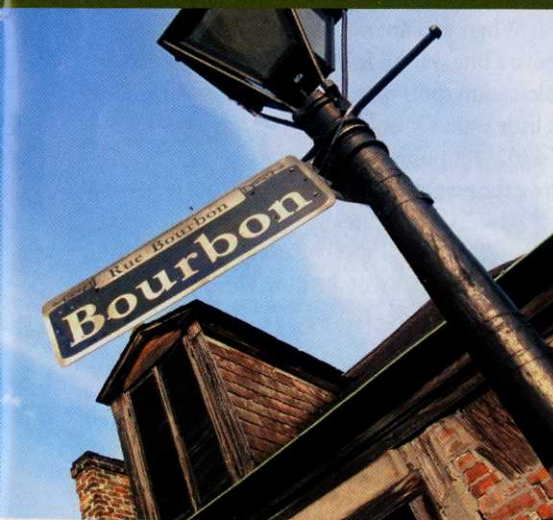


Let the Good Times Roll

BY MARK LUCE, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR



Actually, you probably won't be able to stop them from rolling when you're in New Orleans for the Golf Industry Show. Here's where to go for food, fun and festivity



Imagine for a minute that you're back in your early 20s. You have made the pilgrimage to the Big Easy for the festival known as Mardi Gras. You quickly realize this must be the biggest party you've ever witnessed, and the level of revelry outstrips anything you've ever seen. The funny part is that everyone — even the most tipsy — is well-behaved.

There's simply no city in the country like New Orleans. From its mix of people to its cuisine, from its rich literary tradition to its phenomenal music, the town pulses with a cosmopolitan mix and laid-back attitude that screams hospitality and more than a little hedonism.

As you head down to the Golf Industry Show in January, we here at Golfdom want to give you a few of the sights and smells, tastes and sound of the town known as N'Awlins, and hope while you are there you will *Laissez les bons temps rouler* (Cajun French for "let the good times roll").

New Orleans has begun a comeback from the tragedy and devastation leveled by Hurricane Katrina more than three years ago. However, frequent business traveler Brad Ansley notes that the town simply doesn't seem as crowded. That point is echoed by Janet Savoie, a local bartender, who says that, while large parts of the city are back at full speed, there are still areas that have a long way to go. For a few-day stop, though, chances are you wouldn't know that the town was largely under water just three years ago. Part of that comeback, frankly, can be attributed to a can-do attitude of the city founded in 1718 by Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville, and the eclectic population that's inhabited the place since.

New Orleans is best known for food, drink and music, and we shall attack them in that order ... even though the best night will probably include all of the above. But before you do anything, make sure you have a radio



that's tuned to WWOZ, 90.7, for it is New Orleans.

Ansley swears by K Paul's Kitchen (416 Chartres, 504.596.2530), a city mainstay helmed by Chef Paul Prudhomme. As Ansley points out, "Chef Paul is really the person who brought Cajun into the mainstream in the early '80s." He suggests anything with shrimp, chicken and andouille gumbo.

Even more well known by the country, though, is Emeril Lagasse, the celebrity chef. Emeril sports three particular restaurants in the city — Emeril's New Orleans, the flagship, (800 Tchoupitoulas, 504.528.9393) and a standard for locals and tourists. The Delmonico (1300 St. Charles, 504.525.4937) features more upscale fare in the swanky Garden District. Here try the spiced lamb chops or the ribeye. Make sure to dress up for dinner here and prepare for a significant bill. NOLA (534 St. Louis, 504.522.6652) has the most modern feel of

Lagasse's restaurants, and it's in the heart of the French Quarter. You won't be disappointed with the redfish or the shrimp and grits.

Another favorite spot for those dining out is Commander's Palace (1403 Washington, 504.899.8221), routinely regarded as one of the city's finest restaurants, and the kitchen where Emeril got his start. Don't let the 25-cent martinis fool you. This restaurant thrives on classy dishes and even classier service. It's another place where you'll want to dress to the nines, and you'll definitely want the turtle soup and bread pudding soufflé. Other restaurants in the French Quarter with the same classic appeal are Arnaud's (813 Bienville, 503.522.8767), Gallatoire's (209 Bourbon, 504.525.2021) and Antoine's (713 St. Louis, 504.581.4422). It's difficult to go wrong in any of these New Orleans staples, but make sure to have a sports coat, your manners and a credit card. At Antoine's you'll want to sample Oysters Rockefeller, pommes de terre soufflés or the trout; at Arnaud's, the shrimp remoulade, escargot and crawfish; and at Gallatoire, the fried oysters and lamb chops béarnaise.

Another notable for splendor in dining is Herbsaint (701 St. Charles, 504.524.4114), an excursion in French food with a Southern flair, and voted one of the 50 best restaurants in the country by *Gourmet* magazine.

When you are not ready to sell the farm to have a bite, Hohn recommends authentic Creole/Cajun spots that don't require anything but a little wait. One of the best is Dick and Jenny's (4501 Tchoupitoulas, 504.894-9880). Locals love the neighborhood restaurant, but it doesn't take reservations. Instead, patrons are kindly asked to sit on a waiting deck and have a drink. When you finally make it in, there is alligator on the menu. Get it.

Another local treat in the same vein is Jacques-Imos (8324 Oak, 504.861.0886) a

lively place where it will take a long time to be seated and probably longer to get your entrée. But it's worth the wait.

Savoie's favorite place, bar none, is the Port of Call (838 Esplanade, 504.523.0120). "They have the best hamburgers in the city," she says. "You will stand in line, but you can't go wrong here."

In the morning, you'll want to make sure to hit Café du Monde (800 Decatur, 504.525.4544), the city's most famous place for chicory coffee and tasty beignets. Don't worry, though, Café du Monde doesn't close — so a few beignets and some java after a night on Bourbon Street may be a good call.

The bar scene

There's no shortage of taverns and bars in New Orleans, and the French Quarter crawls with them. However, it's important to know that the drink du jour is called a Hurricane, a concoction of fruit juices, sugar and rum. If you are not careful with them, they will put you down, as they taste more like fruit punch than a cocktail. While available everywhere, both Hohn and

Ansley claim that first-time visitors to the city must have a Hurricane on the Patio Bar at Pat O'Brien's (718 St. Peter, 504.525.4823), where the drink was first concocted. Pat O'Brien's is located in the heart of the quarter.

Bourbon Street, of course, is infamous for its, um, frivolity, and one can take drinks outside of bars and walk down the street. On your stroll, take in the insanity of karaoke and balcony revelers at The Cat's Meow, the cozy atmosphere of Johnny White's, early afternoon three-for-one-happy hour at Razzoo and the raucous rocking at The Famous Door. Please keep in mind that while on Bourbon Street your definition of insanity means "normal weekday night" to those in the know.

For a little more subdued evening, pop down to Jean Laffite's Blacksmith Shop (941 Bourbon), housed in the oldest building in New Orleans. Rumor has it that Lafitte, a pirate, used the blacksmith shop as a cover for pirating. It's a piano bar lit by candles and away from the craziness.

But if you don't like your bars dive-y or crowded, slide over to the class of the Hotel



Monteleone (214 Rue Royale), where you will discover the Carousel Piano Bar & Lounge. True to its name, the bar actually revolves and there's live music Wednesday through Saturday nights. Specialties include the Blushing Southern Belle and the Monte Royale.

But maybe you're looking for something away from the city center, and in that case look no further than Vaughn's (800 Lesseps), where you may just find Savoie behind the bar. On Thursdays, the joint features Kermit Ruffins and his band for a \$10 cover. "We're a local neighborhood bar; everyone knows each other," Savoie says. "Our big night is Thursday." She also offers some advice. "Enter on the Dauphine Street side by pushing the buzzer. Always take a cab to and from Vaughn's. We'll call one for you."

You can also get your tuneful fix at Tipitina's (501 Napoleon), a New Orleans music institution that started in 1977 in order to give Big Easy legend Professor Longhair a place to perform as he got older. It has great sound, friendly folks and hot tunes.

Other stuff

The NBA's New Orleans Hornets will be in action twice during the Golf Industry Show. The team features emerging superstar Chris Paul and wide-open play. On Feb. 4, the Hornets take on the Chicago Bulls and rookie phenom Derrick Rose; on Feb. 6, the Hornets play the Toronto Raptors. The games are at the New Orleans Arena (1501 New Girod, 504.587.366) and tickets start at — this is not a misprint — \$8.

Perhaps, though, you merely want to sight-see. If so, check out the Royal Carriage French Quarter Tour (1824 North Rampart, 504.943.8820), a historical carriage ride around the French Quarter. Those looking for something a little edgier may want to indulge in the dark arts provided by the New Orleans Voodoo Tour (723 St. Peter, 504.861.2727), an hour



and a half of altars, history and folklore. The tour only runs on Saturdays.

And, of course, you can always catch up on all things Southern and literary at Faulkner House Books (624 Pirate's Alley), where you can peruse tremendous collectors' editions or snag something new.

One last note: New Orleans is a wildly fun place, but it can also be a dangerous place. Take care of yourself by taking cabs to neighborhoods you don't know, and by tucking the wallet in your front pocket. It's darn near impossible not to have a good time, but be smart, be safe and enjoy the Crescent City. ♣

Mark Luce live may in Kansas City, Mo., but he loves New Orleans and could easily live there.