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NOUVEAU NEW ORLEANS

DISCOVER A DIFFERENT SIDE OF THE BIG EASY, WHERE NEW ADVENTURES AND TRIED-AND-TRUE FAVORITES AWAIT

BY MARY MURRAY



Despite its historic reputation, New Orleans is a city in constant evolution. Part of the thrill of such a destination is the promise of duality, where you can plant one foot in the past and another in the future. Dine at a modern Mexican restaurant then catch a show at a jazz joint that dates to the 1950s. Discover the city's cultural heritage via interactive displays at Vue Orleans before savoring a Sazerac at Peychaud's cocktail bar and embarking on a ghost tour. Or simply post up on a veranda and soak in the sounds of the city as you scroll through social media to decide where to grab lunch (but hurry, because Turkey and the Wolf's stoner-friendly sandwiches often sell out).

Such a veranda—and then some—can be found at Hotel Saint Vincent (saintvincentnola.com). MML Hospitality resurrected this circa-1861 building (which had its first life as an orphanage) and debuted the hotel in June 2021. From the red brick to the



COURTESY OF HOTEL SAINT VINCENT

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SCENES FROM HOTEL SAINT VINCENT, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: FRONT PORCH; CRES-CENT KING BEDROOM; PARADISE LOUNGE.



COMPÈRE LAPIN OFFERS CARIBBEAN-MEETS-CREOLE DISHES, INCLUDING CRUDOS AND TARTARES ACCENTED WITH TROPICAL FLAVORS.



DENNY CULBERT



wrought iron, many of the original exterior architectural flourishes remain. Inside, however, sophisticated Italian decadence commingles with mid-century furnishings and cool '70s elements such as vintage Murano glass chandeliers. There's a hint of hedonism across the 75 rooms and suites, all unique in their layouts but inclusive of retro-tiled bathrooms awash in a custom psychedelic wallpaper by Voutsas.

The Italian vibes continue at the on-site San Lorenzo restaurant, while the adjacent Elizabeth Street Café serves French-Vietnamese fare with a Creole tinge. Think: a fried shrimp banh mi with Cajun hot sauce, plus daily special macarons like orange Creamsicle and mint chocolate chip. You can also get your cocktail on—a beloved Big Easy pastime no matter the era—at the Paradise Lounge, Chapel Club, or poolside bar.

One of Hotel Saint Vincent's draws is its location within the Lower Garden District.

Not only is this neighborhood supremely walkable, but it's far enough from the more touristy corners to remain insulated from the intense crowds. However, should the French Quarter call, it is just a quick Uber or trolley ride away.

Highlights within the Garden District itself range from gallery hopping to ogling nineteenth-century mansions and side-hall homes. Along the way, pop in and out of local watering holes like The Bower and

Barrel Proof before a dinner reservation at Lengua Madre (lenguamadre-nola.com). This spot by chef Ana Castro has garnered an avalanche of accolades, including being named one of *Bon Appetit's* best new restaurants in America and landing on *The New York Times'* 2021 list of the country's 50 most delicious and vibrant restaurants. Herself a 2023 James Beard nominee for Best Chef: South, Castro crafts multicourse tasting menus that change seasonally, reflect her Mexican heritage, and celebrate Southern ingredients. The meal is a surprise—with the menu only presented at the end—but recent highlights have included a traditional quesadilla with crawfish *governador* and trout roe, and octopus with salsa *negra*, little gem lettuce, and a coffee-forward aioli.

To get the full scope of Southern cooking, head to the nearby Southern Food & Beverage Museum (southernfood.org). Belly up to the circa-1850s bar pulled from one of New Orleans' oldest restaurants, peruse the Galerie d'Absinthe, or learn about the city's rich culinary history, from red beans and rice to Popeyes and beyond. The museum also hosts cooking classes that provide a hands-on introduction to such staples as jambalaya and gumbo.

One woman who is becoming synonymous with New Orleans cuisine—in the same vein as Emeril Lagasse, Leah Chase, and Willie Mae Seaton—is Nina Compton. A *Top Chef* finalist and 2023 James Beard semifinalist for Outstanding Chef, Compton operates two NOLA restau-



ZACK SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY

THREE WAYS TO JAZZ IT UP

1. PRESERVATION HALL:

Order your tickets early to attend an intimate jazz show at this historic venue, where an unassuming facade gives way to a living room-style performance space. These concerts truly feel like casual jam sessions between friends—that is, if your friends were some of the South's foremost musicians. (preservationhall.com)

2. BLUE NILE:

Accent an evening out on Frenchmen Street with a late-night visit to Blue Nile. Catch New Orleans native and trumpeter extraordinaire Kermit Ruffins and the BBQ Swingers at this hot spot every Friday. (bluenilelive.com)

3. RIVER CRUISE:

For some jazz with a sweet breeze,

you cannot beat a river cruise. The New Orleans Steamboat Company hosts sailings along the Mississippi River, complete with views of the city, a jazz trio, and options for lunch, brunch, and dinner add-ons. (steamboatnatchez.com)



LEARN THE HAUNTED HISTORY OF MURIEL'S (BELOW) IN THE FRENCH QUARTER AND VISIT STUDIO BE (BELOW LEFT) IN THE CITY'S MARIGNY AND BYWATER AREA.



ic St. Louis Cathedral to hear the tale of Père Dagobert, followed by stories of the Ursuline Convent's casket girls, the gregarious ghoul who demands his own table at Muriel's restaurant, and the city's most notorious murderess, Madame Delphine LaLaurie.

The LaLaurie Mansion, like much of New Orleans, has grown beyond its physical constraints to occupy a distinct place in the imaginations of travelers. The mansion's insidious reputation has attracted tourists for generations, and the city's promise of debauchery continues to entice. But should you choose to explore beyond Bourbon Street, you'll find that New Orleans never plays anything the same way twice. (neworleans.com) <<

rants: Bywater American Bistro and Compère Lapin (comperelapin.com), which translates to "brother rabbit," a figure in Caribbean and Creole folktales. This reference alludes to Compton's playful marriage of the two cultures as seen in dishes such as hamachi tartare with jerk pineapple and fried okra, her signature curried goat served atop sweet potato gnocchi and garnished with cashews, and her addictive *scialatielli*, which eats like a Creole carbonara, dotted with crawfish and andouille.

Compère Lapin is part of the city's Ware-

house Arts District, which is also home to attractions including the National World War II Museum, the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, and Mardi Gras World, where you can check out the event's famous floats year-round. For a more off-the-beaten-path stop, walk to the other side of the French Quarter to visit Studio Be (studiobenola.com). The resident gallery for artist Brandan "BMike" Odums, Studio Be covers some 35,000 square feet and boasts floor-to-ceiling artworks that reflect the spirit of New Orleans and those who call it home.

Speaking of spirits, few American cities have as much ghost lore as New Orleans. If you have a penchant for spooky stuff and plan to explore the French Quarter, do so on a ghost tour. Given the destination's association with hauntings, vampire sightings, and everything voodoo, there's no shortage of companies offering these types of experiences both day and night. A standout is NOLA Historic Tours and its Haunted French Quarter Tour (tourneworleans.com). Start at the icon-



TRAVELING NEWLYWEDS