



Are We There Yet?, LLC

5902 Columbia Ave

Phone: (314) 304-3508

St. Louis, MO 63139

Email: Info@AreWeThereYetDea.com

A Steel Magnolias Christmas

Dec 12-17, 2024

Thursday, Dec 12

Depart St. Louis, Cape Girardeau, and Sikeston for a Southern Christmas on the Bayou! We will see plenty of decorations on this tour as we traverse towards our first stop, **Hot Springs, Arkansas**. Hot Springs has been a tourist destination for over a hundred years as hotels and baths were built to take advantage of the naturally hot water. Up until recently it was the smallest National Park, displaced by our very own Gateway to the West. Our overnight will be in the heart of Hot Springs at **The Waters Hotel**. After check-in we enjoy dinner at a local favorite, the **Back Porch Grill**. (D)

Friday, Dec 13

After breakfast at the hotel, we continue our journey southward towards our destination of Natchitoches, Louisiana! Founded in 1714, Natchitoches is the oldest city in Louisiana, but with less than 20,000 people it retains a certain



small town genteel charm. They are famous for their Christmas Festival, where the entire town puts on this amazing event, filled with music, entertainment, arts and crafts, food vendors, culminating in a display of fireworks!

In addition to the festival itself, they also have a **Christmas Tour of Homes**, a holiday tour of three uniquely decorated properties in Natchitoches, featuring docent-led commentaries on the history of each property as well as their unique holiday decorations. The houses are all within walking distance, so you can visit them in whichever order you wish and at your own pace.

Our home for the next two nights is the Hampton Inn Alexandria. After we freshen up it's time for a wonderful dinner in a historic home, the **Kent Plantation House**. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Kent Plantation House is one of the oldest structures in the state, built prior to the Louisiana Purchase. The home is a great example of French Colonial Creole architecture, built by Pierre Baillio II, the son of an officer at nearby Fort St. Jean Baptiste. Kent Plantation House offers a glimpse of the French, Spanish and American cultures that have influenced Louisiana, and all three flags fly over the entrance. But most importantly, the food is absolutely amazing! (B, D)

Saturday, Dec 14

After breakfast, we depart on our *STEEL MAGNOLIAS TOUR!* *Steel Magnolias* started as play written by Robert Harling, Jr., who wrote it in 10 days after the death of his sister. Some of you may have seen it performed at Stages St. Louis recently, as its story of love and friendship, of relationships, and of loss and grief, seen through the lens of a family and a community who lived through it all. As engaging as is the movie, the real-life story behind the movie is even more fascinating, and we will discover it on our tour as we see the iconic sites such as Truvy's Beauty Shop, St. Augustine Catholic Church, and Shelby's home We'll even drive down Harling Lane!



Later, enjoy a walking tour of the **Natchitoches National Historic Landmark District!** Walk through the history of Natchitoches and the Cane River region, from the time prior to European contact until now including Creole and Catholic culture, history, and customs. We will discover why Natchitoches has been a destination of travelers since the time of the Natchitoches people, for whom the French explorer Louis Juchereau de St. Denis named the city he founded in 1714, four years before New Orleans.

Enjoy free time for lunch on your own and shopping at unique stores in town, including Louisiana's oldest store, the Kaffie Frederick General Mercantile, which has been open since 1863. This afternoon we enjoy some Christmas magic with live entertainment at the Downtown Riverbank stage that will get you in the mood to put on your dancing shoes. (Don't worry, we have also arranged chairs for when you wish to sit down!) You'll also get the opportunity to view the lighted boat parade on Cane River Lake, where the Natchitoches locals light their boats up and give a fantastic light show. The evening ends with the most exciting Natchitoches Christmas tradition, their one-of-a-kind fireworks show over the Cane River Lake. Seeing the Christmas lights reflecting on the water with the fireworks in the sky is a sight to see. There will be food and beverage vendors available so you can while taking in all the festival activities.



(B)

Sunday, Dec 15

After breakfast we check out of the hotel and head to Melrose, Louisiana for our tour of **Melrose on the Cane Plantation.** The history of Melrose is a remarkable story, weaving together a series of fascinating people and events beginning with Marie Therese Coincoin, the matriarch of the Isle Brevelle Creole community. Born into slavery 1742, Coincoin was a resourceful and intelligent woman who eventually attained freedom and prosperity for herself and her children. She bore 14 children, 10 of them with French merchant named Claude Thomas Pierre Metoyer,



who eventually bought her freedom and granted her property on the Red River. Between 1794 and 1803, Coincoin and her sons expanded their holdings of land and slaves, becoming one of the wealthiest families. The Metoyer family continued to own the plantation until 1847. The house fell into decline for decades until 1898, when a remarkable and energetic woman named Cammie Garrett Henry restored the property and preserved its historic structures. Over time, Mrs. Henry sponsored several writers and artists at Melrose, including Rachel Field, Roark Bradford, Francois Mignon, and Lyle Saxon. It was at Melrose that Saxon wrote his best-known novel *Children of Strangers*, which portrays the Cane River area. Melrose also spawned the artistic achievements of Clementine Hunter, one of the South's foremost primitive artists.

For lunch we enjoy authentic soulful Creole Cuisine at **Lasyone's Meat Pie Restaurant.** The recipes are handed down through the family and "always prepared with love from the soul of our deep southern roots". Famous for their meat pies, the family-owned and operated restaurant boasts many unique dishes you will be sure to enjoy.

Our home tonight is in Shreveport at the Margaritaville Resort Casino, and you can enjoy dinner on your own at one of their many restaurants before we head to **Christmas in Roseland.** Shreveport is home to the American Rose Society, which for over 125 has been promoting the culture, preservation and appreciation of the Rose, and has members around the world, including Alton, IL. Christmas in Roseland is their largest fundraiser, and the American Rose Center is transformed into a whimsical winter wonderland. Featuring thousands of twinkling lights, dozens of lighted displays, giant Christmas Cards to the Community, nightly entertainment, and a new Giant Pixel Tree, you will be sure to be amazed at what sort of party the society for the appreciation of the Rose can throw! **(B, L)**

Monday, Dec 16

After a breakfast of your choice at Margaritaville, we have a leisurely departure before we head to Little Rock with a lunch on your own at a local favorite, Whole Hog BBQ. If you're not in the mood for BBQ, we will drop you off at the McCain Mall where our hotel, the Hampton Inn, is located. We are going to enjoy dinner this evening at **The Edgemont House**. Enjoy a tour and meet Chris, owner of Botanica Gardens and Plantopia, and he will share the seasonal decorations on display for our enjoyment. (We have a Christmas decorating shopping stop at his stores for some Christmas decoration shopping too). One of the premier homes found in Little Rock, a beautiful historic Spanish Colonial Revival style home restored by Chris H. Olsen! From the minute you step into The Edgemont House you will be transported to another time and era: when homes were grand, and parties were even grander. After dinner here, we return to the hotel. **(B, D)**

Tuesday, Dec 17

This morning, we have breakfast at the hotel before departing for home, full of new Christmas memories in Louisiana. We will have breaks and lunch along the way. Thank you for traveling with us! **(B)**

Tour Price includes:

- Deluxe Motor Coach transportation round-trip St. Louis on a 52 Passenger Coach with extra leg room
- Deluxe accommodations at The Waters Hotel, Hampton Inns, and Margaritaville
- A fantastic time at the Christmas Festival and our own chairs for parade seating
- Multiple walking tours with local guides
- A Christmas in Roseland
- 10 Meals: 5 Breakfasts, 1 Lunch, 3 Dinners
- Private home dinners at Edgemont and Kent House
- Baggage Handling of one suitcase per person
- Are We There Yet? Tour Directors to handle whatever comes our way
- Gratuities to Tour Guides, Coach Driver, Bellmen & Servers at Included Meals

This is a 4 – sneaker tour due to the historic homes we visit and the walking tours we have planned. Remember, you can always stay at a restaurant or on a bench if you do not feel you are able to participate in everything. You will be required to leave the motorcoach with the group as the driver is off duty at these times.

\$1,648 per person, double occ

\$2,102 single occ

\$1,510 pp, triple

\$1,442 pp, quad occ

Prefer to pay by check? Receive 3% discount:

\$ 1,599 per person, double occ

\$2,039 single occ

\$1,465 pp, triple

\$1,399 pp, quad occ

Make your reservation with a \$500 deposit per person right now to reserve your space. Once this tour is filled, a wait list will be formed. Please send a check or call with a credit card along with your name, address, phone number, and all roommates' names if you are sharing a room and any dietary or walking restrictions.

Balance on base tour price is due October 1, 2024, and no refunds will be given after that time. We encourage you to purchase trip cancellation and interruption insurance. Please email or call us for details and options. If you take the insurance and need to cancel for a covered reason after October 1, 2024, you may file a claim with proper documentation to request a refund of your money.

Trip cancellation insurance is available at an additional charge. Please see the brochure available from our office or on our website.

Please note: Any notice of fuel surcharges imposed by carriers and/or attractions will be disclosed at least 30 days prior to tour departure.

The itinerary is subject to change and substitutions will be made with service of equal or greater value.