

# **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 Island Hotel in Newport Beach – The Best spot for 4th of July Fireworks in Orange County**

So for those who haven't been to the Orange County coast of California, you may not be familiar with the swathe of land that covers approximately 60 miles from Northern tip to Southern tip. This swathe of land also happens to have an incredible variety of hotels from resorts such as the Rancho Valencia in the south, to the Island Hotel in Newport Beach

all the way on the North. My preference has always been for the resorts on the Southern end of Orange County (Including the Ritz-Carlton in Laguna, the Monarch Beach in Laguna, or the Montage also in Laguna).

However, sometimes you need to be in a particular place and don't feel like driving an hour just to get to somewhere you need to be. If it so happens that you need to be spending time in Huntington Beach or Newport Beach – then your best option, in my opinion, is the Island Hotel.

This property isn't particularly new, nor is it particularly flashy, but what it does have it does very well. The tone of the property is muted and beach-reminiscent. Pastel tones carry the property and make it feel light and airy and even though it is still a few miles from the Ocean one would think they were right on the beach when entering the lobby.



Check out those pastel  
beachy tones

The rooms themselves have great expansive views, as the building is exceptionally tall and although they're not as updated as I would personally prefer, they still have a well-built luxurious quality to them and the mattresses are comfortable, the entertainment systems are updated, and bathrooms are kept exquisitely clean.



The rooms aren't the most modern, but they're comfy and luxurious still

My favorite features at the hotel are the poolside fireplace – a great place to have a glass of wine and unwind for the night, and the rooftop lounge – replete with awesome views all the way to Los Angeles and of course towards the Ocean.



This is where you want to spend your time when you're here



Oh yea, spend some time up top as well. It's on the



## 12th floor

### **PROS:**

- This hotel has excellent service, and even though its not the newest property it has been very well maintained
- The fireplace and rooftop lounge really are excellent features that you don't find in many hotels in the area
- They have an incredible room service menu and it's 24/7

### **CONS:**

- The hotel could use a slight update, things are wearing well but it wouldn't hurt to refresh the colors or furniture to something more modern

### **SECRETS:**

- I highly recommend checking last minute rates at this hotel, they are often pretty cheap. Also, you can often get a good room upgrade once you get to the hotel, the suites are pretty great bargains and are very nice – a step up from the standard accommodations and worth the extra \$\$.

### **THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:**

- Check out Balboa Island – rent a Duffy and cruise the harbor, eat frozen dipped bananas at the original Banana Stand
- This is the best place to spend 4th of July, but book early, as the Island Hotel is the BEST place to watch fireworks down in Orange County (the height of the building really lends itself to this)