

LIVING WITH HISTORY IN NEW ORLEANS' NEIGHBORHOODS

Vieux Carré



PHOTO: NAIRNE FRAZAR

PRESERVATION RESOURCE CENTER OF NEW ORLEANS
INVITES YOU TO EXPLORE THE LOCAL SIDE OF LIFE IN
THE FRENCH QUARTER, HOME TO OVER 4,000 RESIDENTS.

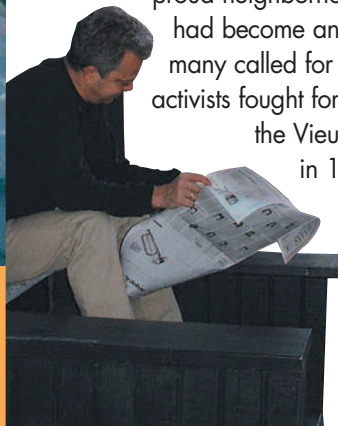
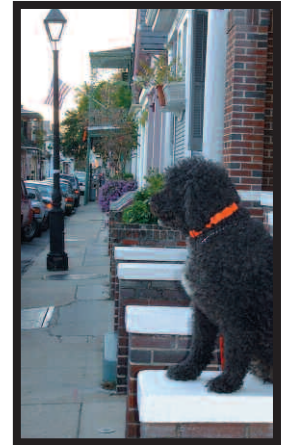


Today's Vieux Carré, also known as the French Quarter, is home to more than 4,000 residents, many of whom walk to work in the neighborhood or in the nearby Central Business District. It's also the center of well-established and prominent citizen associations, home to one of the city's best public schools, and the site of the oldest community theater and the oldest cathedral in the country.

Hollywood celebrities and software magnates have joined the residential mix, keeping the glamour up-to-date, but it's the year-round local residents who keep the neighborhood vibrant. It's a community that welcomes newcomers and where residents take the time to visit with neighbors on the street. Most "Quarterites" couldn't imagine living anywhere else.

Intimate but anonymous, New Orleans' oldest neighborhood has exerted a spell over writers and artists since the time of Mark Twain, Lafcadio Hearn and John James Audubon. By the 1930s, however, this once-proud neighborhood of aristocratic Creoles had become an impoverished slum, and many called for its demolition. Instead, local activists fought for, and won, establishment of the Vieux Carré local historic district in 1936. Exterior changes to buildings are now governed by the Vieux Carré Commission, a city agency charged with ensuring the Quarter's historic character.

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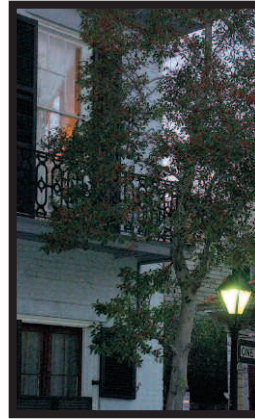
WALKING TOURS

Taking aim on a few key clusters of buildings will lead you into the residents' French Quarter. We encourage you to use good judgment and common sense in taking these tours.

TOUR A

While many of the homes on Esplanade Avenue remain single-family residences, contemporary apartment hunters and condo shoppers

vie for space, just as wealthy Creoles and Americans did when the commons here was first divided into building lots in 1812. The soaring ceilings and classic details of the mansions and three- and four-story townhomes, many now divided into smaller units, continue to make Esplanade a popular address. Start at the Old U.S. Mint near the river, once site of the Spanish Fort of San Carlos, and walk to Rampart St., alternating sides for a better look. The tree-lined avenue bustles with dog walkers and delivery boys on bikes.



TOUR B

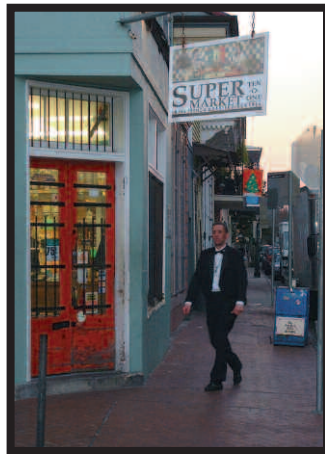
From Esplanade Avenue, go left on Burgundy Street past Cabrini Park to scenic Governor Nicholls Street. The mix of Classic Revival and Creole styles here speaks to the overlap of American and Creole cultures following the Louisiana Purchase, while the late 19th-century Victorian buildings denote earlier demolitions. The curbside crepe myrtles aren't historic but were planted for shade at the instigation of landscape architect and resident Christopher Friedrichs. The Thierry-Reagan House, in the 700 block, is said to be the oldest Greek Revival house in the city.

TOUR C

The French Market, which can be reached via Governor Nicholls St., was essentially the Italian Market during the 1920s, when Italian-American immigrants populated the lower quarter. Today, funky antique stores



French Quarter architecture is a mix of Spanish, French, Creole and American styles. Plastered walls and single chimneys reflect fire laws enacted after fire virtually destroyed the city in 1788 and 1794, while walled courtyards—perfect for French Quarter parties—are a gift of the Spanish influence. Cast iron balconies were added to many masonry buildings after 1850, when the Baroness Pontalba included them on her fashionable row houses near Jackson Square.



These lacy galleries, along with plentiful stoops and porches on younger buildings, make the Quarter a great place for people-watching—and every kind of person imaginable can be spotted on the sidewalks of the Quarter.



and grassroots art galleries dominate the few Italian groceries remaining at the market end of Decatur St., and a popular French patisserie occupies the tiled parlor where Angelo Brocato once served spumoni and other Italian sweets on nearby Ursulines St. Small shops, neighborhood bars and historic townhouses make this area worth wandering.

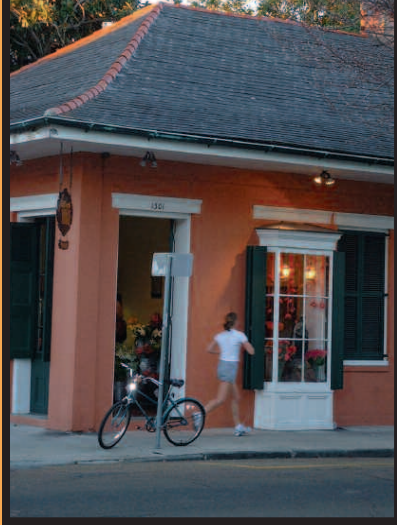
TOUR D

McDonogh 15 Arts Magnet Elementary School draws students from all over the city to its 1931 building at the corner of St. Philip and Royal. Proceed up St. Philip past Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop (941 Bourbon St.; ca. 1781) to a similar brick-between-posts cottage at 827-29 (ca. 1829). Jazz clarinetist George Lewis, composer of "Burgundy St. Blues," lived here in the 1930s and 1940s, when this was a poor African American neighborhood. Turning left, Dauphine Street threads through a residential area peppered with washaterias, hair salons, grocers and other neighborhood businesses.

TOUR E

Going toward Canal Street on Dauphine St., look left at Orleans Avenue, originally the median line of the French Colonial city and, for that reason, its widest street. The dramatic garden behind St. Louis Cathedral lends this vista an intimate feel, though the street was much more residential when Tennessee Williams lived at 710 Orleans in the 1940s. A right on Orleans will bring you into the 900 block, where the stoops on the Creole and Victorian cottages act as impromptu porches.





- 1699 Jean Baptiste le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville identifies junction of Indian portage and Mississippi River for future settlement
- 1718 Bienville founds city of Nouvelle Orleans, now the Vieux Carré
- 1721 French engineers plot the original city, a grid of streets framing a central Place d'Armes
- 1763 Spanish gain control of Louisiana and New Orleans
- 1788 Good Friday fire destroys city
- 1794 Fire again destroys most of city
- 1803 Louisiana Purchase
- 1830-1860 Building "spurt" in French Quarter includes Pontalba buildings (1849-51)
- 1880-1920 Absentee landlords lead to general decline of French Quarter
- 1936 Local historic district established
- 1968 Defeat of proposed riverfront expressway, which would have divided Jackson Square from the Mississippi River
- 1976 Jackson Square pedestrian mall and Moon Walk created

Annual Neighborhood Events

- Benefit tours of secret gardens and historic homes, Spring and Fall, various organizations
- Caroling in the Square and Holiday Decoration Contest presented by Patio Planters, December
- Germaine Wells Easter Parade, Easter Sunday
- French Quarter Festival, May

Neighborhood Organizations

- Vieux Carré Property Owners, Residents and Associates
- French Quarter Citizens for the Preservation of Residential Quality
- French Quarter Businesswomen's Association
- Lower Quarter Crime Watch
- Upper Quarter Neighborhood Watch
- Vieux Carré Alliance



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