



Natchitoches Historic Downtown
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destination to put at the top of your must-visit list!

It's easy to see why USA Today named Natchitoches (pronounced NACK-a-tish), Louisiana, one of the "Best Historic Small Towns." The picturesque and beautifully preserved [Natchitoches Downtown Historic District](#) graces the idyllic banks of the lazy Cane River Lake. When French-Canadian explorer Louis Juchereau de St. Denis happened upon these banks and the nearby Natchitoches Indian Village in 1714, he started a trading post. Trade between French-Canadian explorers, the Indigenous People, and the Spaniards in Mexico thrived, as the City of Natchitoches grew. It is the oldest city in the Louisiana Purchase Territory and a charming

Three Centuries of History and Counting

Since its founding, Natchitoches has witnessed 300 years of history— from the trading post days to the charming destination and “City of Lights” it is today. Much of this history is evident in Natchitoches Historic Downtown, a National Historic Landmark District. The district encompasses 33 blocks and includes more than 50 landmarks that are over an entire century old.

A stroll or carriage ride through downtown showcases these landmarks, including [Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site](#). This reputable fort is a recreation of the early French-Canadian troops built as defense against Spanish forces in Texas.

The Immaculate Conception Church was one of the earliest buildings Louis Juchereau de St. Denis built. The original 1717 structure is gone, but the current church — [the Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception](#) — dates from 1857. Stunning stained-glass windows bathe the hand-painted interior in beautiful light. [Trinity Episcopal Church](#), also built in 1857, is an equally lovely place to visit.

Along Natchitoches Downtown Historic District’s residential streets, you’ll see grand Queen Anne mansions and whimsical Victorian homes. Some of these houses, including the Steel Magnolia House, now serve as beautifully appointed [bed and breakfast inns](#). Quiet and relaxing, you may want to extend your stay by a few days just to refresh in the luxurious surroundings!

If you happen to stay in a French Creole cottage with a wide veranda, gabled roof, and a row of windows and two doors across the front, take a look at the porch ceiling. The ceilings are often painted haint blue to keep the evil spirits away. This tradition can be traced back to the enslaved African people who believed “haints” or ghosts would mistake the blue ceilings for uncrossable bodies of water and would not haunt residents of the home.

Speaking of spirits, join a [walking tour of the American Cemetery](#) to learn about those laid to rest in Natchitoches’ oldest cemetery. Your guide will introduce you to the upstanding citizens and colorful characters buried here along the way!

Historic Downtown’s Award-Winning Main Street

The heart of Natchitoches’ historic commercial area is Front Street. The street’s multi-story brick buildings are works of art with ornate cast iron galleries on each of their upper floors. This red brick road lined with architectural gems landed Front Street on Architectural Digest Magazine’s list of “The Most Beautiful Main Streets in America.”



One of the commercial buildings has been home to the [Kaffie-Fredericks General Mercantile](#) since 1894. This mercantile is Natchitoches’ oldest business and Louisiana’s oldest general store. Downtown buildings from the Antebellum Period are filled with one-of-a-kind boutiques, galleries, and restaurants to satisfy any craving. Savor French cuisine, sample Creole and Cajun dishes, and enjoy fresh caught Louisiana seafood. Gumbo, jambalaya, crawfish etouffee, and [Lasyone’s](#) famous meat pies await!

Planning Your Visit

Downtown Natchitoches truly has something for everyone. Join a guided historical tour or a self-guided tour of movie set locations for Steel Magnolias. Enjoy nature at one of the district’s



pocket parks or the lush gardens of a bed and breakfast. Along the riverfront, relax under a shady live oak tree festooned with Spanish moss and listen to the burbling sounds of [Beau Jardin](#)'s waterfalls. For another view of the Beau Jardin and the historic downtown, kayak along the glassy Cane River Lake. Be sure to plan your trip around one of the many festivals and annual events the historic district hosts.

At the day's end, enjoy the comforts of a charming bed and breakfast inn and the Southern hospitality of your hosts in one of downtown's historic homes.

Be sure to [visit Natchitoches](#) official website for more information on Natchitoches Historic Downtown.