

***COAST GUARD STATION
GRAND ISLE***



WELCOME ABOARD PACKAGE

Updated: January 2008

COAST GUARD STATION GRAND ISLE

Address – End of LA 1, Grand Isle, LA 70358

Coast Guard Station Grand Isle is located on the NE corner of the island, about 2 and a half hours south of New Orleans. STA Grand Isle is a small boat station consisting of two 41' UTB boats, two 33' SAFE boats, and two 23 SAFE boats. Nearby Coast Guard Operational units include Sector New Orleans, Station New Orleans, Air Station New Orleans, Station Venice, and several other Coast Guard stations and cutters. Station Grand Isle is staffed by one LT (CO), one BMC (XPO), one MKC (EPO), one HSC, one MK1, three MK2s, five MK3s, three FNs, four BM1s, four BM2s, six BM3s. four SNs, one SK1, one EM3, one FS1, and two FS3s.

Station Grand Isle is located in Jefferson Parish at the southern tip of La. Hwy. 1. Grand Isle is the only inhabited barrier island in the state of Louisiana. The primary businesses for island residents are tourism, the seafood industry, and oilfield related professions. Originally inhabited in the early 1700's, Grand Isle is a relatively small community with a population of approximately 1,500 people. However, during the summer when vacationers begin flocking to the island, it is occupied by more than 12,000 tourists taking part in activities such as the Grand Isle International Tarpon Rodeo and Fourth of July festivities. The wide beaches of the Gulf serve as excellent place to decompress after a long work week. The area has been rated one of the top "10" spots in the country to sport fish.

The remote location poses unique challenges to arriving members. We are 45 minutes from any services, retail stores, and restaurants. The town has one supermarket, two gas stations, two marinas, three restaurants, and a few shops. There are no daycare facilities on the island. The closest fast food restaurants and Walmart are located "up the bayou" in Galliano, a 45 minute drive. The town of Houma has all the retail stores, restaurants, and services you would expect to find in a small city. Houma is 90 minutes from the station. Members carpool, pick items up for each other, and schedule weekly trips to these areas.

The heat in Louisiana can be oppressive during the summer, with extremely high levels of humidity. Since the unit is located on marshland, there is an abundant mosquito population almost year round. Hurricanes have left their mark on this island and evacuations are often necessary. Arriving members will receive a detailed hurricane package and briefing.

Station Grand Isle is the only priority "4" small boat station in the Coast Guard. It is a true multi-mission station with considerable workload directed towards Search and Rescue, Ports and Waterways Coastal Security, and Law Enforcement missions.

Congratulations on your orders and joining the STA Grand Isle Team.

Base History

1919: The first Coast Guard unit in the Grand Isle area was commissioned in 1919 as Barataria Bay Station 214.



1960: The first 82 foot cutter assigned to Grand Isle was United States Coast Guard Cutter (USCGC) POINT YOUNG (WPB 82303) from 1960 to 1965.



1965: USCGC POINT YOUNG was assigned to Coast Guard Squadron One, Division 11 and deployed to Vietnam from 1965 to 1970. On March 16, 1979, POINT YOUNG was decommissioned as a Coast Guard cutter and transferred to South Vietnam as HQ 714.

1966: The second 82 foot cutter assigned to Grand Isle was USCGC POINT SAL (WPB 82352) commissioned on December 5, 1966 and faithfully served the Grand Isle area for the next 35 years.



1968: The current station of Grand Isle was commissioned on November 1, 1968 as Coast Guard Group Grand Isle which also included a LORAN "A" Station and Rescue Small Boat Station. Coast Guard Group Grand Isle had operational and administrative control of USCGC POINT SAL, home ported and collocated with Group and Station Grand Isle, USCGC POINT LOOKOUT (WPB 82341) home ported in Pascagoula, MS, USCG Station Grand Isle (collocated with Group Grand Isle and POINT SAL), Aids to Navigation Team (ANT) Dulac, LA and ANT Berwick, LA.

1980: The LORAN Station was closed on December 31, 1980

1987: The Coast Guard made an administrative consolidation of the units in this area and reassigned all units to Coast Guard Group New Orleans. On July 2, 1987, Group Grand Isle was decommissioned leaving only Station Grand Isle and USCGC POINT SAL located in Grand Isle.



2001: On May 29, 2001, POINT SAL was decommissioned and transferred to Columbia as part of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 designed to transfer to foreign nations excess boats and cutters that have been decommissioned or otherwise removed from service. The POINT SAL was replaced with an 87 foot cutter USCGC STURGEON (WPB 87336) commissioned on September 28, 2001.



Current: Coast Guard Station Grand Isle is currently billeted for 41 active duty personnel (1 commissioned officer and 40 enlisted members) and 4 enlisted reservists. The station operates two 41' Utility Boats (UTB), two 33' Special Purpose Craft-Law Enforcement, and two 23' SAFE boats. Our base encompasses 29 acres and 35,000 square feet of operational and multi-purpose buildings including 24 government houses for personnel assigned with families and a nine room unaccompanied personnel housing (UPH) facility for single active duty members. In August of 2005, the base was ravaged by Hurricane Katrina and needed extensive to repair. The re-opening ceremony was held in October of 2006.

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF WEB SITES AND RESOURCES PLEASE VISIT:

<http://www.uscg.mil/d8/sta/grandisle>

Living On Base

Family Housing

The family housing units on Station Grand Isle are comprised of 2, 3, and 4 bedroom houses or duplexes. We are required to maintain a 90% occupancy rate in housing. There are 24 housing units available, each with a fenced in yard and a garage or double carport, along with storage under each unit. The base housing also has a large heated in ground pool, basketball court and a playground. There is a gym in the Station open to everyone. There are two gazebos and a fire pit located on the base for morale events.

General Information

- Trash pickup is on Monday and Thursdays
- Exterminator comes on the 1st of the month; you will get an email in advance
- There is a gate code to enter the base
- We are located in Jefferson Parish
- Our area code is 985, local telephone #'s begin with 787, Golden Meadow, Galliano, Larose and Leeville begin with 475,632,325,693,798,396.
- The local grocery store is the Sureway
- The convenience store/gas station is Conoco.
- We do have a US Post Office on the Island. Phone: 800-275-8777
- The Library is open Tues – Sat. from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. Closed Sunday, Monday and Thursday. Phone: 985-787-3450
- The local school is Grand Isle School. Phone: 985-787-2577, grades K-12.
- There is a Spouses Club open to all spouses of the active duty members attached to the CGC Sturgeon and Station Grand Isle.
- The pool is open from 01 April- 30 November.
- The gym is open year round.
- The mailboxes are located under the canopy at the Station Building.
- You are required to sign a waiver to use the gym and pool.

Living on the Island

Grand Isle is many things to many people. Thousands of summer visitors see it as sunny beaches, quaint town with interesting shops, and a variety of entertainment opportunities. Physically, Grand Isle runs along the Gulf for 10 miles. Northwest of it lies Port Fourchon, which is one of the fastest growing ports in the US.

Fishing

Grand Isle has been rated one of the top “10” fishing destinations in the country. All types of fishing, including game, bottom, and surf are excellent on Grand Isle.

Boating

There are several harbors where boats can be moored. Many people trailer their boats to one of the many public or town ramps that are on both sides of the Island. Several marinas and coves provide shelter and services to the large number of boaters that gather every summer. Boaters should make themselves aware of registration requirements, and required safety equipment before venturing out.

Hunting

The Grand Isle area is abundant in migratory birds and waterfowl that can be taken in season. There are also deer to be hunted north of Grand Isle. State licenses are required and federal bird stamps to hunt migrating waterfowl.

Beaches

Thousands of vacationers head for the Grand Isle's 10 miles of sandy beach each year. Surfing is gaining popularity in the area, with fun knee to waist high waves being ridden year round.

Fire Pit & Pavilion

The unit has a large fire pit and pavilion area for unit shrimp/crawfish boils and bonfires.

Paintball

There is a small wooded course located on the island.

Movies

For movie fans, a Netflix subscription or a Blockbuster movie pass is essential to living on the island. You can mail your movies from the mailbox at the station, there is normally a three day turn around.

Grand Isle Local Information

Hospitals

Lady of the Sea
200 West 134th Pl.
Galliano, LA
Phone: 985-475-5200

Terrebonne General Medical Center
8166 Main St.
Houma, LA
Phone: 985-873-4141

Family Practice

Dr. John Jackson
Dwight Matherne, PA-C
Deanna Hodson, FNP
314 W. Washington Street
Golden Meadow, LA
Phone: 985-475-5200

Drs. Gary Birdsall & Walter Birdsall
Lady of the Sea- Cutoff
102 W. 112th Street
Cutoff, LA
Phone: 985-632-6233

Pediatricians

Dr. Rozalynde Randolph
14064 West Main St.
Cut Off, LA
Phone: 985-693-1500

Bayou Pediatrics
8120 Main St. Ste. 300
Houma, LA
Phone: 985-872-6405

Lady of the Sea Medical Clinic- Larose
Camille Pitre MD
13030 Hwy 308
Larose, LA
Phone: 985-798-7000
Fax: 985-798-7021

Lady of the Sea Medical Clinic
Dr. John Jackson, MD
Golden Meadow, LA
985-475-5200

OB/GYN

Dr. Christine Albrecht &
Andre Gros, nurse practitioner
855 Belanger St. Ste 209
Houma, LA
Phone: 985-873-0112

Women's Health & Wellness
1022 Bellanger Street
Houma, LA
Phone: 985-868-1561

Dentists

Dr. Rhonda Lorraine DDS
1466 West Main Street
Cut Off, LA
Phone: 985-632-6188

Dr. Dant A. Sandras DDS
13373 Hwy 3235
Cut Off, LA
Phone: 985-798-3800

Optometrists

Wal-Mart Vision Center
Galliano, LA
Phone: 985-632-4747

- You have to pay up front, then file a claim with Tricare for reimbursement.

Phamacies

CVS Galliano
16263 E. Main Street
985-632-6774

Rite Aid Cut Off
110 S. Bayou Drive
985-693-8662

Clinic Drug Store of Golden Meadow
110 S. Bayou Drive
985-475-7777

Department of Motor Vehicles

500 N. Alex Plaisance
Golden Meadow, LA 70357
Toll free line: 1-877-DMV-LINE

Women/Infant/Child (WIC)

Lafourche Parish Health Unit
133 West 112th ST
Cut Off, LA 70345
985-632-5567

Telephone Service

Latelco
165 W. 10th Blvd.
Larose, LA
Phone: 985-693-0123

* You must go in person to set up service. You must bring DL and copy of spouses DL if married.

Vonage will also work on Grand Isle; you will need a high speed internet service.

Internet Provider

Mobiletel
165 W. 10th Blvd.
Larose, LA
Phone: 985-798-2323

Vision Communications
112 West 10th Blvd.
Larose, LA
Phone: 985-787-2111

Cell Phone

Nexstar-Galliano (Nextel and Sprint)
985-325-2900

Cable

Vision Communications
112 West 10th Blvd.
Larose, LA
Phone: 985-787-2111 Grand Isle
*Direct TV will also work on Grand Isle

Emergency Phone #'s

Fire: 985-787-3473
Ambulance: 985-632-6401
911 (now working on Grand Isle)

Sheriff: 985-787-2204
Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222

USCG General Information

Station Grand Isle: 985-787-2136
CGC Sturgeon: 985-787-2137
Housing: 504-942-4015
ID Cards: 504-942-3015
Station Website: <http://www.uscg.mil/d8/sta/grandisle>

Ombudsman

Station Grand Isle	CGC Sturgeon
Laney Pinto	Doreen Waguespack
20 Paratus Place	2 Paratus Place
Grand Isle, LA	Grand Isle, LA
Phone: 305-725-2076	Phone: 985-787-2073
E-mail: applepielse@yahoo.com	E-mail: campwagalong@yahoo.com

Medical

The unit has a Chief Health Services Technician assigned and can be reached at 985-787-2136. Additional information can be found at:

Tricare: 1-877-249-9179 (We are Tricare Prime **Remote**)
Tricare website: www.tricare.osd.mil (enrollment forms are on the website)
United Concordia Dental: 1-800-866-8499
United Concordia Website: www.ucci.com (enrollment forms are on the website and you can enroll on the internet also)
Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy through Express Scripts: 1-866-363-8667
Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy Website: www.express-scripts.com

STA Grand Isle's Phone Listing

Station Grand Isle	(985) 787-2136
CGC Sturgeon	(504) 329-6211
Grand Isle Police Dept	(985) 787-2204/2207
Grand Isle Fire Dept	(985) 787-3473
Lafourche Fire Dept	(985) 632-5821
Houma Ambulance	(985) 632-8068
Houma Fire Dept	(985) 879-3596
Terrebone General	(985) 873-4002
St. Annes	(504) 537-6841
Lady Of The Sea	(985) 632-6481
ISC Medical	(504) 942-3021
Grand Isle State Park	(985) 787-2559
Grand Isle City Hall	(985) 787-2559
Grand Isle High School	(985) 787-2577
Grand Isle Head Start	(985) 787-2577
Grand Isle Community Center	(985) 787-3500
Grand Isle Tourist Info	(985) 787-2997
Grand Isle Library	(985) 787-3450
Sureway Super Market	(985) 787-3141
Sand Dollar Marina	(985) 787-2500/2893
Bridge Side Marina	(985) 787-2419

UNACCOMPANIED PERSONNEL HOUSING (UPH)

Rooms are available for single Coast Guard personnel adjacent to the station. The rooms are single occupancy, with a small fridge, bathroom, bed, and closets. The UPH also has TV room/lounge.

When barracks space is unavailable, single personnel are eligible to live on the economy.

STA Grand Isle personnel who desire assignment to UPH must first check in with the XPO. They will be assigned a duty room if one is available, and will be placed on a waiting list for UPH. For more information about UPH, contact the XPO at [\(985\) 787-2136](tel:9857872136).

PET Registration

STA Grand Isle housing policy states that no more than two pets are permitted per household. All pets must be registered, and an up-to-date shot record is required on all pets. Although there are no veterinarian facilities on base, the closest veterinarian facilities are South Lafourche Veterinary (985) 632-4500 or Lafourche Animal Hospital (985) 632-3333. If you have questions about pet owner responsibilities please feel free to contact XPO [\(985\) 787-2136](tel:9857872136).

Kennel/Boarding Facilities

Dr. Clay Pierce
West 67th St.
Cut Off, LA
Phone: 985-632-3333

Dr. George Perry
111 West 132nd St.
Galliano, LA
Phone: 985-632-4500

Animal Kingdom Veterinary Hospital
1123 Grand Caillou Road
Houma, LA
Phone: 985-868-PETS

Animal Care Clinic
47 Grand Caillou Road
Houma, LA
Phone: 985-876-3563

Employee Assistance Program (EAP Office)

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is part of the Coast Guard's Work Life Program. Each Integrated Support Command (ISC) has a Work Life Office and an EAP Coordinator. This program provides short-term counseling services and information referral to all active duty, family members and retired military personnel.

The EAP coordinator helps develop proactive and preventive programs that promote family wellness and enhance family functioning. Our services can provide you help with problems such as:

Emotional	Relationship
Family	Alcohol
Financial	Job Concerns
New Job Assignment	PCS Moves

For information or to request services, contact the EAP at 1-800-222-0364.

Grand Isle Public Schools

Grand Isle School is unique... Grand Isle High School presented its first twelve-year diploma in May of 1942, to a class of one. Although the school's programs and campus have changed drastically over the last 63 years, the class sizes have remained delightfully small. Our student-teacher ratio is less than 15 students per teacher. This statistic is only one of many things that make us "one of a kind". We are a K-12 school. Over 33% of our faculties have a M.Ed. or better. Our faculty tenure is extremely stable as represented by an average of 18 years of teaching at Grand Isle School. We are a "rural" school in a large metropolitan school system. And last, but certainly not least, our "front yard" is the beautiful Gulf of Mexico. There is a Head Start preschool program located at the school for preschool children ages 3, 4 and 5. They can be reached at [\(985\) 787-2577](tel:9857872577).

Churches

First Baptist Church
Cedar Lane
Phone: 985-787-3410

Lighthouse Christian Fellowship
Central Ave
Phone: 985-632-5011

Our Lady of the Isle (Catholic)
Ludwig Lane
Phone: 985-787-2385

United Methodist
Oak Street
Phone: 985-475-7412

Educational Opportunities

For those interested in starting or continuing their college education while stationed in Grand Isle, Services are available include testing, counseling, and educational referrals/liaison with local colleges. Local colleges include Nicholls State University, 906 E 1st St, Thibodaux, LA (985) 446-8111, Southern University at New Orleans, 6400 Press Dr, New Orleans, LA (504) 286-5000.

Weapons Registration

On base, weapons may only be in your vehicle while being transported for legitimate reason (i.e. en route hunting or target range). At other times the weapon may be stored in family housing or off-base quarters. Individuals that will be living in the barracks must keep their weapons in the base armory. Please contact the OOD at Station Grand Isle for any more information.

Work Life – NOLA

Coast Guard HQ Work-Life Website: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-w/g-wk/wkw/index.htm>

The primary function of the ISC New Orleans Work-Life staff is to provide timely work-life information and guidance to Coast Guard commands, employees, and family members through direct and indirect referral and training.

Contact Work-Life: 1-800-USCGWLS ext. 308

All staff members can be reached Monday through Friday 0700-1530, or by calling 800-USCGWLS ext. 308. After hours/weekends/holidays you can reach staff by calling their cell phone number or by calling the ISC New Orleans OOD 504-329-3889

Employee Assistance Program Coordinator (EAPC):

Ms. Teresa Blais: work: (504) 678-7680 cell: (504) 628-5307 email: Teresa.Blais@uscg.mil

Ms. Allison Bell: work: (504) 678-7660 cell: (504) 329-3888 email: Allison.C.Bell@uscg.mil

Family Advocacy Specialists (FAS):

Ms. Kelli Deluca work: (504) 678-7659 cell: (504) 628-1646 email: Kelli.Deluca@uscg.mil

Ms. Leslie Lubritz work: (504) 678-7652 cell: (504) 628-2066 email: Leslie.Lubritz@uscg.mil

Ms. Debra Voelker work: (504) 678-7662 cell: (504) 782-7137 email: Debra.C.Voelker@uscg.mil

Family Resource Specialists (FRS):

Mr. James Green work: (504) 678-7658 cell: (504) 628-5293 email: James.G.Green@uscg.mil

Ms. Leslie Mathes work: (504) 678-7661 cell: (504) 628-5309 email: Leslie.S.Mathes@uscg.mil

Health Promotion Managers (HPM):

Mr. Brad Welch work: (504) 678-7686 email: Brad.Welch@uscg.mil

Ms. Michelle Murray work: (504) 678-7685 email: Michelle.L.Murray@uscg.mil

Transition / Relocation Manager (TRM):

Mr. Bob Casale work: (504) 678-7682 cell: (504) 628-5270 email: Robert.Casale@uscg.mil

Work-Life Fax: (504) 253-6360

Living off Base

Off-base rental housing, as in many resort areas, is at a premium and therefore very costly. Weekly summer rentals can cost as much as monthly rentals during the winter. For those interested in the local housing market, a few real estate agencies are Century 21 Grand Island Realty (985) 787-2747, Century 21 Nicole Lombas & Associates (985) 787-3204.

For more information about your Basic Housing Allowance (BAH) for this area please visit the following website: <https://secureapp2.hqda.pentagon.mil/perdiem/>

Military Lease Clause

If you sign a private lease, be sure a military (transfer) clause is included in your lease. The below military clause is example of one which should be used: "The said LESSOR agrees that in the event said LESSEE shall be transferred by military orders from _____, or be required to occupy government quarters, then, in either of such events, said LESSEE has and shall have the right to terminate this lease prior to the date of expiration there of by delivering to the LESSOR a thirty(30) day notice in writing of such transfer or assignment, and the effective date thereof, said notice to be sent to the LESSOR by registered mail".

Information for off base living

ELECTRIC

Orleans, Jefferson and ST Bernard Parishes: ENTERGY 1.800.368.3749
7am-9pm Daily

Service Hours: 8am-noon, 1pm-7pm weekdays. Report outage 1.800.90UTAGE

Washington & ST Tammany Parishes: CLECO 1.800.622.6537 24/7

Service Hours: 8am-5pm weekdays

Washington-ST Tammany CO-OP: Covington 985.892.8804, Slidell 985.643.6616 &
Folsom 985.796.3679

GAS

Orleans Parish: Entergy 1.800.368.3749

Jefferson Parish: Louisiana Gas Service 504.456.9882 7am-6pm weekdays

ST Bernard Parish: Louisiana Gas Service 504.271.4181

North Shore: Atmos 1.800.547.4321 or Center Point Entergy 1.800.735.1307

WATER

Orleans Parish: Sewerage and Water Board 504.529.2837 8:00am to 5:00pm
weekdays

Jefferson Parish: Department of Water 504.736.6050

ST Bernard Parish: ST Bernard Water & Sewer Corp. 504.271.1681

Northshore: S.E. Louisiana Water & Sewer Co. 985.626.8426

Slidell Bayou Liberty Water Association 985.643.1216

Coast Water Works Utilities, Inc. 985.641.7932

Cross Gates Utility Co. 985.643.1376

TELEPHONE

Bell South 504.557.6500 24/7 Service Hours 8:00am to 6:00pm weekdays

CABLE TV

Orleans, St Bernard, Jefferson and St Charles Parish: Cox Communication
504.304.7345

ST Tammany Parish: Charter Communication 985.882.6688 Mandeville/Covington,
Slidell 985.645.8000, Hammond 985.542.8969 and Livingston 1.800.888.2954

GARBAGE

Orleans Parish: Department of Sanitation 504.826.1791

Jefferson Parish: Department of Sanitation 504.837.8748

Vehicle Registration

LA Department of Motor Vehicles 504.925.6146

Voter Registration

Orleans Parish 504.565.7135, Jefferson Parish East Bank 504.736.6191, Jefferson
Parish West Bank 504.364.2670, ST Bernard 504.278.4232, ST Tammany East
985.646.4125 and ST Tammany West 985.898.2572

EDUCATION

Orleans Parish: 504.365.8730

Jefferson Parish: 504.348.2891

ST Bernard Parish: 504.271.2533

ST Tammany Parish: 985.646.4917 East, West 985.892.2276

Archdiocese of New Orleans 504.861-9521

Louisiana Department of Education 504.342.3602

Louisiana Tuition Assistance Program 504.342.3414

Permissive Orders For House Hunting

Permissive orders for “house hunting trips” consist of up to ten days authorized absence to search for a new residence at the new duty station. This is specifically for the benefit of members with PCS orders. The five days absence is issued at the discretion of the Commanding Officer of the old duty station. It may be combined with leave or liberty to extend the period, but may not be combined with any travel, proceed time, or leave incident to PCS orders. Article 7-A-10.b(7) of the Personnel Manual allows the Commanding Officer at the gaining unit to grant administrative absences during circumstances (such as distance, cost, or TAD) for up to five working days when the member is unable to make use of permissive orders for house hunting prior to departing the last unit.

The City Of New Orleans

Grand isle is only a 2 ½ hour drive from New Orleans, ‘the big easy’.

New Orleans, the birth place of jazz, has a vibrant night life and eclectic music scene. Whether you wish to check out a national pop/rock/country act at the house of blues, local jazz musicians at snug harbor, or the weekly open mic/poetry readings at the maple leaf bar, there is something for every taste. New Orleans also hosts several music festivals throughout the year from the essence festival in early July to the voodoo music experience in late October.



Most notable is the a seven day festival (over two weekends in late April/early may) drawing attendees from around the globe to sample local cuisine, shop local artisans, and take in such diverse musical acts as Jimmy Buffett, Ani Difranc, Tim McGraw, Bruce Springsteen and New Orleans’ own Harry Connick Jr. For more info check out www.nojazzfest.com

Many people come to New Orleans for the signature cuisine: gumbo, muffulettas, crawfish etouffee, fried catfish po boys and many more culinary delights are available to tempt your appetite. Suggested dining experiences include visits to the acme oyster house, commanders’ palace (where Emeril Lagasse got his start), any of Emeril’s three restaurants and of course Café Du Monde for beignets and Café Au Laut.

Some people come for the architecture and unique neighborhoods. You can take a street car down St. Charles Ave to see the grand mansions of the garden district or stroll the streets of the historic French Quarter, shopping at the many jewelry and art shops on Royal Street. Just a few blocks from the Vieux Carre (as the locals call the French Quarter) is the Fauborg Marigny, a bohemian neighborhood with book shops, coffee houses and frequent street art exhibits/sales.

Steps away from the superdome are the warehouse/arts district featuring art galleries and museums. If you are looking for a break from the city, head to City Park: a 1300 acre oasis of walking paths, meadows and sports facilities. City Park is also home to the New Orleans museum of art and sculpture garden. For the children: check out the Carousel Gardens amusement park and Story Land playground. During the winter holiday season, city park's celebration in the oaks light display is always a popular event. For more city park info go to www.neworleanscitypark.com

Nestled on the Mississippi river bend of uptown New Orleans is the Audubon zoo, home to over 2000 animals from all over the planet and rated one of the top five zoos in the country. Season passes are available. Throughout the year the zoo sponsors various functions such as earth fest (in connection with earth day) and swamp fest, a two day festival of Cajun cuisine, crafts, and music headlined by Grammy award winning band beausoleil. The Audubon nature institute also runs the aquarium of the Americas featuring the country's largest collection of sharks and jellyfish. The aquarium is also home to the rare white gator. Co-located on the southeast corner of the French Quarter with the aquarium is the Entergy Imax theatre a 354 seat, 5 ½ story tall screen showing localized films such as 'hurricane on the bayou' which chronicles hurricane Katrina and it's effect on the wetlands of southeast Louisiana. The Imax theatre also presents first run films such as recent box office hits 'Beowulf', '300' and 'Spiderman 3'. For more information on season passes, adopting an animal, or other zoo/aquarium events go to: www.auduboninstitute.org

For the sports lover, New Orleans is home to the NBA hornets, Zephyrs baseball (a New York Mets AAA affiliate), Voodoo (arena football) and the  NFL saints. All teams offer season tickets.

Of course, one cannot discuss New Orleans without mention of Mardi gras and carnival season. Beginning each year on the feast of the epiphany (Jan 6) and running until Mardi gras day (fat Tuesday- the day prior to ash Wednesday), carnival season is a period of parties, parades, king cake, and merriment leading up to lent. Two weeks before Mardi gras day the parades roll nightly as well as throughout the day on weekends, featuring marching bands and brightly colored floats with masked riders throwing plush animals, krewe doubloons and beads of all shapes and sizes. On Mardi gras day grab a costume and head to the French Quarter for possibly the biggest street party in America, but at midnight the party ends as police on horseback ride down Bourbon Street signifying an end to the festivities until next year. More Mardi gras info and yearly parade schedules can be found at www.mardigrasguide.com

Laissez les bon temps roulez!

For more information about New Orleans and to request a visitor's guide with extensive listings of restaurants, hotels and much more go to www.neworleansonline.com