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WEEKEND Getaways

TRENDY QUARTERS AT THE ACE HOTEL NEW ORLEANS

If you're a local looking for a "staycation" or driving in from another part of the state, consider the Ace Hotel (acehotel.com/neworleans), newly opened in the stylish Central Business District of New Orleans. Any day can easily be capped by the culinary experiences

within the hotel's walls. Its restaurant, Josephine Estelle, offers seasonal, Italian cuisine and is the brainchild of James Beard Award-nominated chefs Andy Ticer and Michael Hudman. For a nightcap at the Ace, the Lobby Bar serves creative Southern

A CABIN RETREAT NEAR FONTAINEBLEAU STATE PARK

On the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain is the 2,800-acre Fontainebleau State Park, which offers miles of hiking and nature trails that weave throughout the swamplands and forest, and more than 400 different species live around the Fontainebleau, making wildlife-watching a pleasant addition to an afternoon stroll. The shallow waters and sandy beaches of Lake Pontchartrain allow for outdoor activities, including sailing, kayaking and canoeing. Cabin rentals are available through the State Park's website (crt.state.la.us/louisiana-state-parks/parks/fontainebleau-state-park).

One option is to rent a cottage at Pontchartrain Winds in Mandeville (pontchartrainwinds.com). From the grounds, you can take a short bike ride into town to the Mandeville Trailhead, which is home to free Friday evening concerts and the Saturday morning Mandeville Community Market. You can continue on to the beautiful Northlake Nature Center, which offers visitors the opportunity to experience hardwood forests and pond-swamp ecosystems. Fontainebleau State Park and its neighboring communities provide many amenities to create a weekend away in a peaceful, natural setting. - D.K.

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Italian-inspired cocktails, while the lively Three Keys music venue hosts events on an almost-nightly basis, including live jazz, DJ's, pop-up shops and other creative endeavors. Another destination within the hotel is Alto, a relaxing rooftop bar offering picturesque views of New Orleans's gleaming cityscape. - D.K.

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Camellia
House Bed
& Breakfast

OUTDOOR ADVENTURES AT CAMELLIA HOUSE BED & BREAKFAST

If a bed-and-breakfast outside New Orleans is more your speed, then just a quick car ride away is the quaint Camellia House Bed & Breakfast in Covington (camelliahouse.net). The raised Southern-style cottage is steps away from enough activities to pack any day tripper's daily schedule.

The B&B has bikes available for guests, and the nearby Tammany Trace (tammanytrace.org) is a top-rated trail and Loui-

siana's only rails-to-trails conversion. Originally part of the Illinois Central Railroad, the 31-mile Trace is now a hike and bike trail that connects five communities from downtown Covington to Slidell. Walk, run, rollerblade or bike from town to town and enjoy the lush wildlife the Northshore has to offer. After a long day of physical activity, the Columbia Street Tap Room (covingtontaproom.com) offers Southern comfort cuisine and traditional

American bar food. The restaurant moonlights as a music venue during the weekends, so you are bound to catch a lively performance from a local musician. Back at the Camellia House, you can lounge by the pool, take a dip in the hot tub, have a nightcap down by the fire pit, or soundly drift on the front porch swing to the sweet sounds of nature. - D.K.

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LUXURY LIVING IN LOUISIANA'S STATE CAPITAL

In Baton Rouge, the L'Auberge Casino & Hotel (batonrouge.com) houses all the dining, nightlife and relaxing spa treatments for anyone looking to create a well-rounded weekend. Begin your trip exploring the rich political heritage of Baton Rouge. Take a tour of Louisiana's Old State Capitol, which was converted into a museum in 1994 to serve as a historical landmark to this Southern states democratic history. Next, head over to Louisiana's current State Capitol for a fascinating tour of the grounds. Just viewing the building is a marvel in itself. Built in the 1930s, the State Capital is a stunning example of Art Deco design and stands 450 feet tall, making it

the tallest capital in the United States.

After a didactic day, head back to L'Auberge to round out the evening. Overlooking the scenic Mississippi River, you can wine and dine at one of four restaurants before hitting up the craps table at the casino. Take a late-night dip in the rooftop pool while gazing at the glistening beauty of Baton Rouge at night. Complete your stay with a rousing game of golf at the partnering golf course or have a rejuvenating massage in the privacy of your own suite.

- D.K.



FAMILY-FRIENDLY CAMPING IN DENHAM SPRINGS

If alfresco living is a preferred home away-from-home, camping is the epitome of tapping into your inner outdoorsman. The pet-friendly Baton Rouge KOA in Denham Springs (koa.com/campgrounds/batonrouge) is a perfect spot to get your camping fix at night while enjoying fun activities during the day. Grab your family, friends or fellow campers and kill time playing air hockey in the game room, playing 18-hole miniature golf, swimming in the pool or basking in the hot tub. Next door there is access to a tennis court, basketball courts, paved hiking and biking trails and baseball fields.

After sweating in the sun take a 25-minute drive to Baton Rouge and tour the Fletcher-class destroyer *USS KIDD*. Nicknamed the "Pirate of the Pacific," it is a memorial to honor the men and women of American armed forces. Eat closer to the campsite at Randazzo's Italian Market (randazzositalianmarket.com), serving up authentic Italian cuisine and homemade pastas to cap off a busy day with comforting food. If the RV is in the shop or having a tent as your only safety from the forces of nature does not draw out a picture-perfect weekend, the Baton Rouge KOA also has cabins available for rent. - D.K.



Myrtles Plantation

HAUNTED HISTORICAL STAY AT THE MYRTLES PLANTATION

The stretch of Baton Rouge to New Orleans is known as "Plantation Country" and speaks to Louisiana's rich antebellum heritage. As standing monuments to the decadence of the past, an overnight stay in one of these historic mansions is a getaway in itself. Just 25 minutes outside of Baton Rouge is The Myrtles Plantation (myrtlesplantation.com) in St. Francisville. Built in 1796 in true Neo-Classical splendor, its décor evokes pre-war glamour including a 125-foot veranda, ornamental ironwork, hand-painted stained glass, crown molding, Aubusson tapestries, Baccarat crystal chandeliers and Carrara marble mantels.

Take a guided tour to learn about the mansions many owners and tumultuous past. After a tour take a stroll through the historic grounds laced with Live Oaks, Crepe Myrtle trees, azaleas and other botanical life typical of antebellum plantations. Experiencing its history and decadent grandeur will not be the only highlight of the trip - through the years plantation keepers lay claim to its haunted past. Many ghost sightings have taken place beginning in 1992 when the proprietress photographed what appeared to be a slave girl standing between two of the plantation buildings-partake in the Mystery Tour to learn more about other strange happenings speckling The Myrtle Plantation's extensive history. -D.K.



RIP VAN WINKLE GARDENS BED AND BREAKFAST

If you're looking for a romantic, quiet weekend away, three cottages await you on 25 acres of semitropical gardens at the Rip Van Winkle Gardens (ripvanwinklegardens.com) on Jefferson Island near New Iberia. A majestic tree-lined road leads to

this island, located on an elevated natural salt dome surrounded by marshland. The Joseph Jefferson Mansion, built in 1870, sits atop the island and is open for tours. A cook's cottage and servants' quarters serve as the bed-and-breakfast loca-

tions and are exquisitely appointed with mahogany king-size, four-poster Louisiana French-style beds. Amenities at these Acadian cottages include fine cotton sheets, down-filled pillows and a complimentary in-room breakfast and bottle of

wine for two. A Japanese Tea House also sits on the island. The Jefferson Cafe, with a glassed-in porch, is nestled in a grove of ancient oak trees and offers a breathtaking view of nearby Lake Peigneur. - J.P.



GRAND ISLE VACATION RENTAL



Grand Isle offers a fun and relaxed beach escape on Louisiana's only inhabited barrier island. Seven miles of glistening sand await visitors on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. Great saltwater fishing can be found in Grand Isle with speckled trout, redfish, amberjack, red snapper and more. Bring your own boat for fishing in

Caminada or Barataria Pass or let a charter captain take you out to fish the world's largest artificial reef. Grand Isle is home to beautiful oak trees, lakes, bays, marshes and historic homes. Visitors can hike through the nature conservatory, Butterfly Dome, or take a self-guided walking tour of 1893-era homes. Wake

Side (*wakeside.net*) Louisiana's only salt-water cable park, uses a cable system to pull thrill-seekers on inner tubes, skis or wakeboards over two jumps and a water obstacle. Several restaurants and a grocery store make it a convenient vacation destination. - J.P.



Grand Isle

CAMPING IN JONESVILLE, SHORT-TERM RENTALS ON SICILY ISLAND & VISITING FROGMORE ALONG THE WAY



Uncle Bud's Cabins and RV Park on Larto Lake (*unclebudsincabins.com*), located an hour due east of Alexandria, offers cabins, bunkhouses and RV hookups on one of the top crappie lakes in the United States. The Kincaid Lake Campground in Kisatchie National Forest is a modern campground located inside of the Evangeline Unit in the Calcasieu Ranger District (9912 Highway 28, Boyce). One of the most inviting public campgrounds in the state, Kincaid Lake offers easy access to a nine-mile hiking loop - the longest in the region - lined with wild azaleas, magnolias and loblolly pines.

Several of the most entertaining *Airbnb.com* listings in Central Louisiana are for short-term rental properties in Sicily Island, a village located just outside of Ferriday. Lake Saint John, a small oxbow lake, is the site of lakefront listings that ask renters to "ease off on loud music after 10 p.m. (unless neighbors are playing same)" and "only smoke in the grill shack." This party-friendly vibe is perhaps to be expected from a town that counts Jerry Lee Lewis and Mickey Gilley among its native sons. History buffs passing through Ferriday should not miss Frogmore Plantation (*frogmoreplantation.com*), where visitors can contrast a working cotton plantation of the early 1800s with a modern cotton plantation and gin of today. - C.J.



Camping at Lake Chicot

A STATE PARK IN VILLE PLATTE



Chicot State Park (*crt.state.la.us/louisiana-state-parks/parks/chicot-state-park*) in Ville Platte is a paradise for campers and paddlers with more than 6,400 acres of rolling hills and calm, clear waters shaded by cypress trees. The state park features a number of campsites with standard hookups. There are countless other spots to pitch a tent along the shores of picturesque Lake Chicot. Fishermen can catch their limit of largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill perch and red-ear sunfish, either from their own boats, a rental boat or from the park's 400-foot fishing pier. Hiking and backpacking trails completely encircle Lake Chicot, including a hiking and biking trail that winds through the park's bottomland hardwood forest. The 300-acre Louisiana State Arboretum, an area devoted to a natural exhibition of over 150 species of plant life native to Louisiana, is located adjacent to the main entrance. Entrance fees are \$2 per person. - J.P.



CENTRAL LOUISIANA: SCENIC VIEWS AT TOLEDO BEND & NATCHITOCHEs



Located on the east side of the Toledo Bend Reservoir, Wildwood Resort in Zwolle (*wildwood-resort.com*) offers an assortment of cabins, cottages and multi-family lodges, each with its own amenities and personality. One of Toledo Bend's best scenic views is available from the resort's private fishing pier. Other perks include nature trails, stocked fishing ponds,

fire pits and swimming pools located throughout the property. When visiting Zwolle, sample the town's famous tamales at L & W Tamale House (1547 Oak St.) or Uncle Wayne's BBQ and Tamales (21400 Highway 191).

Even in a city with 26 bed and breakfasts, the Judge Porter House (*judgeporterhouse.com*) in Natchitoches manages to

stand out. High ceilings, heart pine floors and five fireplaces are among the many reasons why this bed and breakfast has a reputation as one of the best in the South. Rooms on the second floor offer access to a Queen Anne-style wrap-around porch complete with rocking chairs and luxurious shade provided by a canopy of live oaks. The best of Natchitoches

lies within a three-block walk, including shopping on brick-paved Front Street, famous meat pies at Lasyone's Meat Pie Kitchen and divine bread pudding at Mercier Beaucoup. - C.J.



LOYD HALL IN CHENEYVILLE & HONEY BRAKE LODGE IN JONESVILLE

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Built in 1820, Loyd Hall Plantation (loydhall.com) is a Neoclassical-style home at the heart of a 640-acre working farm. Five cottages located on the property may be rented, but guests seeking a truly upscale experience should consider booking one of two suites in the main house. Both multiroom suites feature antique canopy beds, clawfoot baths and access to inviting balconies that overlook the property. Visit nearby Marksville to sample craft beer and Cajun fare at Central Louisiana's only brewpub, Broken Wheel Brewery, located inside of Fresh Catch Bistreaux (109 Tunica Drive, Marksville).

Ranked by *Garden & Gun* magazine as one of the best hunting lodges in the South, Honey Brake Lodge (honeybrake.com) in Jonesville provides an unforgettable experience that can include guided waterfowl and big game excursions, bass fishing or simply enjoying the incredible, 13,000-square-foot grand lodge. If you'd like to experience this high-end lodge, be prepared to plan further in advance than usual - duck hunting excursions are typically booked two years out. - C.J.

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EXPLORE POVERTY POINT, THEN CAMP AT LAKE CLAIBORNE

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There's been an increased public interest in Poverty Point since the prehistoric earthworks were named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014. Just 13 miles from the historic site is Poverty Point Reservoir State Park in Delhi (www.nps.gov/popo), a camping and fishing destination offering 54 campsite rentals as well as eight cabins and

four lakeside lodges. Fishing enthusiasts, especially, should consider this park, as the reservoir has a reputation for being one of the top crappie fisheries in Louisiana.

About an hour and a half east of Poverty Point, a popular camping destination in North Louisiana is Lake Claiborne State Park

in Homer (crt.state.la.us/louisiana-state-parks/parks/lake-claiborne-state-park) which offers boat and canoe rentals as well as a beach, disc golf courses and trails. Deluxe cabins and campsites are available for rental, with campsites beginning at \$14 per night. If you're planning to explore the backroads of North Louisiana, especially

near communities like Shreveport, Plain Dealing, Homer and West Monroe, consider traveling the Boom or Bust Byway, a 130-mile, GPS-driven scenic tour that uses a free app to guide you along scenic Highway 2. It can be downloaded on iTunes or Google Play: Search for "N La Byways." - C.J.

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This image of Poverty Point comes from the book *Poverty Point: Revealing the Forgotten City* by Jenny Ellerbe and Diana M. Greenlee

PHOTO BY JENNY ELLERBE

HOMES AWAY FROM HOME: THE MAHAFFEY FARM HOUSE & HAMILTON HOUSE INN

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One of Louisiana's most interesting AirBnB listings is tucked away down a country lane in Princeton, an unincorporated community just east of Bossier City. The Mahaffey Farm House in Princeton (mahaffeyfarms.com) is a 90-year-old, solar-powered cottage located on the grounds of a working farm. Proprietor Sandra Evans serves a farm-to-table country breakfast made with ham and eggs raised right outside the door. If a break from the hustle and bustle of city life is needed, guests are encouraged to spend the day taking in life on the farm. If feeding the chickens isn't enough excitement, the farm is located just minutes from live horseracing at Louisiana Downs in Bossier City (caesars.com/harrahs-louisiana-downs) and only 15 minutes from riverfront nightlife in downtown Shreveport.

The Hamilton House Inn (hamiltonhouseinn.com) is a historic bed-and-breakfast located in West Monroe's celebrated Antique Alley and Cotton Port Historic District. Browse 30 shops filled with antiques, collectibles, furniture and vintage clothing, or walk two blocks and cross the Endom Bridge into Monroe to dine at Chef Cory Bahr's celebrated Restaurant Cotton (restaurantcotton.com). - C.J.

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LUXURIOUS STAYS UP NORTH:THE REMINGTON SUITE HOTEL & EDGEWOOD PLANTATION

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Guests at The Remington Suite Hotel and Spa (remingtonsuite.com) in Shreveport should be prepared for the possibility of a celebrity encounter. The luxurious boutique hotel has established itself as the preferred accommodation for visiting celebrities ranging from Angela Bassett to Marilyn Manson. Enormous suites are complemented by amenities including a saltwater pool, on-site massage therapists, in-room essential oil diffusers and a private screening room. Within easy walking distance are several popular Shreveport bars, including The Noble Savage (thenoblesavagetavern.com).

Farmerville's Edgewood Plantation (edgewoodplantationlouisiana.com) is a striking "Steamboat Gothic"-style plantation house built in 1902 by merchant Jefferson Davis Baughman and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The home recently underwent extensive renovations and opened as a bed and breakfast in 2012. A two-story bell tower and a 3,000 square-foot, wraparound porch add a sense of Southern grandeur to the house, while the proprietors' pets - including a black Clydesdale horse and a pot-bellied pig - provide a unique welcome for guests. Food lovers passing through Farmerville should not miss L.B.K.'s, a combination barbecue joint and soul food cafeteria that is highly regarded among barbecue connoisseurs. - C.J.

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