

# FROM THE BRIDGE

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European river cruising

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Neon lights and  
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## MISSISSIPPI DREAMING

Cruise into the heart of America's deep south  
on board luxury riverboat *Louisiane*

PRESENTED WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF:

# VIVE LA *différence*

French America Line's riverboat, *Louisiane*, brings new-found elegance and luxury to river cruising in the US.

WORDS: LIANI SOLARI



Tour the hauntingly beautiful  
Oak Alley Plantation, Louisiana



*Louisiane* delivers river cruising at its most elegant

I would happily follow [chef] Regina Charboneau up and down the Mississippi for an extended dose of her hospitality and her inventive and always superb cooking,” once wrote author Julia Reed of her fellow Mississippian. Now that Regina is executive chef for French America Line’s riverboat, *Louisiane*, you can do just that. Guests can relish her French and Creole specialties while traversing America’s great waterways—the Gulf of Mexico and the Mississippi and Ohio rivers—in the former French territory of ‘Louisiana’.

And they can do it in style. The 4-star riverboat has undergone a US\$2.5-million transformation to reflect a subtle French influence. Perfumed with fresh flowers, *Louisiane*’s intimate spaces encourage you to relax while you take in every scene around every bend of the river, a glass of Regina’s signature mint julep in hand. The impressive crew-to-guest ratio (58 crew to 152 guests) means this is boutique luxury river cruising at its finest. Additionally, *Louisiane* is capable of navigating waterways not accessible by larger vessels.

in itself—roast meat is carved and served at your table from a rolling silver cart—the venue turns up the heat after dinner with an intimate cabaret that follows the course of the region’s various musical genres, from the delta blues to the jazz standards of the Great American Songbook. The tinkling of the piano in the French Quarter Lounge every night heralds a convivial evening of cocktails and music.

The Orleans Room menu devised by Regina Charboneau—a Natchez native trained in Paris—sees guests devouring specialties such

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History is well preserved in Natchez, Mississippi

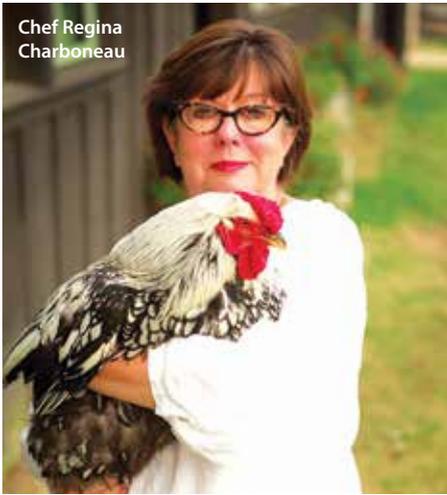
*Louisiane*’s design affords unimpeded views of the river from the open decks and other public areas. However, when you’re not being mesmerised by the views, you could be unwinding with a book in the Great River Lounge or playing a game in the Card Room.

With its rich panelling and high ceilings, Bar Royale provides a lovely backdrop to pre-dinner drinks, while the splendid Orleans Room with its banquettes and crystal chandeliers is the perfect setting for elegant dining. Though dining in the Orleans Room is a spectacle

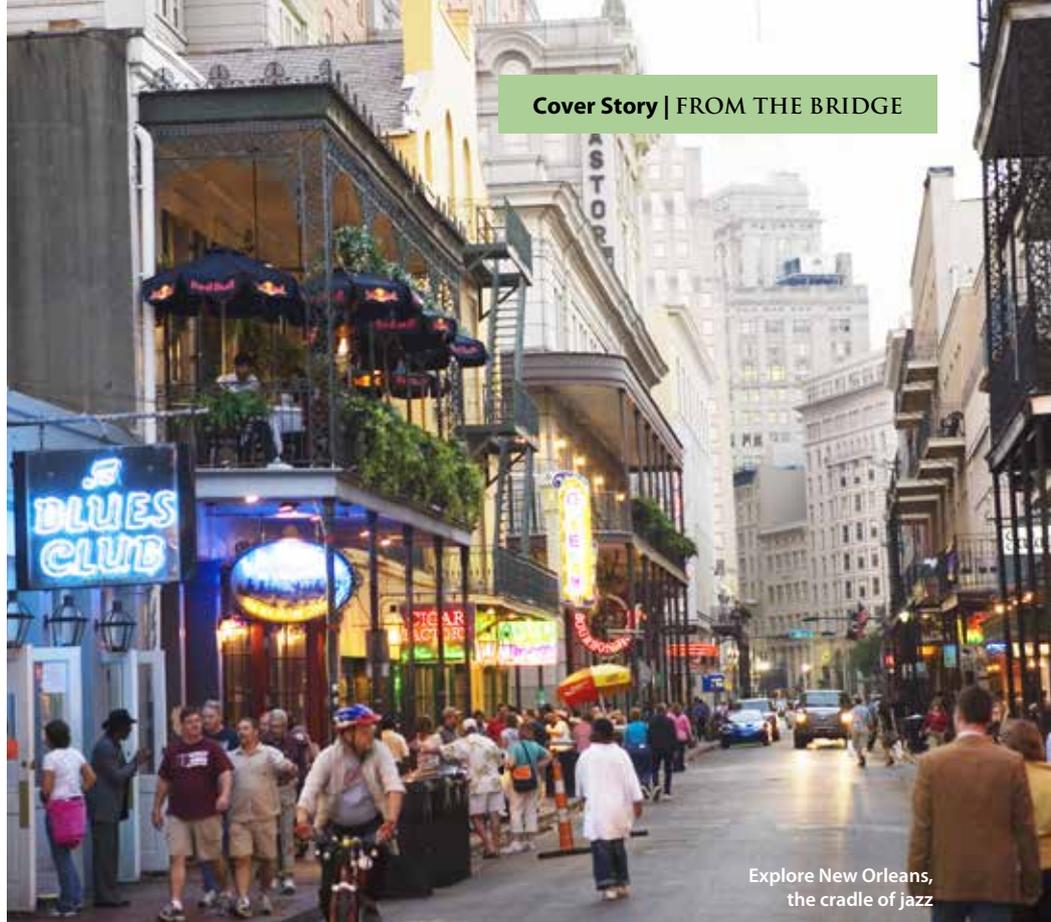
as crawfish and corn chowder; grilled shrimp po’boys; poached salmon with Béarnaise sauce; and pan-fried quail with smoked bacon, cheese grits and flash-fried greens. An alternative to taking meals in the Orleans Room is elegantly casual *plein air* dining at The Veranda Café, which is open 24 hours a day.

French specialties are laid on thick as butter—from café au lait, irresistibly flaky croissants and Champagne served in Bar Royale, to a different quiche matched with a regional French wine every evening in

Chef Regina Charboneau



Dining on board is sublime



Explore New Orleans, the cradle of jazz

The Veranda Café. Complimentary drinks flow freely, including coffee, tea, soft drinks, specially selected French wines, house-brand spirits and house-brand cocktails.

Beyond the onboard food offerings, cultural immersion is also the hallmark of *Louisiane's* shore excursions and hands-on activities, which are included in the cruise price. An inspiring onboard enrichment program of lectures and talks by noted historians will engage you, as will hands-on cooking lessons.

When you're plumb tuckered out at the end of the day, relax and recharge in one of *Louisiane's* 76 luxuriously appointed staterooms and suites, all featuring L'Occitane en Provence™ toiletries, high-quality linens, satellite television, complimentary wi-fi and 24-hour room service. Measuring 21m<sup>2</sup> to 33m<sup>2</sup>, these guest accommodations are among the largest on any American riverboat and many offer a private verandah or French balcony.

Following her maiden voyage along the Gulf of Mexico from New Orleans to Pensacola, Florida, the new-look *Louisiane* will grace the Ohio and Mississippi rivers in late 2016 during the 7-night Classic Ohio River cruise between Louisville and Pittsburgh and the 9-night Grand Mississippi River cruise from New Orleans to Memphis.

Choose Louisville or Pittsburgh as your starting point for the Classic Ohio River

itinerary, either way taking in bucolic scenes, wilderness areas, charming towns and bustling cities. In Kentucky's largest city, the Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory is hard to miss, with the world's biggest baseball bat dwarfing the building. Take a guided tour of the factory and have a bat personalised with your signature burned into the barrel.

The Ohio River Valley is one of the country's largest designated wine areas, and while you won't have time to visit every artisan winery on the Indiana Wine Trail, two are accessible in Madison. Enjoy Beaujolais-like chambourcin at Lanthier Winery and old-school hard apple cider at Thomas Family Winery.

In Cincinnati, home in on the city's quirkier attractions, such as the guided underground tours of old brewery cellars and tunnels in the historical Over-the-Rhine neighbourhood or the American Sign Museum.

Upriver, in Daniel Boone country, Maysville's Old Washington Historic District is an antique collectors' paradise and a study in architectural history from pioneer log cabins to sophisticated Federal- and Georgian-style town houses. In the Northwest's founding town of Marietta orientate yourself with a trolley tour or wander the brick-paved streets lined with stately Victorian homes and shady hardwoods.

The final stop, Pittsburgh is a happening city that warrants a good look-see, so steel >

### FACT FILE

Cruise line: French America Line

Vessel: *Louisiane*

Star rating: 4

Maximum guest capacity: 152

Crew: 58

Entered service: 2000

Facilities: 3 dedicated bars, 2 lounges, 4 dining options (1 with celebrated Cordon Bleu chef Regina Charboneau), live entertainment, card room, salon and spa, complimentary wi-fi.



Spot Mississippi alligators



Pittsburgh is a city full of surprises

yourself for the best view in town from the observation deck of the 139-year-old Duquesne Incline before you get amongst it.

The Grand Mississippi River cruise of the Deep South begins and ends on an up-beat note, bookended by two of America's top cities for music-lovers: New Orleans, the cradle of jazz; and Memphis, the birthplace of rock and roll. It's easy to get into the swing of party city New Orleans, where music permeates the air on almost every street corner. Make a beeline for the jazz clubs on buzzing Bourbon Street.

For a change of pace, *Louisiane* stops at Oak Alley, a stately antebellum plantation home approached via an avenue of gnarly old southern live oaks. Tour the opulent Big House

built during the thriving sugar trade and reflect on America's darker days at the on-site Civil War and slavery exhibits.

Spot alligators on a Cajun swamp tour from Baton Rouge before stopping at Natchez, where hundreds of immaculately preserved historical mansions are sited on a bluff overlooking the river. At lunchtime savour fine Southern cuisine at Stanton Hall, a palatial Greek Revival residence in the heart of town.

Continuing upriver, Vicksburg, a Confederate stronghold during the Civil War, is a treasure-trove for history buffs. Blues aficionados will find their spiritual home in Clarksdale, where the Delta Blues Museum houses the salvaged core of Muddy Waters'

## Vicksburg, a Confederate stronghold during the Civil War, is a treasure-trove for history buffs.



*Louisiane* is a pleasure

### FEATURED ITINERARIES

The 9-night Grand Mississippi River cruise from New Orleans to Memphis onboard *Louisiane* departs August 12, 2016, and December 21, 2016. Both cruises include a 1-night pre-cruise hotel stay. Ports of call include Oak Alley, Baton Rouge, Natchez, Vicksburg and Clarksdale. Fares start from AU\$7357 per person, twin share.

The 7-night Classic Ohio River cruise from Louisville to Pittsburgh onboard *Louisiane* departs August 27, 2016; Pittsburgh to Louisville departs September 4, 2016. Both cruises include a 1-night pre-cruise hotel stay. Ports of call include Madison, Maysville and Marietta. Fares start from AU\$5751 per person, twin share.

home and the guitars of John Lee Hooker and B.B. King. To walk in the footsteps of music greats from Clarksdale, follow the Mississippi Blues Trail markers in town.

You'll get the blues, a whole lotta soul and good rockin' tonight when *Louisiane* docks at the foot of Memphis' lively club and restaurant precinct, Beale Street. A visit to Elvis Presley's home, Graceland, is the perfect way to end the cruise on a high note. ■



Don't miss the Old State Capitol, Baton Rouge