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MAY/JUNE 2018

NEW SEOUL

THE DYNAMIC
TEMPO OF
SOUTH KOREA'S
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DESIGNER
TAMARA
MELLON'S
FRESH PATH
IN FOOTWEAR

EXPLORING
THE STREETS
OF NEW
ORLEANS AND
BALTIMORE

THE
RESURGENCE
OF ITALY'S
LAKE GARDA

Walking Through



New Orleans

(and Baltimore)

EACH SPRING, THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE INVESTIGATE THEIR CITIES THROUGH WALKS INSPIRED BY PIONEERING AUTHOR AND URBAN ACTIVIST JANE JACOBS. THIS MONTH, *CL* LOOKS AT TWO GREAT AMERICAN TOWNS WITH IDEAL STREETS FOR STROLLING

WORDS **TOM AUSTIN** PHOTOGRAPHY **MORGAN & OWENS**



Walking is life in any true city, and throughout May, more than 200 towns around the world celebrate the birthday of the pedestrian rights activist Jane Jacobs. In the 1960s, Jacobs, then a Greenwich Village resident, mounted a victorious campaign against builder Robert Moses, who was bent on carving up her neighborhood with a highway. The Jane Jacobs movement—which was captured in Matt Tyrnauer’s documentary *Citizen Jane: Battle for the City*—has inspired two international nonprofit organizations, Jane’s Walk and Jane Jacobs Walk: Both groups organize guided public walking tours throughout the year.

These events tie into various impulses in contemporary life, from the yearning for local authenticity to creating communities of like-minded people. Jacobs’ 1961 book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, has remained a blueprint for metropolitan bliss: “Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.”

Her ideas on urban life inspired me to revisit two designed-to-be-walked American cities with deep histories, Baltimore and New Orleans. Both are port cities, both benefit from having predominantly African-American populations, and both are ancient by U.S. standards. Baltimore was founded in 1729, and this year New Orleans—occupied by the Spanish and French at various moments and still America’s most European city—is celebrating its 300th anniversary as a churning engine of myth, romance and eccentricity.

I hadn’t visited New Orleans in almost 30 years, and my first walk in town—a Sunday-afternoon second-line funeral celebration for Arthur “Mr. Okra” Robinson in the Bywater—brought the magical essence of the city back in a flood of sensation. Robinson was one of the city’s last remaining street peddlers, selling fruits and vegetables off an old pickup truck decorated like a Haitian tap-tap bus. Over the truck’s sound system, he extolled his wares (“I’ve got bananas, I’ve got okra ...”) and became a symbol of vanishing New Orleans.

After a visitation at the Marigny Opera House, the second-line wandered through signs with salutes to Robinson (“Thanks, Mr. Okra ... There ain’t no joy like a Ninth Ward boy”) before the funeral reception, or repass, at BJ’s Lounge. An amiable group, riding

STREET SCENES

Jane Jacobs Walk (janejacobswalk.org) offers an array of free tours throughout the year. Here are three to celebrate Jacobs’ birthday month in May.

01

Charleston, South Carolina

A “Civic Charleston Walk,” led by the city’s Design Division, celebrates the town’s singular neighborhoods and examines several civic projects.
May 5

02

Chicago

Art historian Rolf Achilles and co-host Martha Frish are conducting a “Dearborn Street Art and Sculpture” tour featuring work by Pablo Picasso and Mies van der Rohe.
May 5

03

Delft, the Netherlands

A “Water and Cities” walk will be led by the Delft University of Technology, exploring the integration of water in the city.
May 16



Scenes from New Orleans, clockwise from top left: Royal Street; Madame John’s Legacy House on Dumaine Street; iron scrollwork; Antoine’s Restaurant; Chartres Street; Mardi Gras flag; ephemera at Napoleon House.

Opening spread, from left: The Carousel Bar at New Orleans’ Hotel Monteleone, and Baltimore’s George Peabody Library

lowrider bicycles with fantastic paint jobs and iron grillwork from old gates, waved at a bright young thing on a unicycle.

We all took in evocative placards (“Neighborhoods are only real when you have real neighbors”), and then clustered around a hippie woman of a certain age, wearing an okra-adorned straw hat and selling okra-infused Bloody Mary cocktails from an old grocery cart. Thankfully, restaurateur Tanya Boswell, who seems to know everybody in New Orleans, guided me through a gauntlet of determinedly merry people. (Tanya and her husband, Scott, own the restaurant Stanley, named after Stanley Kowalski of *A Streetcar Named Desire* fame.) In Tremé—immortalized in the HBO series of the same name—we hit Kermit’s Tremé Mother-in-Law Lounge, with one outdoor wall offering a mural salute to local *Swamp Tech* music stars Quintron and Miss Pussycat.

At cocktail hour—accompanied by John Rowland of Southern Hospitality Catering—we had drinks at Loa, named after the vodou

NEW ORLEANS IS A CHURNING ENGINE OF MYTH AND ROMANCE.

spirits and tucked into the lobby of my hotel, International House, an atmospheric 1906 beaux-arts property owned by New Orleans native Sean Cummings. The creative director of Loa, Alan Walter, previewed his own John’s Way limited-edition elixir made with aguardiente and homemade Florida water with lavender (John’s Way will debut at the hotel on June 22 during a Saint John’s Eve celebration with a vodou priestess). Walter’s cocktails utilize syrups made from foraged Spanish moss and such, and walking New Orleans is part of his job: “In the Lower Garden District, I like to walk down Prytanía Street, picking sweet olive flowers off trees, which tends to lead to a lot of interesting conversations.”

From International House, it’s a short walk to Brennan’s restaurant in the Quarter: Set in a pink building constructed in 1795, Brennan’s is the flagship of the Ralph >

THE LITERATURE OF WALKING

The idea of the flâneur, the disengaged and leisurely walker in the city, began in 19th-century Paris with such writers as Charles Baudelaire: "The crowd is his domain, just as the air is the bird's." Baltimore's own Edgar Allan Poe covered the walking beat in "The Man of the Crowd."

Also in the canon is Chuck Palahniuk's wonderful *Fugitives and Refugees: A Walk in Portland, Oregon*, part of the Crown Journeys series, which also includes Edwidge Danticat's *After the Dance: A Walk Through Carnival in Jacmel, Haiti*.

More recently, Lauren Elkin's *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London* traces the urban wanderings of Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys and George Sand, among others. And Edmund White has offered *The Flâneur: A Stroll Through the Paradoxes of Paris*, part of Bloomsbury's *Writer and the City* series. White summed up the whole notion with: "The flâneur's promenades are meant to be useless, deprived of any goal beyond the pleasure of merely circulating."



More New Orleans images, clockwise from top left: Faulkner House Books; The Carousel Bar at Hotel Monteleone; art in Jackson Square; Napoleon House; Chartres Street; the Beaugard-Keyes House.

Opposite: Baltimore's Ivy Hotel



Brennan Restaurant Group, which includes the Napoleon House, Ralph's on the Park and Cafe NOMA at the New Orleans Museum of Art. Here since 1956, Brennan's is still serving flaming bananas Foster, and in step with the tricentennial, the restaurant is hosting a fund-raising lunch on June 9—part of The Giving Table series—for the Southern Foodways Alliance, with seven courses reflecting the cultural influences on New Orleans cuisine. As with many old New Orleans families, Brennan is embracing the new age: His wife, Susan Gore Brennan, is the president and chair emerita of Prospect New Orleans, an international art exhibition that has changed the city in the same way that Art Basel has changed Miami, my hometown.

The following evening at Compère Lapin, helmed by the St. Lucia-born Nina Compton and featuring such dishes as Caribbean seafood pepper pot, I had dinner with artist Robin Levy and her husband, attorney Bobby Garon. Earlier, Levy had driven me to the Whitney Plantation—a raw and intelligent examination of slavery's horrors—and then on to the Seventh Ward, where artist Willie Birch has created the Old Prieur Project, with local artists and neighborhood residents using art as a tool to transform their community.

In the French Quarter, twice-a-day walking tours are led by guides from the nonprofit Friends of the Cabildo, the support group for the Louisiana State Museum. In some ways, the Quarter reminded me of Kolkata, a city I learned to love by taking guided tours with Calcutta Walks, which also provides Jane Jacobs-associated events in May. Every great city walk, like every great party, needs a little grit and friction, and the seething cauldron of the Quarter can be overwhelming. But then you can turn a corner and there's the mercy of an everyday miracle, a young jazz ensemble playing music on the street, dodging cars and performing a dead-on rendition of Louis Armstrong's "Potato Head Blues."

The charming Faulkner House Books on



Pirate's Alley—also the headquarters for the Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society—is another oasis of grace, set within William Faulkner's old apartment and featuring such books as his *New Orleans Sketches*. Sherwood Anderson lived nearby, and at the Hotel Monteleone's slowly spinning Carousel Bar & Lounge—decorated like a circus merry-go-round and a haven for old New Orleans society—the cocktail Papa's Daiquiri is inspired by former regular Ernest Hemingway. The hotel's list of literary luminaries also includes Truman Capote, Eudora Welty, Stephen Ambrose and Richard Ford. The only American town that rivals the concentrated bookish heft of New Orleans is Key West: The island city's Old Town Literary Walking Tour naturally encompasses the former home of Tennessee Williams, who also kept a place in New Orleans throughout his life.

Williams was known to have an eye-opener or two at the circa-1797 Napoleon House, a wonderfully untouched National Historic >

LET THE GOOD TIMES STROLL

Saunter through New Orleans' French Quarter with these expert ambassadors

The nonprofit Friends of the Cabildo (friendsofthecabildo.org) offers twice-a-day French Quarter walking tours from Jackson Square; the excursion often includes stops at the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park (nps.gov), full of wizened

and impossibly natty musicians. On her tours, guide Stephanie Larrieu touches on everything from the nuances of the local Yat dialect to the era when plastic toy babies were baked inside king cakes, a local culinary tradition

celebrated at Mardi Gras. The Cabildo also offers tours through the Esplanade and Marigny. Private guide Glenn Louis DeVillier (glfdevilliers.com) conducts a French Quarter literary history tour, encompassing the Pontalba apartments

(former home to Sherwood Anderson) and Antoine's Restaurant. A fantastic palace of miscellany with displays of everything from krewes costumes to a Groucho Marx beret, Antoine's has been run by the same family since 1840.

The George
Peabody Library
in Baltimore

Landmark known for Pimm's Cup cocktails and jambalaya. Built as a private home by early Mayor Nicholas Girod—who only spoke French—the rambling property was intended to be a final refuge for Napoleon Bonaparte.

My lunch companion at Napoleon House was Chuck Robinson, who owns—aptnly enough—Napoleon's Itch, an ecumenical gay bar on Bourbon Street with interludes of

IN MOUNT VERNON, THE CITY'S UNIQUE SPIRIT LIVES ON.

country music. Originally from Dallas and given to white-on-white ensembles topped with a white cowboy hat, Robinson—who once owned a country music label—might be the most fun person in New Orleans. We talked about the great Dottie West and a mutual New Orleans friend, Mickey Easterling. In the 1980s, Easterling would enter her charity galas like Elizabeth Taylor in *Cleopatra*, held aloft by oiled-up weight lifters. When Easterling died at 83 in 2014, she was the most glamorous guest at her own memorial service, embalmed and sitting upright with a cigarette holder, crystal champagne flute and pink boa.

In a world searching for authenticity, New Orleans and Baltimore are utterly real creations, willed into being by their respective residents. I hadn't really spent time in Baltimore since the heyday of the quirky 1980s, and fortunately, the city's unique spirit lives on at places like the American Visionary Art Museum (AVAM) in Federal Hill, founded by Rebecca Alban Hoffberger and featuring an enormous figure of Divine and a life-sized statue of local icon Edgar Allan Poe, entirely created from marshmallow Peeps. Over on Dallas Street, Dolores Deluxe and her husband, Vincent Peranio—the production designer for John Waters' movies—own a singular rental property, the Palace on Dallas, featuring Audubon prints from *Serial Mom* and the chandelier from *Polyester*.

In Baltimore, the Mount Vernon neighborhood



BALTIMORE RAVIN'

Explore the historic city in these illuminating walks

The Mount Vernon neighborhood is included in the walking tours of two nonprofit organizations, Baltimore National Heritage Area (explorebaltimore.org) and Baltimore Heritage (baltimoreheritage.org). The tours pass by the best of the 19th century, including the 1878 George Peabody Library (library.jhu.edu), a cathedral of print featuring a skylight and five stories of bookshelves with cast-iron balconies, and the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion, which beams visitors back to the Gilded Age. Bite of Baltimore (biteofbaltimore.net)—helmed by Zack and Jenny Greene—leads tours through Fells Point, with stops at five restaurants and doses of history (the neighborhood has been a stomping ground for, among others, Billie Holiday and F. Scott Fitzgerald).

is the aesthetic equivalent of the French Quarter: Two nonprofit organizations with volunteer guides, Baltimore National Heritage Area and Baltimore Heritage, offer walking tours incorporating the Washington Monument, Walters Art Museum and George Peabody Library. The Ivy Hotel, set in an 1889 building, includes a library with a 1920s-style society mural. The new Hotel Revival, a Joie de Vivre property, utilizes a 1928 structure and has sourced such decorative touches as a modern interpretation of nine traditional quilt squares currently housed at the Baltimore Museum of Art. In the nearby Station North Arts and Entertainment District, the architectural centerpiece is the Parkway Theatre, a 1915 Italianate-style building that's home to the 20th annual Maryland Film Festival in May.

Part of the joy of walking is being a flâneur, wandering alone and aimless, and on my last day in Baltimore, I strolled around Mount Vernon, which offered everything an urban saunter could possibly give. I was thinking about the pleasure of walking old cities like New Orleans and Baltimore, and about how much I didn't want to go back home to the crazy sprawl of Miami. It seemed as if I just kept walking, I'd eventually figure it all out. **CL**