FRENCH QUARTER TOUR

Hello and welcome to the Free Tours by Foot self-guided audio tour of the French Quarter, New Orleans' oldest and liveliest neighborhood. I'm Andrew, one of the guides with Free Tours by Foot, here to help you explore the neighborhood. Before we start, a few notes to help you prepare. The total distance the tour covers is about a mile and a half or 2.5 km, so taken all at once, the tour can span between ninety minutes and two hours. I'll be providing verbal directions as you go, and you can also reference the map for alternate routes or to make sure you're on track. There will be a brief pause between stops, and you can pause to take your time getting from one place to the next. There's a lot to see and do in the French Quarter and so it's likely you'll want to stop somewhere along the way. If you prefer to get a quieter take on the neighborhood where you can focus on the scenery, then the morning is the ideal time; if you're looking for a livelier experience with street music or stopping into shops, then daytime or early evening will work best. The neighborhood can also be beautiful by night, but for maximum safety and access to parks and other facilities that close in the evening, we recommend daytime for this tour.

If you're planning on shopping or eating, it's best to make sure you have some cash on hand – many businesses in the neighborhood only accept cash, and some of the best arts and crafts in the neighborhood are sold outdoors by street vendors.

The tour begins in Washington Artillery Park, a raised park overlooking Jackson Square. The address is 768 Decatur Street. It's centrally located, so you can reach it on foot from anywhere in or near the Quarter; the nearest public transit is the Riverfront Streetcar, which connects this area with the convention center, cruise ship terminals, and Riverwalk mall. Washington Artillery Park is accessible by ramp from either side; one ramp begins right by Café du Monde, the other by the intersection of Decatur and St. Peter Streets. You can also reach it via stairs from the riverfront. Watch out for con men in this area; someone who compliments your shoes is probably a scammer.

WASHINGTON ARTILLERY PARK/INTRODUCTION TO THE FRENCH QUARTER

Washington Artillery Park offers something truly rare in New Orleans – an elevated view. In our flat city, it's rare to be able to see so far in multiple directions. And from where you are, you can see three sights that tell the story of the city's creation: the Mississippi River, the French Market, and Jackson Square.

Let's start with the Mississippi. This river is the reason for the city's existence. In a commercial sense, the river provides fertile ground for farming and a key connection between the inland US and Canada and the Caribbean; but the river is also the reason why New Orleans can exist physically. The land where you're standing used to be part of the Gulf of Mexico. Then, around 7000 years ago, the Mississippi changed its course and began to pass through this general area. Before the man-made levees that surround it today, the river tended to overflow annually, and with each flood it deposited earth that built up to form the southern part of Louisiana. As you explore the French Quarter, you'll be walking on ground that arrived here from all over the Mississippi Valley.

The river drove human commerce long before New Orleans came to be. To your left, as you're looking toward the river, is Café du Monde, the starting point of the French Market – a place we'll visit further into the tour. Today's French Market stands on the site of an indigenous trading post, dating back about a thousand years. The name "Mississippi," meaning "big river," comes to us from the Ojibwe language of

Native Americans who lived much further north around the river's headwaters; locally, the Choctaw language calls the land around the French Quarter "bulbancha," meaning "place of many languages." Before colonization, the Choctaw, the Chitimacha, and many other cultures knew this area as a place where the river met natural ridges that ran through swamps to other key waterways, making this a relatively easy place to reach from anywhere in the region.

The river was also the route by which Europeans came to Louisiana, and they came in three waves. First, a Spanish expedition, led by Hernando de Soto, entered north Louisiana in 1541, looking for more of the gold and silver that Spaniards had taken from South and Central America. They didn't find it, and Spain never followed through on occupying land De Soto claimed around the Mississippi, but they did unwittingly reshape Louisiana with their short visit, introducing European game species like pigs and also the smallpox virus, which had such a deadly effect among the indigenous here that the next wave of European arrivals found communities that were much smaller and much changed. That second wave came in 1682, when a Frenchman, Rene-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de la Salle, made an expedition down the Mississippi from the Great Lakes, claiming the river and its valley for France and naming it "la Louisiane." The name hasn't changed much, but the borders have – la Salle's claim covered the Mississippi and all of its tributaries, including land as far from New Orleans as western New York State and southern Alberta, Canada. La Salle planned to return and build a colony along the Mississippi, but he was never able to find the mouth of the river again, and ultimately he was killed in a mutiny while searching for it far to the west of us in east Texas.

The successful founding of a French colony along the river finally happened in 1718. The Le Moyne brothers, known as Iberville and Bienville, were sent to Louisiana in the wake of la Salle's failure, and the younger brother, Bienville, looked along the Gulf Coast and the lower Mississippi for the best site. One of his gifts was languages – he learned to speak the indigenous trade tongue earlier and faster than many colonists could do and involved himself in inter-tribal politics and wars. This relatively nuanced situation didn't last long, but while it did, Bienville advocated to his fellow Frenchmen for placing the colony alongside and eventually on top of the native trade ground. He argued that the place was far enough inland to be safe from floods and hurricanes, and that the hard bend in the river, still visible today, would make the city defensible from either direction.

On the opposite side of the park from the river, you can see the iconic view of Jackson Square, the place where Bienville's city began and the city's central gathering place since its founding. We'll get into more detail on Jackson Square later, but you'll see plenty of visitors taking advantage of this spot for photos, especially under morning lighting, or enjoying beignets from Café du Monde in relative peace and leaving behind streaks of powdered sugar. And like I mentioned, this spot and the scenic walk along the riverfront nearby are also popular for an age-old local con – if an aggressively friendly stranger says they bet they can tell you where you got your shoes at, the answer is "on your feet."

The cannon in the center relates to the park's namesake – the Washington Artillery, a long-standing organization that has been variously a militia, a benevolent society, and a division of the Louisiana National Guard and participated substantially in the American Civil War and in World War I.

From here, head down the ramp to Café du Monde. If you're facing Jackson Square, this will be the ramp to your right.

CAFÉ DU MONDE

The green and white striped awning of Cafe du Monde marks one of the must-see places in the French Quarter. Depending on the time of day and the time of year, you may or may not see a long line of people waiting to get in, but almost no matter when you're passing by, you'll find them open – Café du Monde operates 24/7 almost every day of the year. It's best known as a breakfast destination, but it can serve just as well or better for a snack or dessert, and the crowds slack off after the morning hours. If you decide to pay them a visit, as long as there's no wait, you can just walk in and sit down; there's also a to-go line at the back. Three important notes: they only take cash; one order is three beignets; and never inhale while you're eating a beignet unless you want to choke on powdered sugar.

Cafe du Monde has stood at this location since 1862. There are several other locations in Louisiana, but most of them are in Japan. Japanese investors opened fourteen locations after taking a shine to the French Quarter original during the 1984 World's Fair.

The two items the Café is famous for – beignets and coffee with chicory – both speak to pieces of local history. Coffee with chicory is a relic of the American Civil War, when New Orleans was cut off from imports and used chicory, the root of the endive plant, to extend the limited supply of coffee. Chicory can be an acquired taste, and generally the best vehicle for a first-timer is a café au lait. Beignets are the local version of the worldwide phenomenon of fried dough with sugar – many older New Orleanians call them "doughnuts." Coffee and beignets were sometimes a means to autonomy and freedom for some of the enslaved people of New Orleans. People who prospered in New Orleans during the first century and a half of its life generally relied on slavery for their success, but the way slavery was practiced in New Orleans was somewhat different from the rest of the US. From 1718 to 1803, New Orleans was run by France and Spain and was theoretically all-Catholic; so local laws required the enslaved to be forcibly baptized and also protected the observation of the sabbath. This meant that even the enslaved had a day off each week. Some of the enslaved would run a business on their only day of freedom; one of the most famous was Rose Nicaud, a woman who weekly pushed a coffee cart in front of St. Louis Cathedral in time for the end of Sunday mass and sold her goods to the departing crowds. Such arrangements generally involved splitting the take with one's owner, but through years of this work, Rose Nicaud earned the money it took to mortgage herself – also a possibility under Spanish law. And with her new seven-day-a-week life, Rose opened the first coffee stand here in the French Market. Many other women, free and enslaved, made money by selling coffee, beignets, and calas – rice fritters that are similar to a beignet, but hard to find today.

From here, cross Decatur Street and continue until the end of the fence. Turn left and get a view of St. Louis Cathedral.

CATHEDRAL/CABILDO/PRESBYTERE

The most active part of Jackson Square tends to be the strip in front of St. Louis Cathedral, where, on a busy day, you'll find artists, performers, and plenty of sightseers. Musicians, magicians, and the like aren't regulated or compensated by the city; they come to their own arrangements on who performs where and when, and most of them make their living through street performance. Artists, on the other hand, have to have a city license to show work in Jackson Square or behind the Cathedral, and they are

also required to sell originals that they have produced themselves. So you can rely on the work you see being locally made and usually one-of-a-kind.

St. Louis Cathedral and its twin neighbors – the Cabildo on the left and the Presbytere on the right – don't date all the way to the city's founding, but they suggest the French city that used to be. A city hall - the meaning of "Cabildo" - was built on this site shortly after the city's founding, and next to it a church where St. Louis Cathedral stands now. The buildings you can see today date from after a fire in 1788, after which most of the city had to be rebuilt.

If you look at the left stained glass window above the center doors of St. Louis Cathedral, you can see the form of a man named Andrés Almonaster, who started the construction of these buildings. A couple of decades before the fire, in 1762, Spain had received Louisiana from France in a treaty. So in this era, Spanish place names like "Cabildo" or personal names like "Andrés" weren't uncommon. Andrés Almonaster had moved to Louisiana and made a fortune buying, selling, and developing land; by the time of the fire, he had retired from work, but he had the money, resources, and knowledge to help with the recovery. He paid for and oversaw the building of these three central structures, although he himself didn't live to see them completed. At the time, the buildings were shorter than what you see today - a plaque next to the nearby gate to Jackson Square shows what Almonaster's version of the Square looked like. It took another generation to complete the Square as we know it. We'll come to that part of the story later.

All three of these buildings are worth a visit. St. Louis Cathedral is open to visitors from mid-morning to early evening unless a mass or other ceremony is in progress; you'll find signs with mass hours and notices of any upcoming music performances around the left door. The Cabildo and Presbytere are both parts of the Louisiana State Museum system. The Cabildo focuses broadly on local and state history, while the Presbytere has two exhibits on major local subjects - Hurricane Katrina and Mardi Gras. They're best experienced in that order.

From here, head through the gate and inside the park for a close-up look at the statue of Andrew Jackson.

ANDREW JACKSON STATUE AND JACKSON SQUARE

Jackson Square is New Orleans' original city square – a gathering place that saw everything from parades to executions. Under the French, it was called the Place d'Armes; under the Spanish, the Plaza de Armas. The Square remains an active hub for city life today: it hosts everything from weddings to Christmas caroling to political protests to festivals, like French Quarter Fest in April and Satchmo Fest in August.

The statue of Andrew Jackson, the seventh US president, was put here in 1856. It was installed after his death but planned long before; Jackson himself placed a cornerstone in 1840. The choice of Jackson related less to his presidency than to his local claim to fame – his role as Major General in the Battle of New Orleans, the final battle in the War of 1812. This war came in the midst of already troubled times. The United States had bought New Orleans and the Louisiana Territory just twelve years before, and the city was rife with resentments between the old Creole population and the American newcomers. But it was a booming port, and that made it an ideal target for a British invasion. The city was poorly defended, having only an inexperienced militia and a handful of combat-ready ships. General Jackson

was credited with unifying Creole and American locals, militiamen from other parts of the United States, the nation's first battalion of free people of color, local Native Americans, and even the Lafitte brothers, the famous and influential pirates, into an effective patchwork fighting force. The British also made serious tactical missteps – they were unfamiliar with the marshy terrain and didn't know how to move artillery through so much mud, and the bright, easily recognizable uniforms worn by officers made it easy for Jackson, whose strategy was more about effectiveness than dignity, to have the leadership picked off first. The locals had a surprising and lopsided victory, with British casualties around 2000 and American casualties under 100. News later came that the peace treaty had already been signed, placing the Battle of New Orleans outside the boundaries of the war, but the battle still brought different types of New Orleanians onto the same team for the first time, and the story went a long way toward helping General Jackson become President Jackson.

There's a popular idea that equestrian statues speak in a sort of code, telling the fate of the person depicted by whether the horse is on two, three, or four feet. By that understanding, the position of this horse – rearing up on two legs – would indicate that Jackson died in battle, which he didn't. There was no special meaning to rearing equestrian statues at the time this one was made, because this one was a first. Specifically, its sculptor, Clark Mills, was the first to figure out how to keep 20,000 pounds of bronze balanced on two small hooves. This is one of four copies made from the same cast; you can see the original on the White House grounds in Washington, DC. But even that one is meant to portray Jackson surveying troops before the Battle of New Orleans – something he did right on the ground where you're standing.

Looking down from Jackson himself, you can see an inscription on the side of the pedestal facing the Cathedral – "The Union must and shall be preserved." This is a paraphrased quote from Jackson. In the late 1820s and early 1830s, well before the American Civil War and a time when "Union" just meant the country, South Carolina was at the center of some disagreements over tariffs and about whether states could nullify federal laws within their borders. This argument shook up the country to the point that the Vice President resigned, and both the US and South Carolina started to prepare for violence, but a shaky compromise was reached and civil war was averted. While this was all under way, Jackson attended a celebration of Thomas Jefferson's birthday, where he gave a toast, saying, "Our federal union: it must be preserved!" Many years later, another secession movement, again led by South Carolina, took hold, leading to the American Civil War. New Orleans was occupied early on, and Benjamin Butler, the US General in charge of the occupation, saw a statue of Andrew Jackson in the middle of town and had this, his paraphrased memory of a Jacksonian anti-secession quote, added to the pedestal.

From here, looking toward the Cathedral, head left toward the park gate that's under a large live oak tree. Get a look at the long building just outside the gate.

PONTALBA BUILDINGS

This is the Upper Pontalba, one of the two Pontalba Buildings, along with its twin on the opposite side of the Square. They bear the name of their builder, Baroness Pontalba, who played a huge role in what Jackson Square looks like today. Her father was Andres Almonaster, the man who financed the reconstruction of the Cabildo, Cathedral, and Presbytere after the 1788 fire. He did all of this in his late 60s and also managed to father his first child around the same time. Born with the name Micaela Almonaster, she was married, at her mother's choosing, to a first cousin once removed and went to live

with him in France. Her new father-in-law received a generous dowry as part of the marriage agreement, but he wanted control of the rest of her estate, too, which by law was her right to keep. When she refused to sign it over to him, he became abusive, something Micaela's husband never did anything to stop; after many years of standoff over her property, her father-in-law finally tried to kill her, shooting her four times in the chest. She survived, and he shot himself in the head. When he died, his title of Baron passed to his son and, by proxy, to Micaela - hence the name Baroness Pontalba that we call her today. She separated from her husband, came home to New Orleans, and renovated the whole Square around you. She added a Mansard-style roof to the Cabildo and Presbytere - completely different from her father's Spanish Baroque design for the lower floors of those buildings. She essentially rebuilt St. Louis Cathedral from scratch. She also had the garden landscaped, participated in the placement of the Jackson statue and the renaming of the square for him, and added the long Pontalba buildings to either side. The cast iron railing you can see on each floor bears a kind of family crest - an interlocked A for Almonaster and P for Pontalba, a combination which describes only her and her children, leaving out her husband and his side of the family. This introduced New Orleans to decorative cast iron railings, which today you'll see everywhere in the French Quarter. And despite her clear independent streak, Baroness Pontalba ultimately moved back to Paris and helped nurse her estranged husband through a terminal sickness. She has an architectural legacy there, too - the Hotel de Pontalba, which functions as the US ambassador's residence.

The Pontalba Buildings were designed as townhouses, but today, the upper floors have been split into single-story apartments. The Lower Pontalba, on the opposite side from you, contains a museum called 1850 House, which maintains one of the original townhouses as it would have looked around 1850.

From here, make a right and continue to the corner of Jackson Square, next to the Cabildo; then make a left onto Chartres Street. Continue for a block until you reach the intersection of Chartres and Wilkinson Streets.

CHARTRES STREET AND 18TH-CENTURY FIRES

As you arrive at the intersection of Chartres and Wilkinson, you should see on your left a wall-mounted tile street sign in addition to the pole-mounted metal signs. Street signs are one of the easiest ways to see how New Orleans has changed hands over the years; the French street names are reflected in tile signs embedded in the sidewalks, meant to be visible from the elevated vantage of a carriage driver, while the Spanish street names are on the wall-mounted signs, and the American names are on the pole-mounted signs. They don't look it, but the tile signs with the Spanish names are actually the newest of the three – they were made in Spain but added to our walls in 1984 when New Orleans hosted the World's Fair.

You can also see the change of language in the name of this street – the French name "Chartres" has long since been Americanized to "Chartres."

In the couple of blocks ahead of you, you should be able to see quite a few adjoining buildings with plaster facades and wooden or iron balconies and galleries on the outside. This area has the highest concentration of late 18th-century Spanish buildings in the city and can give you an idea of what the Spanish-era city looked like. They're called Creole townhouses, and they're a lot like what you'd see in

other Spanish colonies in the Americas around the same time. The French Quarter is full of more ostentatious American-era variations on this theme, best recognized by their Greek Revival elements, exposed brick, cast-iron railings, and prominent doorways.

Creole townhouses of whatever kind are completely different from the French buildings that stood at the time of the 1788 fire. They mostly had a ground floor built in brick, which functioned like a basement, and an upper residential story also built in brick but clad in wood. We'll see a building in this style later. The wood of choice was that of the plentiful local bald cypress tree, which is more or less impervious to water and insects but extremely vulnerable to fire. 617 Chartres Street marks the spot where the fire of 1788 began – it was Good Friday of that year, and a few altar candles led to a fire that consumed 80% of the city. Afterwards, the residents mostly rebuilt their wooden French colonial homes, only for another fire to destroy many of them in 1794. The rebuild after that as subsidized by the Spanish crown, but with the caveat that they would only pay for a certain type of building – more or less the kind you see here. And few of them have burned since 1794.

We call the post-fire buildings Creole townhouses and Creole cottages. The word "Creole" here describes a type of building, but the same word can also apply to people, food, music, and language. In all those contexts, it points at innovations of the New World that involved elements from the Old. Creole people were the locally born descendants of immigrants, most often used to describe people with families from France, Spain, or western Africa, but often including other backgrounds, too. Most of them spoke Louisiana Creole – a language that involved mostly French-derived vocabulary, some West African words and structural elements, and a few Native American words for new things encountered in the region. And they ate Creole food – approximations of the cuisines of their various homelands that adapted to the local supply of ingredients. Many of the restaurants in the French Quarter, like Tableau, the large red building at this intersection, serve Creole cuisine, which involves French, Spanish, West African, and Native American elements – with a heavy weight toward French in the case of fine dining restaurants like this one. Many of them also serve Cajun food – another cuisine coming to us from rural southwest Louisiana and involving some overlaps with Creole food, but generally spicier and with a stronger German element.

In New Orleans, Creole stands in contrast with American. Look away from Jackson Square and you'll see skyscrapers in the distance, indicating the American part of the city, located across Canal Street and including well-known areas like the Garden District and St. Charles Avenue. The contrast of Creole vs. American involved huge differences in language, culture, religion, and philosophy that remain key to how New Orleans stands out from much of the US today.

The American period brought enormous changes to life in the French Quarter, some of which we'll get into at our next stop. From here, proceed along Chartres away from Jackson Square across Toulouse Street until you reach the New Orleans Pharmacy Museum on the left – there's a hanging mortar-and-pestle-shaped sign outside.

PHARMACY MUSEUM

Today's New Orleans Pharmacy Museum occupies the site of the first government-licensed pharmacy in the United States. When this site opened in 1823, it would have provided everything from medications to cosmetics to love potions to surgery. This was the first time a state policy required pharmacists to

pass an exam to hold a license – a policy that came about in reaction to the many and serious plagues affecting Louisiana at the time and the free-for-all of quacks that an unregulated system encouraged. The law was created by the first American governor of Louisiana, William C.C. Claiborne, soon after the Louisiana Purchase. The transition from French to American ownership brought about all kinds of changes, one of which was a far worse plague situation.

Before the purchase, the US already owned territory along much of the Mississippi and was shipping many of its goods through New Orleans, one of the largest ports in the world at the time. Americans had their eyes on the city as fresh ground for expansion, and so President Thomas Jefferson sent agents to Napoleon, who had taken most of Louisiana back from Spain in 1800. They brought back word that Napoleon would agree, on the condition the US would buy not just New Orleans, but all of Louisiana, which, at the time, was the whole Mississippi Valley west of the river. The price was $15 million – more money than the US had at the time. Jefferson had his Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin, borrow money from British and Dutch banks to pay for the new territory. This meant that British banks indirectly helped finance Napoleon in fighting a war against Great Britain; Albert Gallatin, for his part, got honored with a street name in the French Quarter, which became a red-light district.

The change from French to American opened New Orleans to the same surge of immigration other coastal American cities were seeing, much of it coming from more northerly latitudes like Ireland. Many of these immigrants hadn't been exposed to the diseases common in this region, and over the coming century, summer plagues of yellow fever, malaria, and cholera would kill huge numbers of New Orleanians every few years – as much as a sixth of the population at a time. In these desperate circumstances, people who were creative and opportunistic could sell anything and call it medicine; hence the laws that required pharmacists to have a license.

The licensing requirement did more to standardize the medicine of the day than to improve it. Lacking understanding of things like sanitation and germs, many of the mainstream medical practices a prospective pharmacist was tested in were deadly. The museum puts some of the worst mistakes of the 19th century on display. The typical treatment for syphilis, for example, would have been an intravenous injection of mercury, whereas in the same era, a voodoo priest would have given her client a medicine made from moldy bread – a small dose of penicillin, in other words, most of a century before mainstream medicine embraced it. The museum includes these and many other examples of the sometimes terrifying medical practices of the time – so while it's a fascinating place to go, it's best suited to visitors with a strong constitution. It's just $5 for entry, closes Sunday and Monday and offers guided tours on weekdays at 1pm.

Before you move on, take a quick look across the street at the gray hotel building. You'll see a section of stonework that looks out of place against the rest of the building. Today this is the Omni Royal Orleans Hotel, but the site was once home to the St. Louis Hotel and Exchange – a destination for wealthy Creole planters visiting the city. Among the amenities available was a slave auction block on the property – one of the features implied in the word "exchange." The US banned the import of enslaved people from across the Atlantic in 1807, but the demand for human property remained enormous for decades to come – enough to support two slave auction sites at this single intersection. After the Civil War, when sale of people was no longer legal, the hotel passed between many owners, became abandoned, and finally blew down in a hurricane in 1915. Today this piece of stonework printed with the word "change" is all that's left of it.

From here, continue along Chartres Street to the next intersection, with St. Louis Street. You'll get the best view from the corner with the large white marble building.

LOUISIANA SUPREME COURT

The white marble building at Chartres and St. Louis is the Louisiana Supreme Court – one of the few you'll find outside a state capitol. Despite the classical elements of its Beaux-Arts architecture, it's out of place in the French Quarter – a block of smaller buildings, like the ones you've seen along Chartres Street, was torn down to make room for this to be built in 1910. Today, the buildings of the French Quarter are legally protected, but that legislation was passed in 1934, and it was passed in reaction to rampant destruction taking place in that era. The Supreme Court had previously operated out of the Cabildo in Jackson Square, and it briefly planned to tear down the Cabildo in order to put up a new building; a negative public response took that plan off the table, but the bulldozing of this block in 1908, the destruction by hurricane of the St. Louis Hotel next door in 1915, and the accidental burning of the French Opera House on Bourbon Street in 1919 all added to a fear that the French Quarter was disappearing. This was the same era when the French language and Creole cultural traditions were growing rare. These losses in the French Quarter, tangible and intangible, helped build momentum for the creation of our historic district, the second in US history, which works to preserve the neighborhood's historical character today.

On the corner opposite from the Supreme Court building is a restaurant called Napoleon House. The sign reads "Since 1797," which accurately describes not the business, but the building, and then only part of it. And the name "Napoleon House" is a similarly stretchy kind of true. Local legend has it that some of the Creole residents of New Orleans planned to rescue Napoleon from his second exile and were only stopped from doing so by his death. At the time, this was the home of Nicolas Girod, a mayor of New Orleans, who allegedly volunteered his house to be the emperor's new home. Much later, in 1914, when the French Quarter had become home to more immigrant Sicilians than native-born French-speakers, the Impastato family opened a grocery store in the building and named it for the place's legendary unfulfilled purpose. The dishes served today include some of the Italian-derived local staples, like muffuletta sandwiches. The Impastato patriarch also had a taste for relatively sober guests, and his mild signature cocktail of choice, the Pimm's Cup, is still the house specialty. Ralph Brennan of the Brennan restaurant family took over ownership in 2015, but the soundtrack is still Italian opera.

Near this corner are the sites of restaurants established by two of the city's most famous chefs – NOLA, a Louisiana fusion restaurant owned and operated by Emeril Lagasse, just along St. Louis Street toward the River, and K Paul's, a Cajun/Creole restaurant founded by Paul Prudhomme, just along Chartres. Paul Prudhomme died in 2015 and was honored with a jazz funeral that proceeded from St. Louis Cathedral to the restaurant, which for a long time stood as his greatest memorial. K Paul's closed in 2020.

Next up is the oldest restaurant in the city, Antoine's. Look away from the Mississippi on St. Louis Street and you'll see a huge sign for it on the side of the building it occupies, just over a block away – head toward that.

ANTOINE'S

Antoine's is named for its founder Antoine Alciatore, who opened a restaurant in 1840 that today is run by the fifth generation of his family. Antoine's is enormous, part restaurant and part museum with some vestiges of family home. The dining rooms commemorate historical moments like Prohibition – the Mystery Room is the space that formerly hosted the restaurant's speakeasy in the era when alcohol was illegal – while others celebrate particular Mardi Gras parades. One of the Mardi Gras-themed rooms is the Hermes Bar, named for the Krewe of Hermes parade. The Hermes Bar is the most accessible part of the restaurant if a fine dining meal isn't what you're after – it has no dress code, serves Prohibition-era cocktails and small plates, offers a happy hour, and has Mardi Gras paraphernalia all over the walls. In the main restaurant, weekday lunches are more casual and include a $.25 martini option if you order a main dish.

From the intersection of Royal and St. Louis, you can also see James H Cohen Antiques at 437 Royal Street. This is one of the neighborhood's many interesting antique shops – it specializes in guns, swords, other military paraphernalia, and coins. And it used to be another neighborhood pharmacy noted for an invention that has endured the ages. In 1830, Antoine Peychaud ran an apothecary on this site, where he sold a mix of herbs that, mixed with brandy and sugar, became a medicine known for making you feel better from pretty much anything. Today he's credited for creating Peychaud's bitters, and his medicinal blend, albeit somewhat altered, is New Orleans' official and now purely recreational cocktail, the Sazerac. Made from whiskey or rarely brandy with bitters, citrus, and sugar and served in a glass coated in absinthe, it is a strong, memorable sipping cocktail, and you can ask for one at the Hermes Bar or any other craft bar in the neighborhood – like the Carousel Bar in the Monteleone Hotel, also visible from this intersection, just a couple blocks up Royal Street, where the bar is an actual working carousel.

In the opposite direction along Royal Street, going back toward Jackson Square, there are several things to see. This part of Royal Street closes off to cars and becomes a pedestrian mall during the daytime – specifically 11-4 on weekdays and 11-7 on Saturday and Sunday. It's the home of antique stores, art galleries, and street music. As you walk the first block, keep an eye out on the left for a small window into Antoine's 27,000-bottle-capacity above-ground wine cellar, which they installed in 1933 at the end of Prohibition to commemorate the survival of all the wine they'd saved from destruction by avoiding police raids. Just past that window on either side of the street, you'll see the Historic New Orleans Collection, a free museum with a collection and a public courtyard on this block, a home offering tours just around the corner on Toulouse Street, and a research center on Chartres Street with records on every property in the French Quarter. And on the next block, on the right, you'll see MS Rau – the French Quarter's largest antique store with a museum-caliber collection.

Continue along Royal Street until the intersection with Orleans Street, where you can see the back of St. Louis Cathedral.

ST ANTHONY'S GARDEN

The green space behind St. Louis Cathedral is called St. Anthony's Garden. While it's a peaceful spot today, it used to be a favorite site for dueling – an activity associated with wealth, honor, and status, and hence not inconceivable on the grounds of the Catholic church. As the 19th century progressed, social pressure turned gradually against dueling, and increased use of guns increased the danger to

bystanders. So duelists took their hobby out to City Park, where they fought under a pair of trees called the Dueling Oaks, one of which is still standing. The statue of Jesus here in the garden is known for its shadow – a floodlight illuminates it after sunset each evening and casts a huge shadow on the back wall of the Cathedral, which is a favorite photo subject popularly known as "Touchdown Jesus."

On the ground just outside the gates to St. Anthony's Garden is a medallion with a portrait of Henriette Delille, the founder of the Sisters of the Holy Family, the first order of nuns for black or mixed women. Their convent occupied the building that is now the Bourbon Orleans Hotel – you can see it on Orleans Street, looking away from the Cathedral, on the right. Henriette Delille was what the time called a free woman of color. New Orleans, even well before the Civil War, had a large population of African-descended people who were not enslaved. A woman like her had greater freedom than an enslaved woman, but her choices were still extremely limited. And as her story is often told, Henriette was pressured toward this building well before it became a convent. It was originally built to be the Orleans Theater and Ballroom. The ballroom survives – it's through the large arched door on the second floor. And local legend claims that ballroom was often the site of quadroon balls. "Quadroon" was a term referring to people like Henriette Delille, who were or appeared to be one-quarter African-descended. And a quadroon ball, according to popular stories, was a sort of debutante-style ball, where a young free woman of a certain complexion could meet interested white men. The story goes that her mother would receive suitors, arrange a match, and have some kind of contract drawn up. Marriage between the races wasn't legal, so any agreement would have looked more like an adoption. None of these contracts or any other evidence of quadroon balls has survived, apart from legends, but white Creole men, including married ones, did sometimes have a mixed-race mistress on the side in the 19th century, and these couples likely met at church and in the street and all the other places people meet each other. And while there would have been religious pressure on a woman to avoid these kinds of relationships, the Sisters of the Holy Family claim that Henriette Delille was pressured toward one by her mother, who likely saw it as a way toward some kind of security. In the end, though, she found allies who helped her start the order in 1842, buy this building, and turn it into a convent, creating a new choice for women like herself. The order's work included a hospice for the elderly and a school for girls. The nuns lived and worked on this site until 1964, by which time tourism was increasing, property value was rising, and Bourbon Street as we know it today was becoming the convent's neighbor. At this point, the nuns saw fit to sell their building and move to a larger space in New Orleans East, while their former home became a hotel with the same old ballroom still upstairs, now hosting wedding receptions.

From here, take a few steps back along Royal Street and turn left into Pirates Alley at the end of St. Anthony's Garden.

PIRATES ALLEY

In 1964, the year the Sisters of the Holy Family sold their convent to become a hotel, tourism was on the rise, and the narrow walkway called Cabildo Alley was renamed Pirates Alley. Local legends make the alley the site of an early 19th-century pirate black market run by the Lafitte brothers. Whether that's true or not, they certainly kept company with a privileged clientele – the kinds of people who would have worked in the Cabildo and Cathedral – and Jean Lafitte also definitely spent a short time in the jail once located along this alley, on the back of the Cabildo. Today, there's no question that pirates walk the alley, thanks to the pirate-themed bar located halfway along its length – the Pirates Alley Café, a destination for absinthe.

The Lafittes were two brothers, Jean and Pierre, who came to New Orleans from Haiti in the first few years of the 1800s, and probably from France before that. They arrived in Louisiana at a key moment. Jean came to Louisiana fleeing the Haitian Revolution and wanting to get into legitimate shipping, but other newcomers had already saturated the market by the time he arrived. Instead, he found his niche in the illegal side of the trade. The Napoleonic Wars were under way and the US was staunchly neutral; trade with either side would provoke the other, and while the US produced plenty of raw materials, it had always relied on importing manufactured goods. Piracy was a solution. The Lafittes grew wealthy and extremely popular by illegally importing every kind of in-demand cargo from nails to enslaved people. The illegal nature of their work ran them afoul of William C.C. Claiborne, Louisiana's first American governor, who offered a bounty for their capture; Andrew Jackson showed up in the middle of this standoff and negotiated the Lafittes into fighting on behalf of the city in the Battle of New Orleans in exchange for a full amnesty. Of course, after that battle, the pirates were more popular than ever, but the amnesty only included crimes they'd done before – not the new ones they immediately set about doing afterward – and before long, with the Napoleonic Wars ending and trade opening up, they were run out of town and moved their enterprise to Cartagena, Colombia.

Also in the alley is Faulkner House Books, located in one of the two buildings where the writer William Faulkner lived for his brief one-and-a-half-year stay in New Orleans, during which he wrote his first two novels. Today, you can find an excellent selection of the works of southern writers, new and old, in the bookstore, plus a case of historic local books; the staff are well-read and can help you pick out your best introduction to Southern Gothic.

Continue along Pirates Alley until just after the Pirates Alley Café, where a path forks off to the right. Follow this out to St. Peter Street.

LE PETIT THEATER

From where the alley opens onto St. Peter Street, you can see two spots important to local theater history: Le Petit Theater on the left and a former residence of Tennessee Williams on the right.

Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre, or just Le Petit, opened in 1917. At first, it was located in Jackson Square, but it moved to its present site when it was just a few years old. Le Petit represents the French Quarter's most Bohemian era, when the neighborhood, after decades of architectural neglect following the Civil War, became a hub for artists and eventually for travelers and preservationists. Until recently, Le Petit had two stages; after Hurricane Katrina, in order to finance necessary repairs to the building, they sold their smaller stage to the Brennan family of restaurateurs who renovated the space and launched the adjoining restaurant, Tableau.

To the right, on the top floor of 632 St. Peter Street, is the attic apartment where Tennessee Williams lived when he wrote A Streetcar Named Desire.

From here, take a right on St. Peter Street and continue about a block to find Pat O'Brien's and Preservation Hall on your left.

PAT O'BRIEN'S AND PRESERVATION HALL

Pat O'Brien's is one of the French Quarter's most famous bars and, compared to the Hermes Bar and Carousel Bar mentioned earlier, it's a lot divier. Legally, the bar dates to 1933, opening, as many bars did, right after the end of Prohibition. Private clubs with a password were a common way to work around Prohibition laws, and the door here is said to have opened to the words, "Storm's a-brewin'." Appropriately, the signature drink here is the hurricane, named for the glass it's served in, shaped like a hurricane lamp. A hurricane is a fruity rum drink, made with passionfruit juice and orange liqueur, which was invented to make the most of the cheap rum that was often the only available liquor in the 40s. Prohibition had amply prepared local bartenders to deal with subpar spirits – the bootleg stuff available during that era was full of impurities and tasted foul, and the flavor was masked with sugar, eggs, cream, and other heavy ingredients that are still part of many traditional local drinks. That said, the hurricane you get at Pat O's today is a prefabbed drink that's a far cry from the original recipe – if you want the 1940s version, ask at a craftier bar with a signature cocktail menu. The bar's other calling cards are the courtyard – one of the biggest in the neighborhood – and the flaming fountain and dueling pianos, both of which show up in the evening.

Preservation Hall is the innocuous dark-colored building just past Pat O's. As the place's name suggests, New Orleans jazz was on a brink when Preservation Hall opened. Jazz had been the sound of Bourbon Street in its World War II-era youth, and to a degree that remained the case into the 50s and 60s. But Bourbon Street has always moved with the times, and rock and roll was increasingly what the street's nationwide audience of partygoers wanted to hear, especially after Elvis Presley made the movie King Creole set in the Quarter. By the time Preservation Hall opened in 1961, jazz was hard to find on Bourbon, and many of the oldest generation of jazz artists were out of work and no longer mentoring younger musicians. While artists of all kinds of genres appear as guests, the staple here is still a short set of traditional jazz, usually performed at 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 through most of the year. The wait can be long – advance tickets let you skip the line – and amenities are spare, so find a restroom beforehand, bring you own drink, and be ready to stand for a while – the band is worth it.

From here, head further along St. Peter to the intersection with Bourbon Street.

BOURBON STREET

Depending on the time of day, it may not be at all practical to try to listen to an audio tour while on Bourbon Street. Feel free to listen to this before or after walking the street; when it's going strong, the street is best experienced without commentary.

The nine blocks of bars on Bourbon Street make up a legend that is a mashup of eras and ideas. It's as much the icon of New Orleans as Times Square is of New York or Hollywood is of southern California, and like those places, it's an overcrowded embodiment of one very narrow truth: in our case, that truth is that in New Orleans, drinking is much more legally and socially permissible than in most American cities. You're allowed to drink outside, and not just on Bourbon Street – the law covers all of Orleans Parish, or most of the city. There's a special restriction in the French Quarter forbidding glass or metal

containers – so if you decide to get a drink to go while you're in the Quarter, it's best to ask for a go cup. It's also legal in Orleans Parish to drink in a for-hire vehicle – so theoretically, you could drink in a cab, though you'll have a hard time finding a driver who would okay that. Mainly that law was passed to allow drinking on Mardi Gras floats.

While it's mostly bars today, Bourbon's history and its present are both more complicated than they look. The fact that Galatoire's, one of the most upscale restaurants in the city, is located on Bourbon Street and surrounded by strip clubs, shows that it wasn't always as you see it now. For most of the 18th and 19th centuries, Bourbon was a quiet, middle-class street. Its name didn't even indicate a type of alcohol until the middle of the 19th century; Bourbon Street and Bourbon County, Kentucky, were both named for the Bourbon monarchy, who ruled France at the time when both areas were colonized, and it was only later and by pure coincidence that this Bourbon became famous for bars and that Bourbon became famous for whiskey. The first couple of blocks of Bourbon Street were getting rowdy by the 1890s, but the street was a mixed bag until well after that; it was home to an opera house until 1919 and, like I mentioned earlier, neighbor to a convent until 1964. But World War II brought a huge portion of the US armed forces through New Orleans, and from there on, the shift to pure party district has been steady.

New Orleans has gone through some hard times, and Bourbon Street seems to be as immortal as its reputation. Johnny White's, right here by the intersection of Bourbon and St. Peter, never once closed during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, which didn't flood the French Quarter but did damage it and leave it without power. And other businesses along the street were among the first to reopen, feeding and entertaining rescue workers and journalists and employing the returning residents of the city.

As you go along Bourbon Street today, key sights are horse-mounted police officers, painted people posing for photo opportunities, and hand grenades – the most recognizable drink on Bourbon, thanks to its very tall and somewhat grenade-shaped cup. You're also likely to see people throwing beads from balconies. If you want some thrown to you, generally some noise and arm waving is enough to do the job, without you having to break any laws. If you don't want them thrown to you, you may get them anyway, so keep a hand free for defense. And bear in mind that while drinking in the street is fine, you generally won't be able to carry an outside drink inside a new bar with you.

When you're ready, make a right from Bourbon and St. Peter and continue two blocks to the intersection of Bourbon and St. Ann.

BOURBON AND ST ANN/ARMSTRONG PARK

Take a look to the left when you arrive and you'll see an arch a few blocks away with the word "Armstrong" written in light-up letters. This is the gate to Armstrong Park, a landmark located outside the French Quarter but important to the life of many of its residents. Earlier I mentioned how French and Spanish-era law meant that even enslaved people had one day off every week, and Armstrong Park contains a Sunday afternoon gathering point where West African culture survived relatively undisturbed. The park is outside the French Quarter, which originally was the entire city, so that gathering place, called Congo Square, lay outside the city walls. There, enslaved and free people, some born in Africa, some in the Caribbean, some locally, would play drums and dance – a weekly tradition that some New

Orleanians still keep alive. The rhythms of traditional West African music are a major influence on jazz and, through jazz, most popular music today. Appropriately, Armstrong Park was the original home of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, although it quickly outgrew the park, and you can still find smaller events taking place there throughout the year.

This block is also important to the history of Bourbon Street as it marks the end of entertainment zoning and the beginning of residential zoning. While the bars in the couple of blocks behind you mostly date from the last few decades, those ahead of you are much older and are grandfathered into the current zoning plan. Bourbon Street today is actually two bar districts grown together – the World War II-era tourist destination on one end and a couple of blocks of early and mid-20th century gay bars here at the other. These couple of blocks become a particular destination during Pride in June and Southern Decadence in September, as well as during Mardi Gras and Halloween, but for the rest of the year, you tend to find more locals than tourists down here. A block ahead of you is Café Lafitte in Exile, a possible contender for oldest gay bar in the country, and a block past that is Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop – our next destination.

Continue two blocks along Bourbon to the intersection with St. Philip St. when you're ready.

LAFITTE'S BLACKSMITH SHOP

Lafitte's likes to claim that it's the oldest building housing a bar in the US. It's one of the older bars in New Orleans, though not the oldest – that would be the Old Absinthe House, further back on Bourbon Street. And the age of the building is a bit of a mystery – its exact year of construction isn't known, but it has the look of a structure built shortly after the Spanish-era fires. While most buildings from that era are completely plastered over, on this one you can see the construction materials – parallel and diagonal posts with bricks set between. The connection with the Lafitte brothers is also legendary, but you come for the legends and stay for the historical ambience and the excellent piano players and singers they employ at night. It's a good place to try a local beer or have a simple cocktail, or, if you're feeling like a gamble, ask for a purple drink.

This is the end of our time on Bourbon Street – when you're ready, take a right onto St. Philip, then a right on Royal, then a left on Dumaine. Stop when you see a green and white house on the right side.

MADAME JOHN'S LEGACY

This green and white house at 632 Dumaine St. is called Madame John's Legacy and is one of the older buildings in the city. This is what many homes in French-era New Orleans looked like – completely different from the Spanish- and American-era buildings around it. As mentioned earlier, a French colonial house usually consisted of an above-ground basement on the bottom, used for storage or rented out for a business, and a wood-clad residence in the upstairs. This one is part of the Louisiana State Museum system, and admission is free. It's not a house museum, so you won't see furniture from the period, though you can find that kind of museum on offer at the Gallier House, the Hermann-Grima

House, 1850 House in Jackson Square, or the Beauregard-Keyes House a bit further along our route. This museum focuses on the architecture of the house and on a display of archaeological material from it and from surrounding sites, with other shows installed periodically. As much as Madame John's Legacy looks the part of the French era, it isn't from that time – it was built in 1788, immediately after the first fire, although it might have included elements from a preexisting building.

The name Madame John's Legacy is a reference to a short story by George Washington Cable, a writer in the late 19th century who took Creole life as his frequent subject. He wrote a story called "'Tite Poulette" about a mixed-race woman, Madame John, who received a house as an inheritance – a legacy – from her unmarried long-term white partner. Cable's stories drove some early tourism to New Orleans, and another local writer of the time, Lafcadio Hearn, wrote a guide to the locations described in Cable's works; he attributed "Tite Poulette" to this house. The fact that the official name of a state museum can come from a speculation about the location of fictional events speaks to how much the French Quarter's reality is intermingled with storytelling.

From here, continue slightly down the block to Voodoo Authentica on your right.

VOODOO AUTHENTICA

Voodoo Authentica is one of many shops offering a view into the local practice of voodoo in the French Quarter. But only a few of these businesses are owned or staffed by members of the voodoo religion, and Voodoo Authentica is one of those few.

The existence of voodoo in New Orleans relates to the fact that enslaved people in New Orleans had Sundays free. For a small glimpse into the daily life of an enslaved person, look across the street from Voodoo Authentica. You'll see a side view of an exposed-brick Creole townhouse. On the left side of it – the back of the building – is a courtyard, and past that, a simple structure with a steep roof. That is the slave quarters for this property. They're everywhere in the French Quarter and many other parts of the city, although they're often hidden from view. Today, they might be apartments or guest quarters or utility buildings or completely separate properties.

As we discussed previously, an enslaved person might spend Sunday working to raise money toward necessities or toward buying themselves, and they also might gather in Congo Square for music and dancing. But music and dance weren't purely secular activities. They were an important part of the religions of West Africa, which, like any non-Catholic religion, were illegal in New Orleans under French and Spanish rule. But they survived, because a day free meant time for religious gatherings, which went unrecognized by the French and Spanish and so survived. Within the city walls, these religions endured in disguise. Structurally, Catholicism and West African religions have a few traits in common – they both have a single god, but with intermediaries between mortals and that god – the saints in the case of Catholicism, and, in the case of West African religions, ancestral spirits. If an enslaved person wanted to build an altar for prayer to a spirit, they might find a saint who resembled that spirit, include an image of that saint on the altar, and use that camouflage to hide their true intent. The result – a West African religion incorporating some Catholic imagery and substance – is voodoo. Inside Voodoo Authentica, you can find altars of these kinds, created both for members of the religion to visit and for curious non-members to see and learn from.

There's a popular fear surrounding voodoo, which has almost nothing to do with the realities of the religion. Much of the common image of voodoo today comes from Hollywood and, before that, from superstitions held by slave owners, who believed African religions to be devil worship involving black magic. Their understanding of these religions was poor by design – enslaved people knew they would be punished for practicing their religion, and so they were secretive about it, and much of the knowledge of the religion today is still private oral tradition. One popular misunderstanding came from a voodoo priest's role as an all-around medic, involved in everything from cuts and broken bones to births. Record-keeping was important, and since the enslaved were almost never literate, they kept visual records, making small models of their patients, which they would then annotate with thorns or pins that would help them remember problems they'd observed or partially treated. The result, seen through the eyes of a slave owner, became the horror movie concept of a voodoo doll – a thing that in reality documented wounds rather than causing them.

When you're ready, continue along Dumaine and take a left onto Chartres. Continue two blocks to the intersection with Ursulines Street.

URSULINE CONVENT AND BEAUREGARD-KEYES HOUSE

The large building to your right at this intersection is the oldest in the city – the Ursuline Convent, completed in 1749. It's the only building to have survived both fires as well as manmade destruction since then. The nuns had been in New Orleans since 1727; in that early stage of its history, the colony was largely populated by the inmates of French prisons, and the Ursuline nuns were thought to be the right ones to impose some order into what were expected to be chaotic children. Today, the nuns have decided not to live in the French Quarter, but the school they opened – the oldest working girls' school in the country – still operates in uptown New Orleans. This site is now a museum run by the Catholic Church and focusing on a church perspective of local history; being the only French-era building in the city, it's also architecturally interesting on the inside. It's open every day but Sunday. The adjoining church, St. Mary's, opens for services on Sunday, but is about a century younger than the convent itself.

Opposite Chartres Street from the Convent is a yellow and white building called the Beauregard Keyes House. This Creole Greek Revival house was built as a private residence in 1826 on land that had been recently bought from the nuns. The name comes from its two most noted residents: P.G.T. Beauregard, the Louisiana-born Confederate General, and Frances Parkinson Keyes, a writer whose heyday was in the 1940s and 50s. Keyes wrote over fifty books, many set in the Mississippi Delta, including *Dinner at Antoine's*, which she wrote while living here in the house she renovated. The house offers hourly tours; you can also get a glimpse of the garden through a couple of openings in the wall.

From here, turn right onto Ursulines, toward the Mississippi. Proceed a block to Decatur Street; immediately across Decatur, you'll find yourself in Latrobe Park and the French Market.

FRENCH MARKET

Besides offering food, souvenirs, and local color, the French Market is also the oldest market in the country and arguably the oldest man-made feature of New Orleans. As mentioned at the start of the tour, the site of the market was home to a Native trading post centuries before the founding of New Orleans. The site was ideal for transport, combining river frontage and high elevation with easy access to the Esplanade Ridge, a natural land bridge leading out through the wetlands toward Lake Pontchartrain and thus providing access from anywhere along the lake or the nearby Gulf Coast.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the French Market lay along one of the busiest ports in the world. That era's visitors left behind many accounts of the sensory overload the market delivered. Every kind of New Orleans resident sold wares there, from new Sicilian immigrants selling fruit to Choctaw women sitting on palmetto mats selling herbs and baskets to free women of color selling coffee. Vendors shouted or sang about their goods in many languages, fighting for attention.

19th-century accounts also dwell on the market's filth. John James Audubon, the artist famous for painting American birds, explored the market in 1821 looking for models, and he was surprised to find, among the more typical game poultry, a large dead owl for sale; afterward, he described the French Market as "the dirtiest place in all the cities of the United States."

It's both sad and probably for the best that today's French Market doesn't capture much of that former intensity. But you can still see the market's history in its essential purpose, its art, and its layout. Different portions of the 19th-century market were designated for selling meat, fruits, vegetables, and dry goods, as well as specific areas for black and Native American vendors. The divisions you can see today – with retail here, restaurants there, flea market there – reflect these old boundaries. And while today's buildings were primarily constructed by the WPA in 1936-7, some of the 19th-century structures are still present. You can also find remnants of a few similar markets that were located all over the city – the St. Roch Market now has restaurants where there used to be stands for meat and produce, and Magazine Street, one of the main shopping areas in town, takes its layout from the location of several market buildings, all of which survive in some form or other.

The art in the French Market is mostly along Dutch Alley, the back side of the market to your right, and depicts 19th-century market scenes and characters. Also to your right are a couple of sit-down outdoor restaurants, which tend to have bands playing a mix of jazz, more recent local standards, and classic rock and soul.

To your left are the main attractions of the French Market – the farmer's market and the flea market. The farmer's market is named for what it used to be, not what it is – today you'll find a spread of prepared food here, including most of the more famous classic local dishes. For more places that offer a food and music blend, especially in the mid-afternoon and evening, Frenchmen Street, located near here, offers lots of choices side by side.

Before it was French Market Place, this tiny two-block stretch was Gallatin Street. Port cities tend to give part of their waterfront over to visiting sailors who want to be entertained. New Orleans has had several across the years, and in the late 19th century, Gallatin Street seems to have been the scariest. The eagerness of police to avoid it makes for a dearth of hard records about what happened here, but legend provides stories aplenty: customers knocked out and pressed into service aboard ships, a bouncer whose missing arm was replaced with a ball and chain, madams scarier than their bouncers, et cetera.

The conditions on Gallatin Street were among the factors that drove the city to legislate a vice district in 1895 that would come to be called Storyville. And even though it was closed in 1917 and its buildings have been mostly demolished, Storyville remains famous as one of the neighborhoods that made jazz a profession for many early greats like Jelly Roll Morton and even a very young Louis Armstrong. In 1935, after a few quiet decades, the last of Gallatin Street's lingering reputation was abolished through a name change and the demolition of all the buildings on one side, clearing the way for the farmer's market and flea market located here today. The buildings opposite the market remain to stimulate the imagination.

From here, proceed left down French Market Place toward the large red building at the end.

OLD US MINT

The Old US Mint, built in 1835, is the only building to have produced both US and Confederate currency. It also briefly served as housing for Confederate troops during the Civil War, until the occupation of US forces in 1862. Minting resumed from 1879 until 1909, when it was decommissioned.

In 1981, this landmark building became part of the Louisiana State Museum system. Today, it's the New Orleans Jazz Museum, designated as such as part of the celebration of the city's tricentennial in 2018. A stage inside hosts some excellent concerts, so it's worth seeing who'll be performing while you're here. The door to the museum is on the opposite side of the building.

From here, you have several options for where to proceed. Just on the other side of the Old US Mint is the beginning of Frenchmen Street, two blocks of bars and restaurants hosting live music daily starting as early as noon. Other restaurants and bars, mostly without music, lie along Decatur Street, which is a half-block away, parallel with the flea market and farmer's market. In the opposite direction is the riverfront, which can provide a more peaceful walk back toward the middle of the French Quarter, or the Riverfront Streetcar, which can carry you as far as the Morial Convention Center for $1.25 per person; a $.25 transfer can get you onto streetcars that run along Canal Street or St. Charles Avenue, a bus along Magazine Street, or other public transit options. And for more ideas, please pay a visit to www.freetoursbyfoot.com to check out some of our other offerings, including guided tours, self-guided tours, YouTube videos, and articles. We hope to see you again soon!