

All Jazzed UP

New Orleans Still Sees Skies of Blue



MUSICIANS PERFORM IN THE PIAZZA D'ITALIA OUTSIDE THE LUXURIOUS LOEWS NEW ORLEANS HOTEL, LOCATED ADJACENT TO THE ARTS AND WAREHOUSE DISTRICT WITH A SWEEPING VIEW OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER. BELOW LEFT: THE HOTEL'S MAGICAL NIGHT LIGHTS.

T PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEITH ROCKE

he Big Easy might not have it so easy right now, but its high-spirited mystique hasn't missed a beat. In the wake of catastrophic Katrina and the heartbreaking devastation it wrought upon the Gulf Coast, the proud people of New Orleans continue to celebrate Louisiana's prized legacy as they work day by day to rebuild it. This spring, *Southern Seasons'* staff photographer Keith Rocke visited the Crescent City, partaking of its many charms on a four-day media trip that took him from the gator-lovin' waters of the Manchac Swamp to the jazzy streets of the French Quarter and the luxurious quarters of the Loews New Orleans Hotel. Thanks to all the sightseeing, he didn't gain a pound from the hearty servings of gumbo, jambalaya and etoufee, not to mention the muffalettas, Po'Boys and beignets. Enchanted by both the culinary specialties and cultural treasures of this historic hot spot – including those lavish mansions and storied cemeteries of the Garden District, Keith was perhaps most moved by the spirit of the



ABOVE: BOASTING "THE WORLD'S BEST BAKED HAM," MOTHER'S RESTAURANT HAS BEEN SERVING UP HEARTY DISHES OF AUTHENTIC NEW ORLEANS HOME COOKING FOR MORE THAN 60 YEARS, INCLUDING THE BEST PO'BOY SANDWICH IN TOWN.

N'Awlins people, who, despite everything, put on a happy face. Katrina's blow was crippling, as this outsider experienced on one of the city's eye-opening hurricane tours, but the resolve of the folks who call this place home is unbreakable.



LEFT: CAJUN PRIDE SWAMP TOURS TAKES GUESTS ON A UNIQUE JOURNEY THROUGH THE MANCHAC SWAMP, WHERE THE POPULACE OF AMERICAN ALLIGATOR BRAZENLY PATROL THE LOUISIANA WETLANDS.

RIGHT: ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S TOP-RANKED ZOOS, NEW ORLEANS' AUDUBON ZOO BLENDS THE EXOTIC EXCITEMENT OF ANIMALS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE WITH THE SERENITY OF ITS LUSH GARDENS.





THERE'S NO BETTER WAY TO CELEBRATE THE FRENCH QUARTER THAN SUNDAY BRUNCH & JAZZ AT **ARNAUD'S**. FOR 87 YEARS - THROUGH FLOODS, HURRICANES, FIRES AND WARS, THE RESTAURANT HAS STOOD AS A MONUMENT TO THE ENDURING ALLURE OF CLASSIC CREOLE CUISINE, FROM SHRIMP CREOLE AND TROUT AMANDINE TO CHICKEN ROCHAMBEAU AND FILET LAFITTE.

TRAVEL

“New Orleans is known for its rich history, its cuisine, music, culture and traditions. It wasn't too long ago that this beautiful place experienced one of the most devastating hurricanes in history. Some said New Orleans would never be the same. They were wrong. I know New Orleans will come back bigger and better than ever.”

— *Emeril Lagasse*



ABOVE: **CAFÉ DEGAS**, NAMED AFTER THE 19TH CENTURY FRENCH IMPRESSIONIST WHO VISITED THE CITY IN 1872, OFFERS DELECTABLE CUISINE IN THE QUIANT AMBIANCE OF A FRENCH BISTRO. AMONG THE SPECIALTIES OF CHEF RYAN HUGHES IS THIS OVEN-BRAISED LEG OF DUCK CONFIT WITH PARMESAN GNOCCHI, BLACK CURRANT AND NATURAL REDUCTION SAUCE, AND WILTED FRISEE, PAIRED WITH CLASSIC FRENCH ONION SOUP AND A GLASS OF 2003 GUYONT HATES COTES DE NUIT.

LEFT: DURING A DINNER HELD AT CAFE RECONCILE TO HONOR 6TH DISTRICT POLICE AND FIREFIGHTERS, **EMERIL LAGASSE** MADE A \$25,000 CONTRIBUTION TO THE CENTRAL CITY RESTAURANT FROM MONEY COLLECTED AT THE FUNDRAISER.

BELOW: THE SKY'S THE LIMIT AT THE AAA FOUR DIAMOND **LOEWS NEW ORLEANS HOTEL**, WITH OVERSIZED GUESTROOMS OFFERING EXPANSIVE VIEWS OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER (LEFT), FINE DINING AT CAFE ADELAIDE OF THE COMMANDERS' PALACE FAMILY OF RESTAURANTS AND A FULL MENU OF SERVICES AT THE BALANCE SPA AND FITNESS CENTER.

