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Degas' New Orleans

Experience the city through the eyes of the artist at the house where he lived and worked.

In the fall of 1872, a depressed Edgar Degas left his beloved Montmartre, France, to visit his mother's family in New Orleans. In spite of concerns over his impending blindness, his five-month sojourn in the Crescent City would mark a turning point in his life that would influence the history of the art world forever.

Degas' Time in New Orleans

His mother, Celestine Musson, was born in New Orleans to a French Creole family. While visiting New Orleans, Degas lived and worked in his uncle's stately Esplanade Avenue home, where he completed 18 paintings, four drawings, and wrote five letters. The subjects of the paintings were mostly his cousins, and these works reflect Creole life during Reconstruction. The letters give insight into the developing Degas — the transitioning individual and artist.

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Degas captured the unseen details of his uncle's cotton business in *Portraits in an Office*, the New Orleans Cotton Exchange, which would become his most famous American work. But while painting *Cotton Merchants*, he wrote that his artistic style had evolved. "I'm preparing another, less complicated and more spontaneous, better art," Degas declared.

In the spring of 1873, Degas left New Orleans and returned to Paris with renewed self-confidence. He then began work on bringing the dreams of his youth to reality, and on April 15, 1874, Degas and Claude Monet produced the First Impressionist Exhibition, marking the birth of the French Impressionist Movement.

Visiting Today

Degas House now operates as a Historic Museum House, a bed-and-breakfast, and hosts weddings and receptions in the parlors and the French Courtyard; there's also a gift shop. Among its many awards, the house is distinguished by the French Ministry of Culture through the French National Order of Arts and Letters. It's the world's only home or studio of the artist that's open to the public, fitting for the place that stole his heart. "Louisiana must be respected by all her children, of which I am almost one," Degas wrote in 1872.

Sign up for a guided two-hour tour led by Degas' great-grandnieces. You'll see the beautifully

Degas’ restored house and the artwork he completed while living here, and watch the award-winning
New documentary Degas in New Orleans, a Creole Sojourn. You can even have breakfast at the
Orleans house before the tour, complete with Creole omelets, French toast, and mimosas. Feeling creative? Check out the Bottles and Brushes with Degas program, where a local artist leads participants in creating a Degas-inspired painting or iconic New Orleans scene.

You can even book a stay at Degas House and sleep where the artist once lived and worked. The mansion’s nine guest rooms and suites can be seen in the paintings Degas created in these very spaces. The Estelle Suite was the setting for *A Woman Seated on a Balcony*; the private balcony overlooks tree-lined Esplanade Avenue. In guest rooms, expect to find elegant touches — fireplaces, crystal chandeliers, four-post beds, claw-foot tubs — for a scene that is picture perfect.