



While in the Big Easy.....

New Orleans, aka the Big Easy, is one of my favorite cities to visit since it has something for everyone. I love taking a step back in time on this cultural getaway that takes place in the “Jazz Capitol of the World”. We hope you will expand your trip beyond our annual convention to allow time to truly experience everything this city has to offer. Here are just a few suggestions (I will have a book on things to do in New Orleans at the registration desk for anyone that would like to take a look).

Our convention hotel, the Astor Crown Plaza, will extend the group rate three days before and/or three days after our convention, based upon availability. They also offer an onsite concierge to help answer questions or book tours. I took the opportunity to coordinate a haunted walking tour through them.

Aside from using the hotel concierge, there is a tour operator at the end of the block on Canal & Royal streets. A few popular tours they can even customize are: Swamp tours, Ghost tours, Plantation tours, a general walking tour, and more. Feel free to ask for Peter (#701) at 504-528-7767.

Some points of interest if you would like to go about on your own:

- Our hotel is conveniently located on the corner of Canal and Bourbon streets. This is a wonderful location to take a walk down the famous Bourbon Street. You will see balconies adjoined with beautiful iron lace railings, a blend of buildings with French

and Spanish influence, and relaxing courtyards with fire and water fountains, such as Pat O'Brien's.

- Jackson Square on the outskirts of the famous French Quarter offers St. Louis Cathedral (shown above), Pirates Alley, the Cabildo, the Presbytere, and the Pontalba. Make sure you take an opportunity to stop in Café Du Monde for their famous beignets and chicory coffee. The French Marketplace is just around the corner.
- The New Orleans Cooking School gives you an opportunity to roll your sleeves up and shows you how to cook creole style. Your chef will indulge you in everything that Louisiana cuisine offers. Classes and demonstrations are only five blocks away from the Astor at 524 St. Louis Street, phone: 504-525-COOK.
- Mardi Gras World provides a history of this tradition and provides a tour of a working warehouse where artisans prepare for the celebration in the spring each year. Come celebrate the festive side of New Orleans at 1380 Port of New Orleans Place. Fee is \$19.95 – free shuttle is available. Phone: 504-361-7821.
- The National WWII Museum, formerly known as the D-Day Museum, is a military history museum that tells the story of the American experience in the war that changed the world – why it was fought, how it was won, and what it means today. It is open from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm, costs \$27 each and is located at 945 Magazine Street – phone: 504-528-1944.
- If you are feeling lucky, try your hand at the Harrah's Casino seven blocks from our hotel on the corner of Canal and Lafayette streets. Take a shot at more than 1,500 slots and over 130 table games including blackjack, roulette, baccarat, craps, and poker.
- If you would like to mix it up, the Hop On, Hop Off Bus Tour is \$39 per day or \$49 for 3 days (phone: 504-207-6200) or take a street car at \$3 per day or 10 one-way passes are \$12.50. Either will take you down St. Charles Avenue to allow you time to soak in the ambiance of the Old South as you pass through the Garden District which is the 65 block silk stocking district that was built in the 1850s.
- And don't forget to catch some jazz! Music is everywhere in the city. Enjoy street corner musicians, traditional jazz through opera as it drifts off private balconies, or from old time local musicians performing at Preservation Hall. Music and its heritage is hard to miss in this rich musical city.

If you have any questions in advance of the convention please feel free to contact me at ablake@hbpa.org or come see me anytime during the convention.