

As I put my fingertips to the keyboard, I ask myself, “Why was I asked to write this guide to the Big Easy?” It’s not as if I was born there. There is little to associate me with the city, aside from a one-act play and several short stories. I do enjoy alcohol more than the average person, and I often frequent many of the bars when I visit.

I also have a suite at the Hotel Monteleone permanently booked, as I am in New Orleans several times a year. So, I guess that does qualify me to write this *Guide to New Orleans*.

I could tackle this like Frommer’s, but I imagine that I would dull you, Dear Reader, senseless. Instead, I will offer up my favorite haunts and the occasional anecdote from grad school.

People visit New Orleans, by and large, for three reasons: socially acceptable binge drinking, voyeuristic urges for public nudity (while binge drinking), and sex tourism (also with binge drinking).

But if your itinerary is based around activities other than frequenting massage parlors (after explaining to your wife that you are “only going to a Nick Cave concert”), then I hope you find this Guide to be helpful.

Food:

The Court of Two Sisters: While we haven’t been to New Orleans since we started dating, *TCOTS* will be the first place I take my girlfriend when we do get there. Don’t be put off by the price for the Jazz Brunch. It is 110% worth the price of admission. From andouille sausage gravy and biscuits to shrimp etouffee, hand-cut, cooked-to-order ribeye steaks with candied sweet potatoes to bananas foster, you will find something to please your epicurean tastes. Save room

for seconds or even fifths. Skip the king cake, however; it's a bit dry, and you won't find a baby inside anyway.

Cochon Butcher: Their meat is made in house, and their other ingredients are all locally sourced. My go-to for the last decade has been the smoked turkey sandwich with a Ritterguts original gose, if I am there for lunch, and a charcuterie with whatever white they recommend, if I am there with friends. P.S. Don't be afraid of the head cheese.

Killer PoBoys: A welcome alternative to the overdone tourist-bait Po Boy of deep-fried shellfish. Whenever I go, I agonize over whether to get the Black Beer Beef Debris or the (don't laugh) Pecan Butter and Jelly. The Roasted Sweet Potato and the Roasted Cauliflower are both wonderful vegetarian options. When a bunch of us from Brown were there on Spring Break, Matt had two of the Barbecue Chicken Confit sandwiches, a side of smothered greens, and four Miller Lite tallboys. I was impressed, but not nearly as impressed as I was with the roasted sweet potato.

Entertainment:

The Museum of Death: Located immediately next door to *Killer PoBoys*, this museum can make for an exciting and educational afternoon trip. I enjoy it because it reminds me of the fragility of life and really centers me in an existential way. Though, it would be remiss of me if I didn't add a note of caution. Remember Matt and his big, rich, drunken lunch? Some of the displays in *TMOD* can be a bit intense. I was afraid that he would unswallow all over the Jazz coffin, but he luckily made it to the restroom in time.

The Saint Louis #1 Cemetery: A wonderfully pleasant walking tour where you will see and experience one of the more interesting traits of the city. Remember to always take a guided

group tour from a reputable tour agency, as there is safety in numbers; opportunistic muggers sometimes lurk in the cemeteries, waiting for solitary victims. Don't let my warning scare you away, Dear Reader. It is a beautiful tour, and you will see at least two of the reputed tombs of Marie Laveau, as well as the future resting place of Nicholas Cage.

Note: Be aware that there is a fair amount of street crime in New Orleans, but you can watch that for free.

Rick's Cabaret: Sure, it's a "Gentleman's Club," but it is more upscale than other places. There is an unspoken "Code of Conduct" there. No one bothers me, not even the entertainers. I can relax, have a drink, and consider my next project. That said, I did witness the most non-violent robbery in New Orleans' history there. Same Spring Break from Brown as Matt's big, rich, drunken lunch. An entertainer talked our friend, Charlie, up to a four-hundred-dollar lap dance while another entertainer talked Matt into an even pricier one. That's all. One lap dance. Three minutes and thirty-seven seconds. Not even so much as a kiss before, during, or after. Which is ironic, as those two were certainly screwed.

Bars:

With a number of bars per capita, second only to the Flats district in Cleveland, Ohio, it would be an exercise in futility to recommend even three bars in New Orleans. I will make one recommendation, one suggestion, and one piece of--however unsolicited it may be--advice.

Recommendation: Order a *Popa Doble* at the Carousel Bar in the Hotel Monteleone. Have a conversation with the ghosts of Tennessee Williams, Sherwood Anderson, William Faulkner, or dear old Papa himself. Who knows? As the carousel gently spins through the night, someone—or something—may be listening.

Suggestion: You can drink Budweiser, Miller, and Coors at home. Try a *Sazerac*, *Death in the Afternoon*, or a *Hurricane* while you're in New Orleans.

Advice: When you order a Hurricane, pay attention. If the bartender pours white rum and grenadine into your glass before filling it from a carton of orange pineapple banana cocktail, run away screaming. Any self-respecting mixologist will construct your Hurricane with light rum, dark rum, tropical mix, grenadine, and sour mix, before floating 151 on the top.

Having offered you my recommendations and suggestions for your weekend in New Orleans, I can make one final suggestion: Go with God, and *laissez le bon temps rouler*.