

Suggested Itinerary:

New Orleans, Louisiana's Cajun Country, Coastal Mississippi and Alabama's Gulf Beaches

From the wrought-iron balconies and Jazz music of New Orleans, venture to a bygone era, when sugarcane plantations lined Louisiana's River Road and Cajun Country was just being settled. Then head to the Gulf of Mexico coast, where casino resorts and beach towns beckon.

New Orleans, Louisiana

Suggested: 3-4 days

New Orleans, with its centuries-old cottages and elaborate old cemeteries, is a photographer's delight, but everything in this city tells a story of history and heritage. Guided tours are an ideal way to savour them. Join a stroll through the historic French Quarter or one tracing New Orleans' cemeteries, voodoo and ghost lore.

New Orleans is also a musical city. At Preservation Hall, a rotating lineup of fabulous musicians plays traditional New Orleans Jazz in the most intimate, acoustic environment. Queue up early for standing-room only space or plan in advance to purchase one of the venue's limited seats. Elsewhere in the city, Frenchmen Street is a hub for live music, lined with venues such as The Spotted Cat Music Club. The cozy room packs as many as three bands nightly, spotlighting various forms of Jazz.

Cuisine, and the cocktail culture, are vital to the New Orleans experience. From open-air cafés to fine-dining restaurants, you'll find countless interpretations of local signature dishes, such as sugar-dusted beignets, aromatic jambalaya, and spiced, smoked Andouille sausage.

Venture outside of the city for unique side trips. In St. Tammany Parish, swamp tours cruise Louisiana's mystic bayous, where alligator sightings are plentiful. Along the River Road, visit plantations – with names such as Laura, Oak Alley and Whitney – that transport you to a bygone era. Tour preserved homesteads and former slave cabins surrounded by fields of sugarcane.

Breaux Bridge and Lafayette, Louisiana

Suggested: 2-4 days

In Louisiana's Cajun Country, Vermilionville and Acadian Village recreate the lives of early settlers. Tour restored and replica buildings, today filled with exhibits and working artisans.

Join a food tour to sample area specialities, such as savory crawfish. Later, pop into Café des Amis, where shrimp and grits is a must-eat dish at Sunday brunch, or The Boudin Shop, a casual favorite serving golden-fried boudin balls, blending sausage, rice and seasonings.

You can dine at Prejean's, too, though live Cajun bands steal the show. Local and touring musicians – plus all manner of artistic exhibitions – make the Acadian Center for the Arts a good bet, too.

Don't leave the area without boarding a swamp tour to glimpse Lake Martin Rookery and its treasure of wading birds.

Biloxi, Mississippi

Suggested: 1-2 days

A dozen casinos with 24-hour gaming, including slots and table games, draw visitors to the coastal city of Biloxi. Beyond gaming, casino resorts treat guests to on-site amenities. Imagine luxurious spas, inviting pools, access to exclusive golf courses and some of the area's most outstanding dining and entertainment venues, with high-profile touring acts appearing regularly. Views of the sparkling Gulf of Mexico round out the experience.



Gulf Beaches

Suggested: 1-2 days

When you desire time in the sun, retreat to Alabama's Gulf Beaches. Communities such as Gulf Shores and Orange Beach characterize the quintessential Gulf of Mexico beach holiday: soft, white sand; clear waters along with plenty of activities to complement relaxing in the sun. Rent a kayak or paddleboard to explore Gulf waters near the shore, then board a boat tour to explore farther out. You'll find charter cruises for dolphin-sighting, sailing and deep-sea fishing, a popular pastime in the area. Be sure to enjoy fresh, local seafood when you visit here.

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