

Title:

New Orleans Earns a Spot On Your Holiday Wish List

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Summary:

Traveling for the holidays? With low hotel rates, special culinary offerings, cultural and family events and unique shopping, New Orleans makes the perfect destination.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

Traveling for the holidays? With low hotel rates, special culinary offerings, cultural and family events and unique shopping, New Orleans makes the perfect destination.

In December, New Orleans comes alive with music, food and decorations - all with the sounds, scents and sights of the season.

Food lovers will revel in the free daily cooking demonstrations given by the city's top chefs and have the special opportunity to savor a traditional Creole dinner, the Reveillon, offered in many of New Orleans' best restaurants. These fixed-price menus include a minimum of four courses and feature such delicacies as Louisiana sweet potato risotto, pecan-crusting venison tenderloin and eggnog creme brulee.

Music aficionados can enjoy free nightly concerts in the magnificent 18th-century St. Louis Cathedral in the historic French Quarter as some of the city's top jazz, gospel and contemporary musicians perform in full holiday splendor. Visitors can even sing along at the "Caroling in Jackson Square" on Dec. 19, where the songs of the season are sung by candlelight in one of the country's most historic and picturesque settings.

Ethnic holiday events also abound as a Celtic Christmas celebration, a Kwanzaa festival, two public Chanukah observances and others add to the unique melting pot of the city's heritage.

To help visitors stuff their loved ones' stockings with one-of-a-kind gifts, New

Orleans

offers limitless shopping

opportunities in the historic French Quarter, and the six miles of Magazine Street shops feature everything from antiques and boutiques to auction houses and curiosity shops.

Majestic City Park's "Celebration in the Oaks" is unique as visitors can walk, drive or ride a horse-drawn carriage through a dazzling display of 2 million lights strung through draping, centuries-old oak trees.

The holiday fun continues

after Dec. 25 with a New Year's Eve celebration only New Orleans could host. As a giant, lighted king cake baby drops from Jax Brewery at midnight, top local bands play for the crowds as fireworks ignite the darkened skies above the Mississippi River.

On Jan. 3, sports fans can enjoy the Nokia Sugar Bowl in the Louisiana Superdome, which will host two of the country's best collegiate football teams.