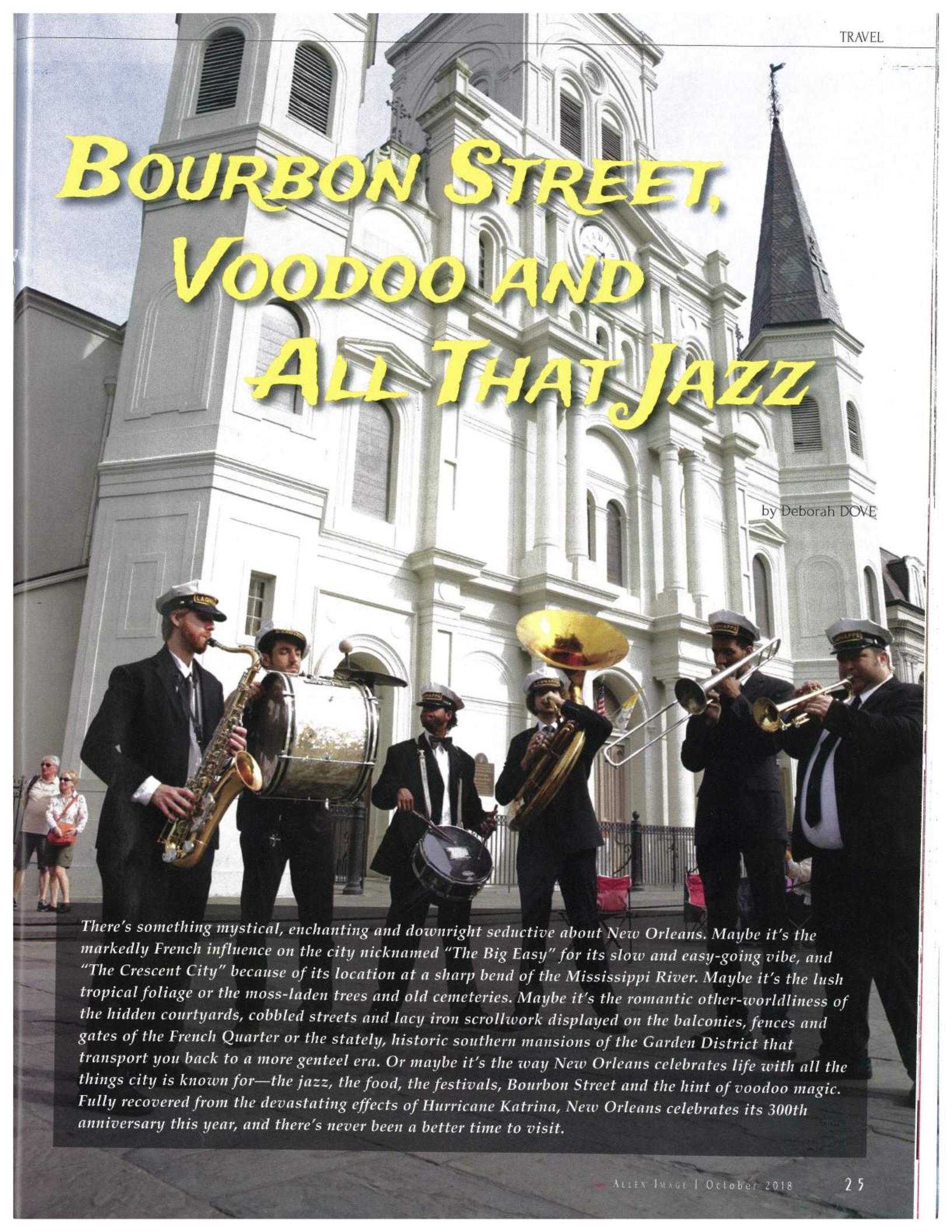


BOURBON STREET, VOODOO AND ALL THAT JAZZ

by Deborah DOVE

A photograph of a jazz band performing on a city street. The band consists of seven members: a saxophonist, a tuba player, a drummer, a trombonist, and three trumpet players. They are all dressed in dark suits and white shirts, with some wearing hats. They are playing their instruments. In the background is a large, ornate, light-colored stone building with many windows and a tall steeple, which is the St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans. The street is paved with cobblestones, and there are some people walking in the background.

There's something mystical, enchanting and downright seductive about New Orleans. Maybe it's the markedly French influence on the city nicknamed "The Big Easy" for its slow and easy-going vibe, and "The Crescent City" because of its location at a sharp bend of the Mississippi River. Maybe it's the lush tropical foliage or the moss-laden trees and old cemeteries. Maybe it's the romantic other-worldliness of the hidden courtyards, cobbled streets and lacy iron scrollwork displayed on the balconies, fences and gates of the French Quarter or the stately, historic southern mansions of the Garden District that transport you back to a more genteel era. Or maybe it's the way New Orleans celebrates life with all the things city is known for—the jazz, the food, the festivals, Bourbon Street and the hint of voodoo magic. Fully recovered from the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans celebrates its 300th anniversary this year, and there's never been a better time to visit.

WHERE TO STAY

The French Quarter is the hub of New Orleans and the best place to stay to experience all that the city has to offer. We stayed at Maison Dupuy, a quaint, French-inspired historic hotel on a quiet residential street in the French Quarter with balcony rooms overlooking the beautiful courtyard or the French Quarter. Just two blocks from Bourbon Street, Maison Dupuy is conveniently located within easy walking distance to just about everything, yet removed enough to ensure a quiet night's sleep.

FOOD AND DRINK

New Orleans is almost as well-known for its food and drinks (Bourbon Street, anyone?) as it is for its music scene and Mardi Gras celebrations, and there's no shortage of restaurants to choose from. Most of them serve up seafood or dishes with a Cajun flair.

No visit to New Orleans is complete without a visit to Café du Monde. Located in the French Market area near the Mississippi River, it is known for its dark-roasted coffee (served black or *au lait*) and beignets—square, French-style donuts dusted in powdered sugar that will change your life.

The Ruby Slipper is a local

favorite for southern-style breakfast or brunch, with to-die-for eggs benedict, biscuits, shrimp and grits and mimosas. For lunch or dinner, Oceana, the Redfish Grill and the Gumbo Shop offer solid NOLA food—primarily seafood with a Cajun flair. For late night eats and breakfast, Daisy Duke's, located in the French Quarter near Canal Street, is open 24/7 and offers delicious po'boys and gumbo without breaking the bank.

Of course, you can't go to New Orleans without visiting Bourbon Street in the heart of the French Quarter. It extends for thirteen blocks from Canal Street to Esplanade and is legendary for its bars, nightclubs,

music and plethora of signature cocktails. Open container laws allow visitors to walk along the pedestrian-only street with a drink in hand while listening to street performers playing jazz or bands from inside bars—most of which are open, allowing the sounds of the city to meld together into a lively hum that is distinctly New Orleans.



Be sure to try to trifecta of Bourbon Street's signature drinks, all of which come in optional take-home glasses. There's the world-famous hurricane at Pat O'Brian's (the large landscaped patio and light-up fountain makes it a great location to take a breather), a lime-green Hand Grenade from Tropical Isle and Resurrection—a blue drink served in a flashing skull cup—at Spirits.

Willie's Chicken Shack serves some of the booziest frozen drinks, and Napoleon House is the best place for a Pimm's Cup—the city's sophisticated trademark cocktail. And, don't miss having a drink at the Carousel Bar at Hotel Monteleone. Once frequented by literary greats such as Tennessee Williams, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Truman Capote, this merry-go-round bar actually revolves and serves up classic cocktails and jazz music in a sophisticated environment.

WHAT TO DO

The French Quarter

The French Quarter is the heart and soul of New Orleans and, in addition to restaurants galore, beautiful architecture and the nightlife scene of Bourbon Street, it offers great live music, including



numerous jazz venues along Royal Street as well as on Bourbon Street.

Rent a bike from Bike Rental New Orleans (or go by foot) and explore the shops of the French Market, have your fortune told at one of the many voodoo shops, or step inside the spectacularly beautiful St. Louis Cathedral—the oldest cathedral in North America—where the organ plays while you feast your eyes on an impressive display of paintings and stained glass.

Nearby St. Louis Cemetery is the resting place of Marie Laveau, the legendary “voodoo queen” whose tomb many believers still visit to make offerings to her spirit in return for blessings.

If you don’t want to risk missing a thing, most of the bike rental companies offer guided tours. In the evening, watch the city go by on a leisurely two-hour jazz cruise aboard the Steamboat Natchez, the last authentic steamboat on the Mississippi River. After disembarking, tempt Lady Luck at Harrah’s, New Orleans’ only casino, which is less than a mile from the dock.

Garden District

Of course, there’s more to New Orleans than just the French Quarter. A streetcar ride along St. Charles Avenue (a steal of a deal at \$1.25 for a single-ride fare or \$3 for an unlimited, all-day ticket) will transport you to the gentility of the Garden District,



with its ancient oak trees and stately mansions.

Get off at Washington Avenue and follow the self-guided tour offered by <https://freetoursbyfoot.com/self-guided-garden-district/> to see the above-ground tombs at the historic Lafayette Cemetery, where numerous movies have been filmed, the homes of some notable New Orleans residents (including former New Orleans Saints quarterback Archie Manning and Confederate president Jefferson Davis), and notable homes featuring the various architectural styles of the city.

Off the Beaten Path

For a truly unique New Orleans experience, take a swamp tour. Airboat Swamp Tours is only half an

hour from New Orleans and offers a fast ride through the swamp where you’ll see alligators, egrets, herons, turtles, snakes and more. Cajun Pride Swamp Tours offers a more sedate journey aboard a covered boat with the opportunity to see alligators up close. For an even more up-close and interactive experience, New Orleans Kayak Swamp Tours lets you explore the beauty of the swamps by kayak with an eco-guide.

Known as the most haunted city in the United States, there’s no shortage of ghost tours in New Orleans. Take a guided tour, or visit <https://www.neworleans.com/plan/itineraries/haunted/> for a list of haunted locales, from Faulkner House Books—the house where William Faulkner wrote his first novel and where people swear they’ve seen his ghost at the writing desk and smelled his pipe—to the Bourbon Orleans, where a lonely ghost can be seen dancing beneath the crystal chandelier.

New Orleans celebrates something almost every weekend (it is the Festival Capital of the World, after all), from Mardi Gras to Voodoo Music and Arts to Jazz, so plan accordingly. For more information, visit www.neworleans.com and <https://gonola.com/>. ♦

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