



Oak Alley Plantation



NEW ORLEANS & CAJUN COUNTRY

October 16, 2023 – 10 Days

Fall in Love with New Orleans & Louisiana

The state of Louisiana is divided into five distinct regions, and you experience three on this vacation. New Orleans is one of the great cities of the western world, not a place you simply visit, but one you fall in love with during three nights staying in the vibrant French Quarter. The cultural riches, sensual indulgences, and unparalleled service that define the New Orleans experience still flourish. History comes to life in Plantation Country as you travel back to the 1800s and the days of sprawling antebellum plantations. Visit Laura and Oak Alley, two of the most famous plantation mansions. During two days exploring Cajun Country, experience the peaceful bayous where French Canadians settled and forever changed the landscape and culture of the state. Take a swamp boat trip, hear the Evangeline story, tour the Tabasco Factory, and visit Martin Accordions.

Activity Level: 2



16 Meals Included:

9 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 4 dinners

Fares per person:

\$4,435 double/twin; \$5,245 single; \$4,205 triple
Tour is exempt from GST.

Early Bookers:

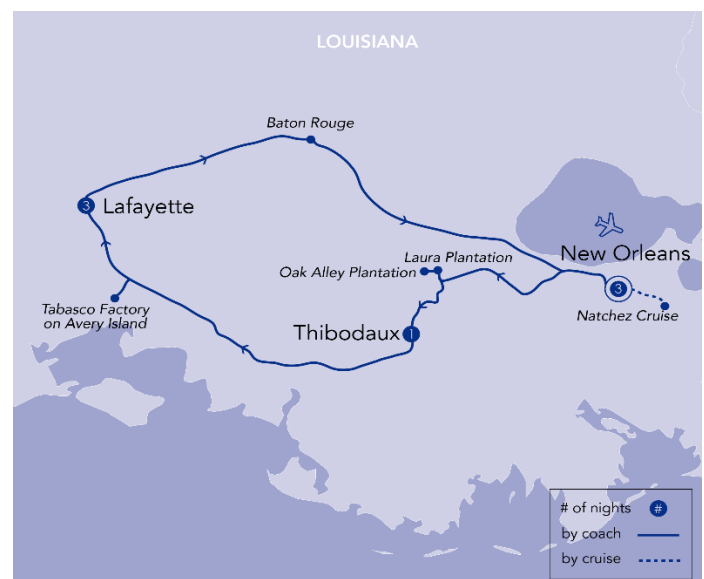
\$200 discount on first 15 seats; \$100 on next 10

Experience Points:

Earn 99 points on this tour.

Redeem 99 points if you book by August 10, 2023.

Departure from: Victoria



ITINERARY

Day 1: Monday, October 16

Transportation is provided to Seattle and we stay at the Embassy Suites Hotel near the airport. Meet your fellow travellers during tonight's reception.

Accommodation: Embassy Suites Sea-Tac

Day 2: Tuesday, October 17

We fly with Alaska Airlines to **New Orleans**, arriving in late afternoon. Welcome to Louisiana! Our coach meets us at the airport. We stay three nights at the Wyndham Hotel, located in the French Quarter on Royal Street and a block off Canal Street. It has a restaurant, free wi-fi, indoor pool, and fitness centre.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Wyndham Hotel

Day 3: Wednesday, October 18

This morning, a local guide takes us on a walking tour of the **French Quarter** where we hear the fascinating 300-year history of characters who built this city. Some highlights are the Spanish Quarter, St. Louis Cathedral in Jackson Square (where the original Louisiana Purchase is housed), Louis Armstrong Park, and **Bourbon Street**. After this walk, everyone gets a voucher to enjoy, at your leisure, a New Orleans tradition of coffee and beignets at Café Du Monde. There is free time for lunch at the Historic French Market. Then we board the coach for a driving tour of the city: Audubon Park; **St. Louis Cemetery**, an above-ground cemetery known for its voodoo history; elegant **St. Charles Avenue**, lined with gracious mansions and trees; Tulane and Loyola Universities; Flooded House Museum which shows the devastating effect of Hurricane Katrina; and the central business district beside the Mississippi River. Dinner is included at **Court of Two Sisters** in the French Quarter. The two sisters, Emma and Bertha Camors, born in 1858 and 1860, belonged to a proud and aristocratic Creole family. Their "rabais" or notions outfitted many of the city's elite women with formal gowns, lace, and perfumes imported from Paris.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Wyndham Hotel

Day 4: Thursday, October 19

At 11 am, we board the **Natchez Riverboat**, one of the few sternwheeler vessels left on the Mississippi River. There is a jazz band on board, calliope music, and a buffet lunch. During the two-hour cruise, we pass downtown highrises, the Domino Sugar Refinery, and the site of the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812. The mighty Mississippi rises in northern Minnesota and flows generally south for 3,730 km to the Gulf of Mexico. With its many tributaries, the Mississippi's watershed drains all or parts of 32 states and two provinces, and is the second longest river in North America. Next, we visit



Natchez sternwheeler

Mardi Gras World, the famous float-making studio where 90% of the floats used in New Orleans' Mardi Gras parades are built. We tour the many carnival dens and observe artists and sculptors as they create the world's largest fleet of floats. Tonight, we go to **New Orleans School of Cooking** for a demonstration of the taste of Louisiana, Cajun and Creole, and recipes are provided. Our host entertains us with history, tall tales, and trivia.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Wyndham Hotel



Mardi Gras World

Day 5: Friday October 20

Today is devoted to learning about life in rural Louisiana, from the perspectives of both the wealthy and the workers. Step back in time as we enter **Plantation Country** which borders the Mississippi River and features splendid plantation homes and sugar cane fields at every turn. Our first stop is **Laura Plantation**, once owned by one of the early Creole settlers. The house was built in 1805 and is surrounded by 12 Historic Register buildings. West African folktales of Br'er Rabbit were first recorded in the slave cabins. **Oak Alley Plantation**, the Grand Dame of the River Road, is next. A 400-metre-long canopy of giant live oak trees, believed to be 300 years old, forms an impressive avenue leading to the classic Greek-revival style antebellum home. Lunch is included on the grounds, followed by the house tour. We stay in Thibodaux in the **Bayou Lafourche** area.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Hampton Inn

Day 6: Saturday, October 21

We take a pontoon boat trip through a **cypress swamp**. Floating among trees draped with Spanish Moss, we watch for alligators, turtles, egrets, and many other native bird and animal species. We learn more about the Cajuns at the Acadian Cultural Center. They settled in Louisiana after their deportation from Nova Scotia and retain a unique dialect of the French language. Here they joined exiled French aristocrats fleeing the French Revolution and their Louisiana born, called Creoles. We stay three nights in **Lafayette**. Dinner is included at the authentic Cajun Table.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Comfort Suites

Day 7: Sunday, October 22

A local guide joins us for the next two days while we tour **Cajun Country**. The meeting of Acadian and Creole cultures was made famous by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem *Evangeline*. Some of the sites visited are Rip Van Winkle Gardens, St. John's Cathedral with its beautiful stained-glass windows, and 500-year old

Evangeline Mighty Oak. At **Vermilionville**, we explore an Acadian village of living history with seven restored buildings dating to 1765.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Comfort Suites

Day 8: Monday, October 23

Today's focus is on the New Iberia area. We visit the **Tabasco Factory** which makes the famous hot sauce. When Ned McIlhenny took over his father's Tabasco company in 1898, he was an Arctic explorer, naturalist, and conservationist, and he set aside a bird sanctuary on Avery Island to protect the endangered snowy egret. He created **Jungle Gardens** in 1935 and today we can marvel at a vast collection of 400 varieties of camellias, 100 types of azaleas, 50 kinds of juniper, and 1,000 varieties of iris. Later, we visit the Konriko Rice Mill, now a century old and the oldest rice mill in the USA, and **Martin Accordions**, noted for their Cajun squeeze boxes. A Cajun farewell dinner is held at Bon Temps.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Comfort Suites

Day 9: Tuesday, October 24

We head east via I-10 on the 30-km long bridge across the Atchafalaya Swamp. In **Baton Rouge**, a local guide meets us for a driving tour that includes the soaring State Capitol, the original Capitol, and tales of crooked Louisiana politicians. We visit the **Rural Life Museum** which has 24 buildings displaying folk architecture, tools, furniture, and farming equipment of the diverse cultures that settled and farmed pre-industrial Louisiana. It is an hour's drive to New Orleans Airport, then we fly in late afternoon to Seattle.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Embassy Suites Sea-Tac

Day 10: Wednesday October 25

Transportation is arranged from Seattle to your pickup point in the Victoria area.

Meals included: Breakfast



WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Transportation to Seattle airport and return
- 9 nights of accommodation and hotel taxes
- Flight from Seattle to New Orleans and return
- Current air taxes and security fees
- Airline luggage fees for 1 suitcase per person
- Locally-guided walking tour of French Quarter
- Locally-guided driving tour of New Orleans
- Flooded House Museum
- Mississippi River cruise on Sternwheeler *Natchez* with lunch and music
- Mardi Gras World
- New Orleans School of Cooking class
- Historic tour of Laura Plantation
- Historic tour of Oak Alley Plantation
- Swamp and wildlife tour on pontoon boat
- Acadian Cultural Center
- Locally-guided tour for 2 days in Cajun Country
- Evangeline Mighty Oak
- Vermilionville Acadian Village
- Rip Van Winkle Gardens
- Tabasco Factory tour
- Jungle Gardens
- Konriko Rice Mill
- Martin Accordions
- Locally-guided tour of Baton Rouge
- Rural Life Museum
- Gratuities for Louisiana guides and drivers
- Knowledgeable tour director
- Luggage handling at hotels
- **16 meals:** 9 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 4 dinners



Activity Level 2: Moderate activity including walking tours of the French Quarter and walking to attractions on uneven pavement on October 18 and 19, maximum 6 blocks or less than 1 km. Coaches are not allowed in the French Quarter except for arrival and departure days with luggage, so there is a one block walk between hotel and coach. Touring the historic mansions usually requires some stairs and standing. There can be longer walks in Seattle and New Orleans airports. There are many stops during this tour and you must be able to get on and off the coach by yourself without delaying your fellow travellers. The coaches cannot carry a scooter or motorized wheelchair. **Everybody** participating in this tour is expected to be capable of handling Activity Level 2. The tour director and driver have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or require frequent assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some days of the tour. In extreme situations, you may be required to leave the tour and travel home at your own expense; travel insurance will probably not cover you.



TOUR POLICIES

Payments: A deposit of \$300 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due August 10, 2023. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined. Payments can be made by online banking, cheque, Visa or Mastercard (\$5,000 limit per person per booking on credit cards).

Discounts: Early bookers receive \$200 discount on first 15 seats and \$100 on next 10 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after August 10, 2023.

Cancellation Policy: Up to July 10, 2023, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From July 11 to August 10, the cancellation charge is \$300 per person (your deposit). From August 11 to September 8, the cancellation charge is 80% of the tour fare. After September 8, there is no refund.

Itinerary and Fare Changes: As the world emerges from the pandemic, many of our suppliers such as hotels, restaurants, attractions, and transportation providers are struggling with shortage of staff, inflated costs, and supply line challenges. Sometimes we are notified about changes to the itinerary prior to departure and sometimes during the tour. We do our best to substitute a similar service if something cancels, but occasionally the only alternative is to provide a refund for the missed activity. Please note that if we are forced to cancel a component of an extensive tour due to an issue beyond our control, the current penalties still apply if you choose to cancel the entire tour. Fuel surcharges and changes to currency exchange rates, taxes or other tour costs can occur at any time, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up to departure.

Flight seating: We are unable to take requests for window or aisle seating on the planes. The airline will not accept them, as group seating is assigned as a block. If this is important to you, we suggest you take the "No Flight" option with a fare reduction of \$510 and book your own flight which allows seat selection.

Food Allergies: You must notify us no later than at final payment if you have a food allergy. Restaurants may not be able to satisfy all food allergies. As restaurants recover from two years of pandemic restrictions, many facing severe labour shortages, we have been informed that food allergies should be honoured, but it is impossible to handle everybody's requests for food preferences. (An allergy causes medical distress, a preference does not.) For some allergies, please consider bringing your own snacks or food items so you are not dependent on what restaurants are able to serve.

Travel Insurance: A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

Home pickups may be offered in Greater Victoria, depending on the number of people booked and coach size. Decision is made about 2 weeks before departure and you will be contacted about your pickup point and time.

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Experience Points: This tour earns 99 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until August 10, 2023.

Consumer Protection BC Licences: Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842

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