

AFAR

NOVEMBER 29, 2018

Why You Should Go to New Orleans This Winter



By Lyndsey Matthews

From Reveillon dinners at Christmas to finding the best king cake in the city during Mardi Gras, winter is the time to be in New Orleans.

Unlike many other places, winter is actually the best time of year to visit New Orleans. Hurricane season is over and the summer humidity is long gone by the time December rolls around. And as soon as the holidays are over, Mardi Gras season kicks off in January and lasts to nearly the beginning of spring, so there's never a dull time to visit the Crescent City in the winter. With a brand-new boutique hotel in the Marigny, a host of restaurant openings from local restaurateurs, and two exciting art exhibits happening over the next few months, this winter is an ideal time to enjoy the Big Easy.

Check in to Hotel Peter and Paul

After a four-year restoration, the Hotel Peter and Paul opened in fall 2018 in the former Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic church and school in the Marigny with 71 rooms, most of which are decorated with oversized gingham drapes and upholstery in rich shades of yellow, blue, red, or green. The Elysian Bar in the church's former rectory is run by the same team as the Bywater's beloved Bacchanal wine bar. 2317 Burgundy Street, hotelpeterandpaul.com

Celebrate Christmas the New Orleans way

Christmas in New Orleans is just as unique as the city's food and music scenes. In the early 1800s, Creole inhabitants ate a late-night feast of gumbo, soufflés, and more called Reveillon upon returning from midnight mass on Christmas Eve. Over the past few decades, the Reveillon tradition has been revived and now restaurants offer the traditional meal at more reasonable times throughout the day leading up to Christmas. For a full list of restaurants offering Reveillon dinners, visit holiday.neworleans.com.

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Eat and drink at these new James Beard Award winners

In 2018, New Orleans took home two major James Beard Awards. Cure, which opened on Freret Street in Uptown in 2009, won the Outstanding Bar Program for its inventive riffs on classic New Orleans cocktails like the Pimm's Cup and Sazerac. 4905 Freret Street, curenola.com

Over in the Warehouse Arts District, chef Nina Compton earned the title of Best Chef in the South in 2018 for her Caribbean meets European cuisine at Compère Lapin, which opened in 2015. The curried goat and sweet plantain gnocchi is exactly the kind of meal you want to order in the winter. 535 Tchoupitoulas Street, comperelapin.com

Kick off Mardi Gras season

Mardi Gras season starts on January 6, 2019, and continues through March 5, 2019. In addition to weekly parades and parties happening all season long, there are a few other events worth traveling for. Anyone with a sweet tooth will want to visit on January 27, 2019, for the sixth annual King Cake Festival when city bakeries bring their goods to Champions Square at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome to help raise money for the Ochsner Hospital for Children (and win prizes for being the best king cake). Champions Square at LaSalle Street, Free, kingcakefestival.org

Take part in Vietnamese New Year at Tet Fest

Winter isn't just Mardi Gras season. Between February 8 to 10, 2019, Mary Queen of Vietnam Church is hosting a free Vietnamese New Year celebration that is open to all. In addition to Vietnamese food like bahn mi, pho, and spring rolls, there will also be a fireworks show and dragon dance on Friday and Saturday night. 14011 Dwyer Boulevard, East New Orleans, neworleans.com

Explore NOLA's Art Museums

To mark the end of the city's tricentennial, the New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA) is hosting The Orléans Collection, an exhibition of paintings from the extensive collection that Philippe II, Duke of Orléans—the city's namesake—amassed during his lifetime. You'll see work from the likes of Rembrandt and Rubens on loan from institutes including the National Gallery of London and the J. Paul Getty Museum during this exhibit at NOMA. Through January 27, 2019; One Collins C. Diboll Circle, City Park, \$8, noma.org

Over at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, New Southern Photography features the work of 25 emerging, mid-career, and established photographers from the past 10 years. As the largest photography exhibit at the Ogden yet, this exhibit aims to show what life is like in the modern New South from such artists as David Emitt Adams, Nancy Newberry, and Whitten Sabbatini. Through March 10, 2019; 925 Camp Street, \$13.50, ogdenmuseum.org

Any day now, Mason Hereford of the sandwich shop Turkey and the Wolf is opening a breakfast joint called Molly's Rise and Shine just a few blocks up on Magazine Street with items like the "Grand Slam McMuffin" and "Spam and Really Expensive Gouda Croissant" on the menu. 2368 Magazine Street, mollysriseandshine.com

For dinner, you can look forward to Justin Devillier of Le Petite Grocery and Balise opening a French Quarter brasserie called Justine on Chartres Street by the end of 2018. 225 Chartres Street, justinenola.com

Jewel of the South, a fine dining restaurant in the French Quarter from celebrated bartenders Nick Detrich and Chris Hannah, is expected to open in December 2018 as well. 1026 St. Louis Street