destinations

Good intentions. They come around every year and are practically synonymous with champagne toasts on Dec. 31. Wavering already? Not to worry with our list of 10 destinations to help keep those resolutions on track. See canoe.ca/resolutionvacations.

Slip, slide away with the family

Make the most of winter by indulging in a little outdoor family fun! These 10 sledding, tubing and tobogganing destinations in Canada are perfect for an afternoon of chilly fun. canoe.ca/sledding

It's winter — get out there!

Celebrate our chilliest season with your family at our top 10 family friendly winter festivals across Canada. See canoe.ca/winterfestivals.

SUN POLL

Online Travel Poll

How do you usually plan your vacation?

- Browse travel catalogues.
- Search for info and recommendations online.
- Talk to friends and family.
- Talk to a travel agent.
- Other.

VOTE NOW AT
canoe.ca/travel

Last week's results

Did you travel as much as you wanted to in 2013?

- 32% Yes, I did.
- 65% No, I wish I travelled more.
- 3% I don't like to travel.



NEW ORLEANS:

From Nawlins to NOLA, few other cities have as many nicknames as New Orleans. If you're planning to let the good times roll in 2014, there is no better place to do that than the Crescent City. Travel writer Laura Martone — a Big Easy native and author of several Moon Handbooks, including *Moon New Orleans* — answers our questions about navigating Louisiana's most storied city.

Q. What's the biggest mistake visitors to New Orleans commonly make?

A: Sticking to Bourbon St. While it's understandable that first-time visitors would want to experience the festive madness of the city's most famous thoroughfare, New Orleans has a lot more to offer than just the strip clubs, loud tourist traps, and overpriced restaurants along much of this stretch. In fact, some of the city's best nightlife options lie beyond the French Quarter, such as the live music venues along Frenchmen St. in the Faubourg Marigny.

Q. What's your best budget tip for New Orleans?

A: Visiting during the summer months can save you a lot of money. True, it's often too hot for many locals (like me) to stick around, but the good news is you can usually find awesome hotel deals as well as many restaurant specials. No matter the season, though, you'll find plenty of budget-friendly options. Cafe Maspero, for instance, offers enormous portions of seafood for some of the cheapest prices in the French Quarter. For shopping bargains, head to Magazine St., where you'll find vintage shops like Funky Monkey. Also, the French Quarter's French Market offers affordable fresh produce, jewelry, apparel, luggage, books, souvenirs and other items with flexible price tags.

Q. What's the best photo op location and the best time of day to take the photo?

A: New Orleans is a well-photographed town — and with good reason. Historic streetcars, centuries-old oak trees, nostalgic riverboats, wrought-iron balconies, lush courtyards, and vibrant cuisine are just some of the photogenic subjects you'll encounter in the Crescent

City. Not surprisingly, the majestic St. Louis Cathedral in Jackson Square is the most-photographed landmark in town. Its likeness has appeared in countless books, movies, and TV shows, but as cliché as it might sound, I still consider it one of the best photo opportunity locations, particularly near sunrise or sunset — though it can also look amazing on a stormy day.

Another popular place to take photographs is the cathedral's rear wall at night, where you'll spy the giant — somewhat haunting — shadow of the open-armed Jesus statue that sits in the fenced garden. The rooftop pool area at Hotel Monteleone offers a terrific aerial view of the French Quarter.

Q. Where's the best place to

nurse a hangover?

A: New Orleans might relish its party town image, but if you imbibe all night a hangover is an unfortunate probability. My favourite spot in the Quarter is Cafe Du Monde, perhaps the most famous place to sample beignets and cafe au lait. Because it's open 24 hours daily, I recommend stopping there before going to sleep. If that doesn't work, consider

some of my favourite post-hangover breakfast joints, such as the Old Coffeepot Restaurant for seafood omelettes, Yo Mama's Bar and Grill for enormous burgers, and, if you're Uptown, Camellia Grill for diner-style vittles.

Q. Where's the best place to soak up true New Orleans culture?

A: Although the French Quarter

NEED TO KNOW

- For more on Moon's New Orleans, see moon.com/2012/12/discovering-authentic-new-orleans-with-laura-martone and *Moon New Orleans*: moon.com/books/moon-new-orleans.
- For additional tourism info, see LouisianaTravel.com/Canada and neworleanscvb.com.



Crescent City Connection Bridge and the New Orleans skyline are reflected in the Mississippi River.

A REAL SLICE

Venture beyond Bourbon St. for an authentic taste of Louisiana's most storied city

oozes history, I often find it too overrun with tourists to feel a true sense of New Orleans' culture. Of course, that's not completely true — it's possible, after all, to get a taste of the city's storied past at places like Antoine's Restaurant, the Hermann-Grima House, the Mississippi riverfront, and the numerous courtyards that are hidden from public view. Still, some of the best spots to get a sense of the real New Orleans

are found beyond the Quarter, such as the jazz and blues clubs along Frenchmen St. I'm also fond of neighbourhood eateries like Mandina's Restaurant, where you might see local politicians.

Q: What's the best park?

A: Beyond the city's three major parks — Woldenberg Riverfront Park alongside the French Quarter, City Park in Mid-City, and Audubon Park

in the Uptown neighbourhood — there are plenty of smaller parks and plazas worth experiencing. My favourite is the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden, a 2-hectare space beside the New Orleans Museum of Art in the southern part of City Park. Delightfully, it's free to visit, and when I have the time, I love to stroll amid the ancient live oak trees, verdant foliage, peaceful lagoons, pedestrian bridges, and more than 60 impressive statues from sculptors like Henry Moore, Pierre Auguste Renoir and Claes Oldenburg.

Q: Where are the best spots for art lovers?

A: Art lovers will find plenty of places to spend their time, particularly the art galleries along Royal and Magazine streets, the CBD's Arts District, which boasts such gems as the New Orleans School of GlassWorks & Printmaking Studio, the Contemporary Arts Center, and The Ogden Museum of Southern Art. In addition, you'll spy a wide assortment of artwork (sometimes for sale) in restaurants and coffeehouses, including three of my favourite French Quarter hangouts: Louisiana Pizza Kitchen, Angeli on Decatur and Mona Lisa Restaurant.

Q: Where can visitors explore voodoo culture?

A: There's no shortage of voodoo shops in the Big Easy. Places like Voodoo Authentica and Marie Laveau's House of Voodoo offer a wide array of curious paraphernalia, from voodoo dolls to gris-gris bags to books. Still, one of the best places to explore this often misunderstood religion and culture is the New Orleans Historic Voodoo Museum, which, in addition to several artifact-filled exhibits, also offers an excellent guided voodoo tour that often includes a visit to Congo Square and Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, a stroll through St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 (site of Marie Laveau's tomb), and an encounter with a contemporary voodoo priestess at the Voodoo Spiritual Temple.

Q: How can visitors walk in the footsteps of New Orleans's literati?

A: This historic port town has lured its share of visual artists and writers over the years. The city's rich literary past includes such luminaries as William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, Mark Twain, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Francis Parkinson Keyes, John Kennedy Toole, and Anne Rice. For an in-depth

look at the influence of such literati, consider taking a reservation-only literary tour through Historic New Orleans Tours. If you'd rather create your own itinerary, be sure to stop by Faulkner House Books, where Faulkner himself once lived and wrote; visit the Brevard-Clapp House, Anne Rice's former Uptown home, or John Kennedy Toole's gravesite in Greenwood Cemetery; and stay at the classic Hotel Monteleone, which has hosted the likes of Eudora Welty, Ernest Hemingway, Truman Capote, and many other literati.

Q: Where are the best places to pick up some local foods?

A: Your most distinctive New Orleans souvenirs will most probably be items you can consume. Regional products, such as Abita beer, French Market coffee, Tabasco sauce, pralines, and Zapp's Potato Chips, can be found at groceries and other emporiums, such as the historic French Market, which houses Southern Candymakers and several food stalls. Alongside Jackson Square, you'll find delectables at Creole Delicacies and the Tabasco Country Store, and there's no shortage of praline shops throughout the French Quarter.

Q: Where should a first-time visitor stay?

A: New Orleans offers a wide array of lodging options, from intimate B&Bs in the Garden District and Faubourg Marigny; fancy, historic hotels in the French Quarter; and large chain hotels in the CBD. So, where you stay will depend on why you've come — and whether or not you have access to a car. Luckily, New Orleans is a small city, so staying in the French Quarter, Faubourg Marigny, or CBD, along St. Charles Ave. in Uptown, and even in parts of Mid-City will guarantee easy access to major attractions, stellar restaurants and events.

Q: What is the best place for a weekend getaway?

A: Although visitors to New Orleans can make day trips to Baton Rouge, Cajun Country, and communities north of Lake Pontchartrain, my favourite excursion has always been the Great River Rd., where you can explore several incredible plantations, such as Oak Alley and Nottoway, plus the quaint town of St. Francisville. My favourite locale along this route is Laura: A Creole Plantation, which has a fascinating history. Its slave cabins were the place where the *Br'er Rabbit* folktales were recorded in the 1870s.



REUTERS FILES



REUTERS FILES



SARAH BERGERON-OUELLET/QMI AGENCY FILES

IMAGES OF NEW ORLEANS: A man rides a bicycle past the Canal St. streetcar line. Dominican Sisters enjoy ice cream near the St. Louis Cathedral in the French Quarter. There is not shortage of atmosphere along Bourbon St., but visitors looking for an authentic taste of New Orleans culture should stray beyond the tourist areas.



DANCING IN THE STREETS

New Orleans' signature event is Mardi Gras — an over-the-top city-wide pre-lenten Carnival celebration of elaborate parades, balls and parties that starts on Feb. 15 this year and builds until the Fat Tuesday (March 4) blowout. On that day, thousands of revellers parade through the French Quarter.

MUST-DO

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