

vinegar which was most memorable.

The next day I moved location to the Maison Dupuy, a boutique hotel in the heart of the French quarters named as one of the best hotels in the world in the Conde Nast Gold List, to a room overlooking the swanky courtyard. The heated outdoor pool was long enough for a few lengths.

■ **Left: a group of young men play jazz music in the French quarter of New Orleans; above: Bourbon Street; below left: kayaking in the New Orleans swamps.** PHOTOGRAPH: ISTOCK

Rather conveniently, Bourbon Street and Frenchmen Street were a short walk away.

Just around the corner is the FreeWheelin' Bike Tours meeting point, which was handy for an early, groggy start the following morning. In three hours of cycling around the city you begin to understand its layout, get a history lesson, and visit less touristy areas such as Treme, the oldest African-American neighbourhood in the United States.

New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz, and at Preservation Hall they consider themselves the keeper of the traditions of old. There was no better place to begin my last night in the Big Easy. You must arrive well in advance to guarantee entry, and have a drink beforehand as they are not served inside. There are no gimmicks here, phones are banned, just sit (or stand) and enjoy. Each song is a story – with each band member assigned their own chapter – that's well worth staying with to the end.

The next day was the end of my journey, but not before I got in one last bit of exercise. The late nights and activities caught up on me eventually, and sleeping in meant having to sprint through the terminal to just about catch my plane.

Moral of the trip? Eat all the beignets you want, and work them off later.

## How to ...

### Get there

There's no direct flight from Ireland to Louisiana. I travelled via New York with Norwegian and then Spirit Airlines to New Orleans.

### Where to stay

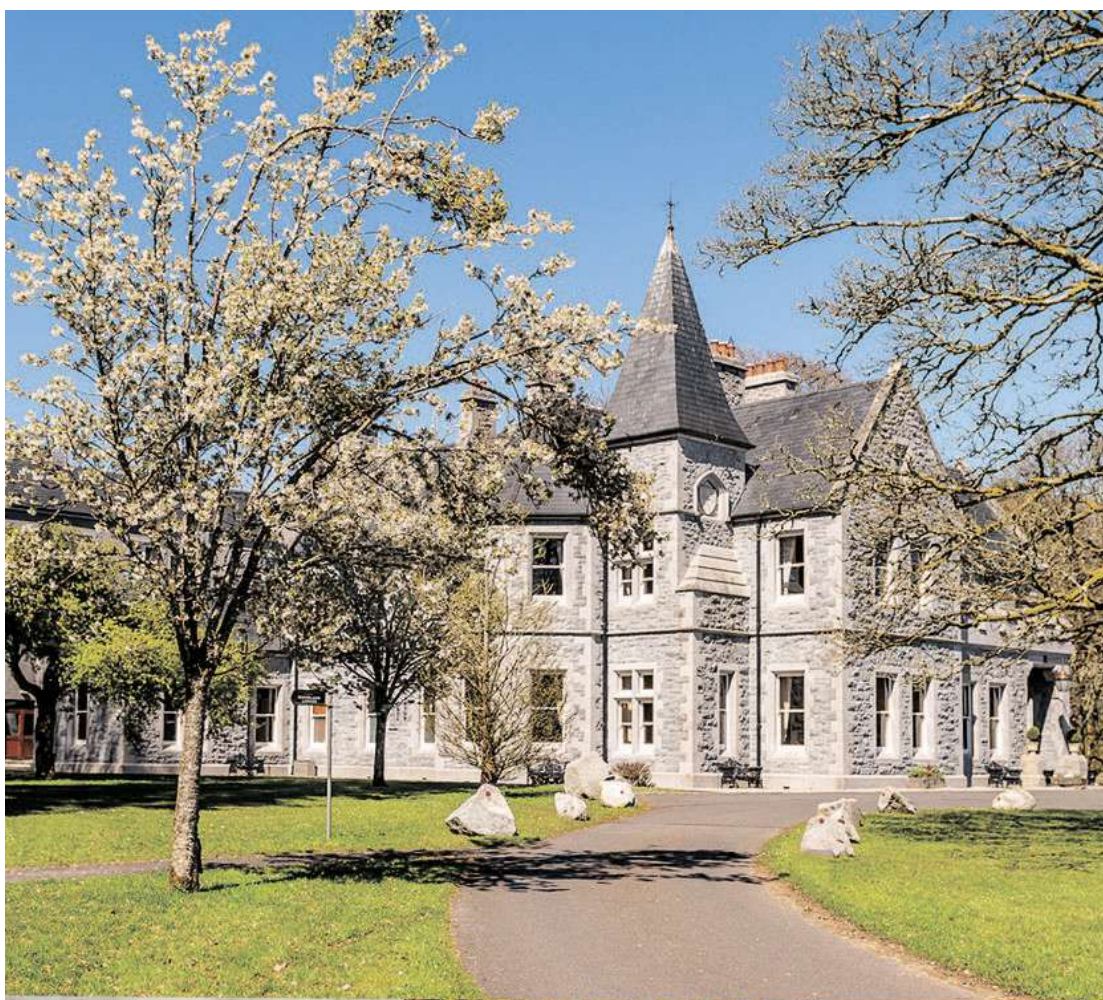
Ace Hotel: Classic King bedroom from €133 per night with advanced booking.  
The Maison Dupuy Hotel: Traditional King bedroom from €120 per night.

### Where to eat

Cochon: Small plates from €7/entrées from €17.  
Seaworthy: Small plates from €10/large from €15.

### What to do

Preservation Hall: Performances every night 5pm, 6pm, 8pm, 9pm, and 10pm; €17.  
The New Orleans Kayak Swamp Tour: Manchac tour including transport €70.  
Free Wheelin' Bike Tours: Creole and Crescent tour €44.



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