

The Young Traveler Guide to New Orleans

New Orleans, the city of soul, the city of food, and a city where you're likely to not remember much, is one of my favorite places in the US. Follow my quick guide below on must-sees while you're here!

1. **Eat a Beignet:** There's only one real place to eat a beignet, and it's at the famous Cafe Du Monde. If you're not familiar with the beignet, it's a close cousin to the doughnut. It's basically a fried pillow of dough dipped in some white sugar and served piping hot. Cafe Du Monde has been at its main location on Decatur street for over 150 years and it's a unique experience. You get into line to sit down, then the minute your butt hits the seat a menu is handed to you with the expectation that orders be placed with haste. Don't worry, once you get your order in relax and soak in the scene. Be sure to order a coffee with hickory from this joint, and enjoy every savory bite of your beignets here because there's nowhere else in the world you can get one like it! (I know, i've tried looking)



Its soft, chewy, sweet, but not overly so, and with coffee – you don't get many moments more perfect than this

- 2. Get a Alligator Airboat Tour:** It's no secret that New Orleans is below sea level. It has been devastated by more than one hurricane, but the tenacity of its residents allows it to get back onto its feet every time. There is one positive note to its geographic location – it's that the local area has been endowed with swampland that is not only uniquely beautiful, but full of life. Airboats are the way to get around, and the ride out to swampland is usually only 45 minutes.

If you've never been on an airboat, it's an awesome time! Cruising (more like sliding around) on water only inches deep at 45+ mph, the beauty of the land rushing by you, you get a sense of just how much countryside there is around the bustling city of New Orleans. In the summer months you'll definitely see alligators, but even if you don't, it's worth going out on the water

just for the sheer joy and beauty of it.



Riding around the swamps on an airboat is one of the most incredible things you can do when visiting New Orleans!

3. **Get Involved in the Cuisine:** This city is known for food, and there's a lot of it to eat here so make sure you came hungry, or brought your stretchy pants! There's a multitude of places to eat here, and many are staples that have been around for a while, check out The Ruby Slipper Cafe for some of the most gluttonous and delicious southern breakfasts you'll ever have, grab a famous Muffuletta sandwich (A version of an Italian sub) for lunch, and then have dinner at Commander's Palace where everything is served with class and elegance. The mixture of Southern and French influences in New Orleans means everything has butter in it, or is friend (or is a combo of both), so although your health might suffer a bit, your stomach will always be happy and full.



Breakfast at the Ruby Slipper is nothing short of spectacular. If you like benedicts, they have plenty of choices!

4. **Catch a Jazz Show in the French Quarter:** So you have heard of the French Quarter, it's rowdy, it's the center of the city, and it's a lot of fun. However, if you're no longer looking to just get black out drunk and would like to combine your imbibing with some class, check out the numerous Jazz Clubs that line this part of town. I prefer Cafe Beignet because of its open air atmosphere. They do serve beignets, which are great, but of course still don't compare to Cafe Du Monde's.



Cafe Beignet. Check it out. Have a drink, have a beignet, and enjoy the jazz.

REVIEW: Le Meridien New Orleans – The Newest Luxury Hotel in the City

So i've been to New Orleans a few times, and have had the pleasure of staying at quite a few hotels there. This one, is so far, one of my favorite. Let me tell you why. It's NEW!

This used to be the W New Orleans (not to be confused with the W New Orleans in the French Quarter). The last time I visited this property it was back in 2014 and it was definitely showing its age. The renovation on the property and rebranding of it as a Le Meridien happened within the last

year in 2016, and when I say renovation, I don't mean a fresh coat of paint and some lipstick. SPG pulled out all the stops on this one, gutting the building and changing the entire layout of the common spaces.

The result, as you can see below... Is stunning!



This is the front desk. It's nice.

You are greeted by stunning textures, surfaces, the combination of marble, antique wood, and mirrored surfaces is something that is a nice juxtaposition from the city of New Orleans, which itself has lots of character, but is older and antique in character.

The lobby is a great place to have a coffee, a drink (which you can walk around with in NOLA – just like in Vegas), and relax.



Yup. That's an awesome lobby area too. Cozy, visually interesting, and thoroughly relaxing

The rooms themselves have gone through some pretty significant renovations. They have beautiful bathrooms in particular, with minimalist countertops and low edge sinks – my personal favorite. The building itself is pretty tall and centralized, next to the Harrah's casino and only about 5 blocks away from Bourbon street.



The very sexy renovated bathrooms – if you can't tell i'm a big fan



This is one of the smaller suites, notice the views, the textured walls, and the bright lighting

To top it off, the service is top notch, it is definitely a hotel where you get a great value, and the gym up top really takes the cake, with 360 degree views (if you actually decide to workout while you're in NOLA).

PROS:

- Newly renovated, it's a great place to be! (2016)
- It's got a great lobby to hangout in, with indoor and outdoor spaces
- Prices are highly competitive

CONS:

- Some would say location, since it's not directly on Bourbon Street, but this can be a personal preference

SECRETS:

- The hotel has high capacity, so more likely than not you

can ask for a late check-in and then ask for a higher floor with a great view

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- Everyone knows that New Orleans is the city of food and soul, and I highly recommend having breakfast over at the Ruby Slipper Cafe
 - Of course there's the requisite Cafe Du Monde
 - And lastly, Commander's Palace – with old school group waiters/waitresses and good ol' southern fare
 - But, the one thing you NEVER want to miss, is a ride on an airboat to go into the swamps and see some Alligators. They're harder to spot in the winter time as the water gets cold, but if you choose a tour company that tends to take their airboats out on the side of the Gulf you're likely to see more of them. Airboat Adventures is one of those tour companies I highly recommend! (I've had bad luck with others)
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REVIEW: The Ritz-Carlton Dove Mountain



The Dove Mountain Ritz-Carlton is a pretty awesome place to visit. The resort is a large property set in the side of Dove Mountain with lots of cool nooks and crannies to explore. The

feel is that of a modern hunting lodge, with high ceilings, large rooms with expansive views, and a rustic quality and vibe.

The Ritz here spent a lot of time and energy developing local activities such as sunset hikes, a traditional Native-American ceremony on certain days, and even outdoor games and a tangerine orchard.



A hunting lodge you ask? Ritz-Carlton has their interpretation of it here at Dove Mountain

My personal favorite area of the hotel, though, is the pool.

There's multiple decks, amazing views of the landscape around the hotel, and even a waterslide – if you feel so inclined.



Check out that waterslide!

Everything about this Ritz is a bit more special, and it reminds me a lot of a Ritz-Carlton Reserve. The service is a slight notch above the other properties, and the build quality of the hotel itself is higher. If you love the desert, I highly recommend visiting this property for a nice weekend getaway!

PROS:

- It's one of the nicer Ritz-Carltons in the chain – similar in feel to a Reserve
- It has lots to offer on the grounds and a wilderness center where you can book hikes and enjoy some really awesome desert activities

CONS:

- It's quite a far drive from anything in the Tucson area

SECRETS:

- Check the events calendar or call before you book.

There's usually lots planned and it's a smart move to book your stay around special events to take advantage of them

- The sushi is also really good here, trust me on this

OTHER THINGS TO DO:

- Biosphere 2 is a really cool biosphere habitat that is basically one of two in the world (as the name suggests). If you're in the area you should definitely check it out!