

The Big Easy and All that Jazz

After Hurricane Katrina forced a change of venue to Las Vegas in 2006, the AAO is finally returning to New Orleans April 25-29. While parts of the city have been slow to recover from the disastrous flooding, the main draws for tourists—music, cuisine, and architecture—are thriving. With its unique blend of European, Caribbean, and Southern cultures and styles, New Orleans remains a destination city for travelers from around the United States and abroad.

Transportation and Weather

The renovated Ernest N. Morial Convention Center opened a new grand entrance and Great Hall in 2013. Its location in the Central Business District is convenient to both the French Quarter to the north and the Garden District to the south. Museums, galleries, and other attractions, as well as several of the convention hotels, are within walking distance, as is the Riverfront Streetcar line that travels along the Mississippi into the French Quarter.

Louis Armstrong International Airport is about 15 miles from the city center. A shuttle with service to many hotels is \$20 one-way; taxi fares are about \$35 from the airport, although fares will be a little higher than usual around town because of the annual Jazz Festival. Amtrak passengers arrive at Union Terminal, centrally located a few minutes by taxi from the Convention Center and downtown hotels.

April and May are usually mild to warm, but an umbrella would be advisable for anyone planning to be out and about this walkable city. One of the convenient Visitor Information Centers is a good first stop; the Basin Street Station Visitor Information & Cultural Center is housed in the restored Southern Railway Station, located at the edges of the French Quarter and the historic neighborhoods of Tremé and Iberville. Other French Quarter visitor centers are at 529 St. Ann St., 2020 St. Charles Ave., and the Jean Lafitte Center at 419 Decatur St.

Mobile apps devoted to the Crescent City's attractions, nightlife, and dining spots can be downloaded from www.neworleansonline.com/tools (some free, some for a fee).



Bourbon Street in the French Quarter at night.
Photo © Jorg Hackemann, Dreamstime.com.

Tours

Get to know popular attractions in the city center by using the hop-on-hop-off double-decker **City Sightseeing** buses, which make the rounds of a dozen attractions and convenient locations every 30 minutes (daily and weekly passes are available). Fares for the Regional Transit Authority's buses and streetcars are \$1.25 per trip; one- or three-day passes can also be purchased (www.norta.com). The four- and six-person mule-drawn carriages rolling through the French Quarter from 8 a.m. to midnight can be engaged at **Carriage Tours** in Jackson Square. **Gray Line Tours** offers excursions within the city and beyond by bus or boat. **Capital City Trolleys** provides bus, airboat, and "ghost" tours, along with a visit to the Villalobos Rescue Center for pit bulls, featured on Animal Planet. **Tours by Isabelle** are small-group, personalized trips through the city, antebellum plantations, and Cajun Country

Boldface names in this article are listed in the Directory on pp. 126-128 with their telephone numbers and street addresses. The online version of this article (freely accessible) includes live website links; see the JCO Online Archive at www.jco-online.com.

swamps; Spanish- and French-speaking guides can be arranged in advance. **Jean Lafitte Swamp & Airboat Tours** traverse a historical park and nature preserve, a 30-minute drive south of the city (children 8 and older are allowed on the airboats).

On the waterfront, **Steamboat Natchez**, a true steam-powered vessel launched in 1975, features antique fittings from historic vessels and a 32-note steam calliope; daily brunch and dinner jazz cruises depart from the Toulouse Street Wharf in the French Quarter. The **Paddlewheeler Creole Queen**, built in 1983 and propelled by an authentic (but diesel-electric-powered) paddlewheel, launches every afternoon from the Port of New Orleans for narrated cruises to the site of the 1815 Battle of New Orleans (Chalmette Battlefield) and in the evening transforms to a jazz cruise vessel, offering a Creole buffet and cocktails.

Performances

Although music is always in the air, the **New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival**, held at the Fair Grounds Race Course north of the French Quarter, is an annual highlight, drawing huge crowds to multiple stages. This year's festival will run during the weekends of April 25-27 and May 1-4; headliners include Eric Clapton, Bruce Springsteen, Christina Aguilera, and Santana, backed by dozens of other musicians and bands encompassing "every style associated with the city and the state". More than 100 Louisiana-based vendors will sell restaurant-quality local delicacies. Visitors should look into tickets and transportation options as early as possible.

During and between Jazz Fest weekends, live-music choices abound. The renowned **Preservation Hall** offers three nightly performances for all ages, and the **Louisiana Music Factory**, a French Quarter music store, features live, in-store performances. The Pfister Sisters bring their traditional jazz vocal harmonies to **Music at the Mint**—that's the Old U.S. Mint, part of the **Jazz National Historical Park**—on April 25. Progressive rock band Moe presents two performances at the **Civic Theater** on April 25 and 26; radio station WWOZ stages its annual benefit



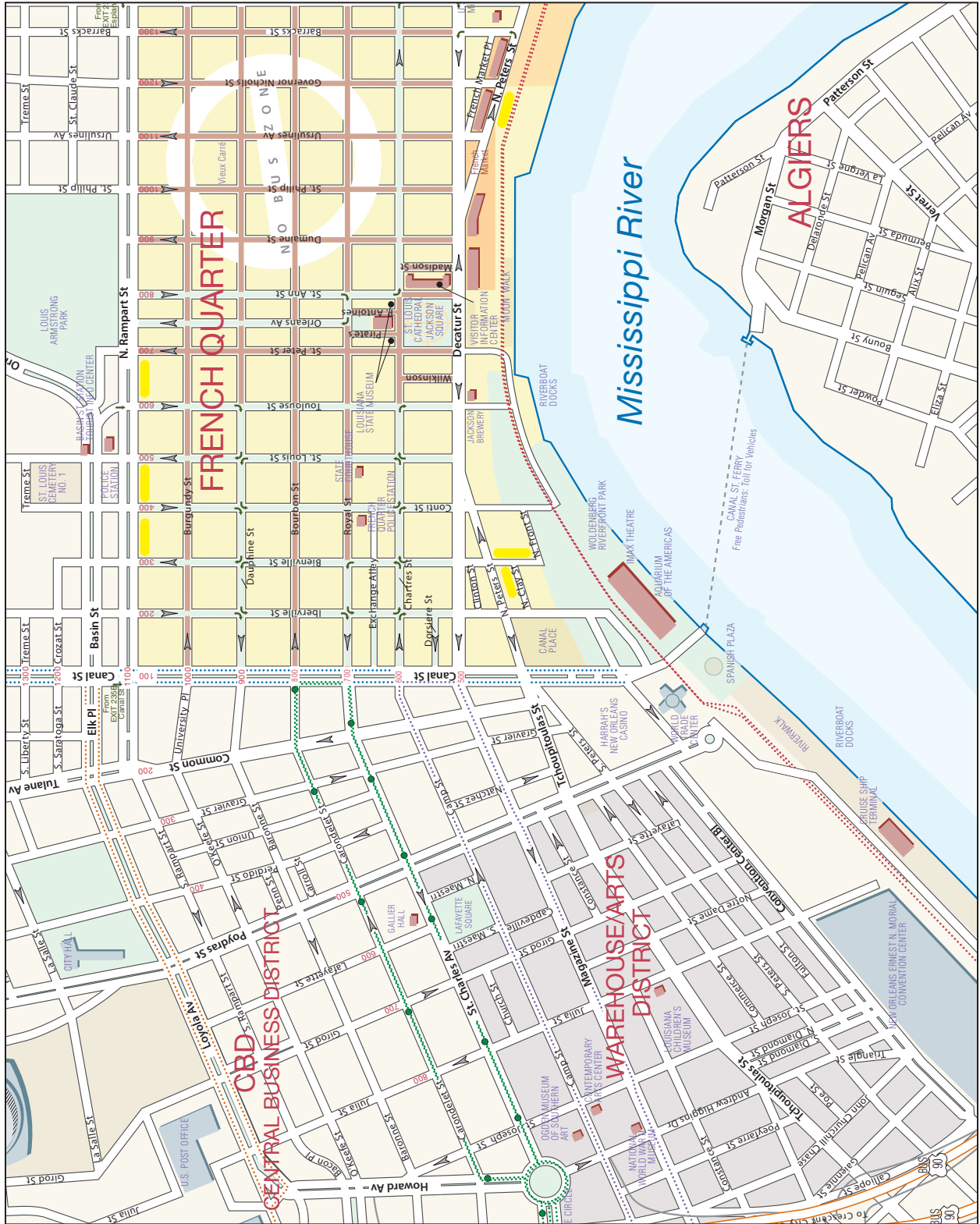
The Riverfront Streetcar line runs along the Mississippi into the French Quarter. Photo © Lawrence Weslowski Jr., Dreamstime.com.

concert, Piano Night 2014, on April 28 at the **House of Blues**, which also hosts George Clinton & Parliament Funkadelic on April 27. **Wednesday at the Square**, a free 12-week concert series at Lafayette Square, goes on rain or shine; a special all-star line-up for April 30 includes Eric McFadden, Jerry Joseph, Norwood Fisher, and Eric Bolivar. **Mardi Gras World** hosts the day-long "Fiya Fest 2014 Crawfish Boil and Benefit for the Roots of Music" on May 2. To keep track of the multitude of live-music venues during the 10 days of Jazz Fest, check the "Nearly World Famous Jazz Fest Grids", updated daily (www.jazzfestgrids.com).

Attractions

Mardi Gras will be long past by April, but a few venues celebrate year-round. The Mardi Gras World facility in the port district lets visitors watch the real artists at work on costumes and floats for next year's parades while learning about festival history and culture. Free shuttle service is available from the central city and French Quarter. Tremé, the oldest African-American neighborhood in the United States, features the **Backstreet Cultural Museum**, displaying memorabilia and the city's

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The popular Algiers Ferry traverses the Mississippi River from the Canal Street dock to the historic Algiers neighborhood. Photo © Lawrence Weslowski Jr., Dreamstime.com.

largest collection of elaborate and brilliantly colored Mardi Gras Indian costumes. A more high-tech historical presentation of Mardi Gras traditions can be seen in the French Quarter's **Presbytère**, with an interactive permanent exhibition called "Mardi Gras: It's Carnival Time in Louisiana". **Harrah's New Orleans** offers a "full dose of the Big Easy" in one spot: table games, poker, and slot machines surrounded by French Quarter décor, Mardi Gras floats, and strolling brass bands.

The full tableau of New Orleans history—from the Battle of New Orleans to the world of voodoo and a haunted dungeon—is presented by 154 life-size wax figures at the **Musée Conti Wax Museum**. The **National World War II Museum**, the official U.S. museum for that conflict, showcases artifacts, vehicles, oral histories, and theatrical presentations in multiple large pavilions. Historic Tremé is the setting for the **New Orleans African American Museum**; the **New Orleans Pharmacy Museum** is housed in the French Quarter apothecary of the country's first licensed pharmacist.

The **New Orleans Museum of Art** and beautifully landscaped Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden are found in City Park. Along with its extensive collection of American, French, African, and Japanese works, the museum is showing "Photography and the American Civil War" through May 4. Closer to the center of town, the **Ogden Museum of Southern Art** focuses on the art, history, and culture of the American South with works by Walter Anderson, Christopher

Clark, Herbert Singleton, and William Woodward. **Newcomb Art Gallery**, on the campus of Tulane University, is exhibiting "Early Modern Faces: European Portraits 1480-1780"—a collection of paintings on loan from Houston's Sarah Campbell Blaffer Collection.

For a more offbeat museum outing, the French Quarter's **Historic Voodoo Museum** features voodoo dolls and other artifacts, psychic readings by a voodoo priestess, and gris-gris bags (voodoo talismans, sold as "curios" only). The museum offers a Voodoo Cemetery walking tour including Congo Square and the historic **St. Louis Cemetery No. 1**, led by guides who can answer questions about jazz funerals, zombies, and voodoo's influence on the local Catholic Church.

The Audubon Nature Institute operates 10 museums and parks in the area, including the **Audubon Aquarium of the Americas**, **Audubon Butterfly Garden and Insectarium** (check the website for a link to the mesmerizing "ant cam"), **Audubon Park**, **Audubon Zoo**, and **Entergy IMAX Theatre**, which will be showing "Penguins 3D" and "Madagascar, Island of Lemurs 3D" during the convention.

St. Louis Cathedral, a much-photographed icon on Jackson Square, is open for self-guided tours when masses or other functions are not going on. Nearby, the extensive Louisiana State Museum collection includes seven historic and iconic French Quarter buildings: **1850 House**, refurbished to depict middle-class family life in the antebellum era; the Greek Revival **Arsenal**, built in 1839; **The Cabildo**, focusing on early Louisiana history; the **Old U.S. Mint**, now incorporating the Louisiana Historical Center, the New Orleans Jazz Club Collection, and a performing-arts center; the Presbytère; **Creole House** and **Jackson House**; and **Madame John's Legacy**, one of the few major buildings that escaped the great fire of 1795.

For close-up appreciation of the region's unique architecture, visit the 18th-century Creole colonial **Pitot House**, now the headquarters for the Louisiana Landmark Society. The lavish, Federal-style **Hermann-Grima House** was built in 1831, during the "Golden Age of New Orleans"; **Gallier House**, a Creole townhouse whose owner was

fascinated by engineering and architectural innovation, is also in the French Quarter, as is the **House of Broel Victorian Mansion**. **Longue Vue House and Gardens**, the former Metairie residence of art collectors Edith and Edgar Stern, features 20th-century artworks by Picasso, Gabo, Laurens, Hepworth, and Soto; each exterior wall of the house is in a different style, with its own garden.

Outside the city in Vacherie, visit **Oak Alley Plantation**, the “Grande Dame of the Great River Road”, one of the few remaining stately plantation homes in the region. Across the Mississippi from downtown New Orleans is the city’s second-oldest neighborhood, **Algiers Point**. Take the ferry at the foot of Canal Street (free for pedestrians) and walk through the business district and neighborhood streets to see a wide assortment of single-family homes in styles ranging from French Colonial Plantation to Creole Cottage to Eastlake Shotgun Double.

Dining

New Orleans is legendary for its Creole cuisine, as epitomized by **Clancy’s Restaurant** (Uptown), **Commander’s Palace** (Garden District), Emeril Lagasse’s **Delmonico** (Garden District), **K-Paul’s Louisiana Kitchen** (French Quarter), and **The Pelican Club** (French Quarter). Expect rather expensive menus in plush surroundings.

For trendier, more contemporary Cajun-style cooking, try **Bayona** (French Quarter), **Boucherie** (Carrollton), **Brigtsen’s Restaurant** (Riverbend), **Cochon Restaurant** (near the Convention Center), **Dick & Jenny’s** (Uptown), **Eleven 79** (Garden District), **Jacques-Imo’s** (Carrollton), **Pêche Seafood Grill** (near the Convention Center), or **Toups Meatery** (near City Park).

Other top restaurants serving more international French-American fare include **August** (near the Convention Center), **Coquette** (Garden District), **Gautreau’s** (Uptown), **GW Fins** (French



Beer and crawfish. Photo © Ekaterina Staats, Dreamstime.com.

Quarter), **Herbsaint** (Warehouse District), **Lilette** (Uptown), and **Stella!** (French Quarter). Those seeking ethnic dining adventures may want to head for **Cane & Table** (Cuban, French Quarter), **La Boca** (Argentine, Warehouse District), **Lilly’s Café** (Vietnamese, Garden District), **Maïs Arepas** (Colombian, Faubourg Lafayette), or **Pho Tau Bay Restaurant** (Vietnamese, Gretna). Or support at-risk youth by chowing down on soul food at the nonprofit **Café Reconcile** (Faubourg Lafayette).

Shopping and Galleries

The Warehouse District, adjoining the Convention Center area, houses the region’s thriving contemporary-arts movement. In April, **Soren Christensen Gallery** will spotlight the landscapes of Eric Abrecht, while **Octavia Art Gallery** offers an exhibition of Nall’s Southern-European fusion. May 3 is the date for the monthly openings in and around Julia Street, including **Callan Contemporary** (paintings and sculpture), **Jonathan Ferrara Gallery** (an exhibition of new paintings by Gina Phillips), and **Arthur Roger Gallery** (works by David Bates, Dale Chihuly, and Lin Emery). Three notable galleries on neighboring Magazine Street include **Sibley Gallery** (regional and national contemporary artists), **Guthrie Contemporary** (five photographers in an exhibit called “PhotoNOLA”), and **Kevin Gillentine Gallery** (works by the owner and other local artists). Between Audubon Park and the Lower Garden District, Magazine Street is a six-mile-long stretch of antique stores, art galleries, craft shops, boutiques, and restaurants.

French Quarter sites and activities are so diverse that many New Orleans visitors spend their entire trips in this neighborhood (www.french-quarter.com). Highlights for shoppers include the **Cigar Factory** (two locations; watch cigars being rolled at the Decatur Street shop), **Erzulie’s Authentic Voodoo** (handmade soaps, candles, and

psychic readings), **Hové Parfumeur** (fine fragrances for men and women), and **Kabuki Design Studio** (one-of-a-kind hats for wearing and collecting). The century-old, 25,000-square-foot **M.S. Rau Antiques** on Royal Street is a landmark for discerning collectors worldwide.

The **French Market** open-air mall, the oldest public market in the country, resembles a European bazaar with its art stalls, shops, eateries, flea markets, farmers' market, and, of course, music (take the Riverfront Streetcar from the Convention Center). Other major shopping centers include **Riverwalk Market Place** (with a grand reopening as The Outlet Collection scheduled for early spring) and the **Shops at Canal Place** (featuring Saks Fifth Avenue, Gucci, and local confectioner Blue Frog Chocolates).

Sports and Recreation

Golf fans can see Billy Horschel defend his Zurich Classic championship April 24-27 at **TPC**

Louisiana in Avondale, 15 miles west of the city center. The Pete Dye-designed course, part of the Audubon Golf Trail, reopens to the public April 29. Other worthy courses within a reasonable distance include **English Turn Golf and Country Club** and the century-old **Audubon Park Golf Course** in the city, **Stonebridge Golf Club** in nearby Gretna, and **Riverlands Golf & Country Club** in La Place.

For cyclists, **The American Bicycle Rental Company** offers a nighttime bike tour of the "Wicked French Quarter"; **Bike NOLA** and **Crescent City Bike Tours** rent out bikes in the French Quarter. To apply your pedaling skills on water, take out a four-seater pedal boat and explore the bayous and lagoons of Big Lake at **City Park**. Chartered fishing trips over the inland waters of the Louisiana Delta, about a half-hour's drive south of New Orleans, are offered by the well-regarded **Jean Lafitte Fishing Charters** and **Griffin Fishing Charters**; both will pick up and return guests who are staying in the city.

DIRECTORY

Tours

Tours	Address*	Phone**
Capital City Trolleys	710 St. Louis St.	(888) 433-5115
Carriage Tours	700 Decatur St.	943-8820
City Sightseeing	101 Burgundy St.	636-1029
Gray Line Tours	400 Toulouse St.	569-1401
Jean Lafitte Swamp & Airboat Tours	6601 Leo Kerner Lafitte Parkway, Marrero	689-4186
Paddlewheeler Creole Queen	365 Canal St.	529-4567
Steamboat Natchez	Decatur St.	586-8777
Tours by Isabelle	P.O. Box 740972	398-0365

Performances

Civic Theater	510 O'Keefe Ave.	272-0865
House of Blues	225 Decatur St.	310-4999
Louisiana Music Factory	421 Frenchmen St.	586-1094
Music at the Mint	400 Esplanade Ave.	568-2022
New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival	1751 Gentilly Blvd.	410-4100
Preservation Hall	726 St. Peter St.	522-2841
Wednesday at the Square	Lafayette Square	585-1500

*New Orleans unless otherwise noted.

**Area code 504 unless otherwise noted.

Attractions	Address*	Phone**
Algiers Point	1 Morgan St.	(877) 413-0052
The Arsenal	600 St. Peter St.	568-6968
Audubon Aquarium of the Americas	1 Canal St.	565-3033
Audubon Butterfly Garden and Insectarium	423 Canal St.	524-2847
Audubon Park and Zoo	6500 Magazine St.	581-4629
Backstreet Cultural Museum	1116 St. Claude Ave.	522-4806
The Cabildo	701 Chartres St.	568-6968
Creole House	616 Pirates Alley	568-6968
1850 House	523 St. Ann St.	568-6968
Entergy IMAX Theatre	1 Canal St.	565-3020
Gallier House	1132 Royal St.	525-5661
Harrah's New Orleans	228 Poydras St.	(800) 427-7247
Hermann-Grima House	820 St. Louis St.	525-5661
Historic Voodoo Museum and Tours	724 Dumaine St.	680-0128
House of Broel Victorian Mansion	2220 St. Charles Ave.	522-2220
Jackson House	616 Pirates Alley	568-6968
Jazz National Historical Park	916 N. Peters St.	589-4837
Longue Vue House and Gardens	7 Bamboo Road	488-5488
Madame John's Legacy	632 Dumaine St.	568-6968
Mardi Gras World	1380 Port of New Orleans Place	361-7821
Musée Conti Wax Museum	917 Rue Conti	525-2605
National World War II Museum	945 Magazine St.	528-1943
New Orleans African American Museum	1418 Governor Nicholls St.	566-1136
New Orleans Museum of Art	1 Collins C. Diboll Circle	658-4100
New Orleans Pharmacy Museum	514 Chartres St.	565-8027
Newcomb Art Gallery at Tulane	6823 St. Charles Ave.	865-5361
Oak Alley Plantation	3645 Highway 18, Vacherie	(225) 265-2151
Ogden Museum of Southern Art	925 Camp St.	539-9600
Old U.S. Mint	400 Esplanade Ave.	568-6993
Pitot House	1440 Moss St.	482-0312
Presbytère	751 Chartres St.	568-6968
St. Louis Cathedral	615 Pere Antoine Alley	525-9585
St. Louis Cemetery No. 1	Basin St. at St. Louis St.	482-5065
Dining		
August	301 Tchoupitoulas St.	299-9777
Bayona	430 Dauphine St.	525-4455
Boucherie	8115 Jeannette St.	862-5514
Brigtsen's Restaurant	723 Dante St.	861-7610
Café Reconcile	1631 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd.	568-1157
Cane & Table	1113 Decatur St.	581-1112
Clancy's Restaurant	6100 Annunciation St.	895-1111
Cochon Restaurant	930 Tchoupitoulas St.	588-2123
Commander's Palace	1403 Washington Ave.	899-8221
Coquette	2800 Magazine St.	265-0421
Delmonico	1300 St. Charles Ave.	525-4937
Dick & Jenny's	4501 Tchoupitoulas St.	894-9880
Eleven 79	1179 Annunciation St.	299-1179

DIRECTORY (cont.)

Dining (cont.)

	Address*	Phone**
Jacques-Imo's	8324 Oak St.	861-0886
K-Paul's Louisiana Kitchen	416 Chartres St.	596-2530
Gautreau's	1728 Soniat St.	899-7397
GW Fins	808 Bienville St.	581-3467
Herbsaint	701 St. Charles Ave.	524-4114
La Boca	870 Tchoupitoulas St.	525-8205
Lilette	3637 Magazine St.	895-1636
Lilly's Café	1813 Magazine St.	599-9999
Maïs Arepas	1200 Carondelet St.	523-6247
Pêche Seafood Grill	800 Magazine St.	522-1744
The Pelican Club	312 Exchange Place	523-1504
Pho Tau Bay Restaurant	113 Westbank Expressway, Gretna	368-9846
Stella!	1032 Chartres St.	587-0091
Toups Meatery	845 N. Carrollton Ave.	252-4999

Shopping and Galleries

Arthur Roger Gallery	432 Julia St.	522-1999
Callan Contemporary	518 Julia St.	525-0518
Cigar Factory	415 Decatur St.; 206 Bourbon St.	568-1003
Erzulie's Authentic Voodoo	807 Royal St.	525-2055
French Market	2 French Market Place	522-2621
Guthrie Contemporary	3815 Magazine St.	897-2688
Hové Parfumeur	434 Chartres St.	525-7827
Jonathan Ferrara Gallery	400A Julia St.	522-5471
Kabuki Design Studio	1036 Royal St.	523-8004
Kevin Gillentine Gallery	3917 Magazine St.	891-0509
M.S. Rau Antiques	630 Royal St.	523-5660
Octavia Art Gallery	454 Julia St.	309-4249
Riverwalk Market Place	500 Port of New Orleans Place	522-1555
Shops at Canal Place	333 Canal St.	522-9200
Sibley Gallery	3427 Magazine St.	899-8182
Soren Christensen Gallery	400 Julia St.	569-9501

Golf and Recreation

The American Bicycle Rental Company	325 Burgundy St.	324-8257
Audubon Park Golf Course	6500 Magazine St.	212-5290
Bike NOLA	1209 Decatur St.	858-2273
City Park	1 Palm Drive	482-4888
Crescent City Bike Tours	626 N. Rampart St.	322-3455
English Turn Golf and Country Club	1 Clubhouse Drive	392-2200
Griffin Fishing Charters	2629 Privateer Blvd., Barataria	(800) 741-1340
Jean Lafitte Fishing Charters	4915 Jon Marie Drive, Barataria	452-1413
Riverlands Golf & Country Club	500 Fairway Drive, La Place	(985) 652-6316
Stonebridge Golf Club	1500 Stonebridge Drive, Gretna	394-1300
TPC Louisiana	11001 Lapalco Blvd., Avondale	436-8721

*New Orleans unless otherwise noted.

**Area code 504 unless otherwise noted.