There are a few stories that you might hear in Port-au-Prince: that Sun Ra lived here on and off for several years in the 1960s. That he owned a Gingerbread house that you now can stay in, or maybe it’s a restaurant you can eat at. He stayed in quite a few other places. He stayed in a campev, or perhaps a tent. He tried to buy Hôtel Olofsson (Map p286; 60 Ave Christophe; 7am-11pm)

He composed Rocket Number Nine Take off for the Planet Venus in Port-au-Prince. He signed a photo of himself that now graces the walls of a local restaurant. He wanted to adopt a Haitian boy. He hired various children. He shared a room with Graham Greene.

Want more? Head to the Ghetto Biennale (www.ghettobiennale.org) and find out more about these overlooked moments in Sun Ra’s history.

Belle Etoile Hôtel
(Hotel $58, Map p286; 2255-1016, Rue C Perrault; s/d $45)
The Belle Etoile is the best of the budget hotels for travelers purposes — threatening to be grimy from the outside, but actually hosting bright and clean rooms that have been recently killed out; friendly staff.

Doux Sejour Guest House
(Hotel $55, Map p286; 32 Rue Magny; s/d from US$65/74; ) A tiny, little guesthouse painted white on the outside, with only two rooms, interestingly laid out (ascending the terrace feels like climbing into the trees). Staff are helpful and the attached restaurant, Le Bistro (mains US$9 to US$10) serves tasty, filling meals.

Hotel Kinam
(Hotel $55, Map p286; 48 Rue de Paris; s/d from US$90/103; ) A large gingerbread hotel right in the center of Pétionville, the Kinam is a good option. Rooms are well sized and modern, while the hotel as a whole offers good quality. The whole effect is charming, particularly on evenings when the pool is lit up and guests congregate for the renowned rum punches.

Ibo Lele
(Hotel $55, Map p286; 2257-8500, 2257-8509; Rue Ibo Lele; s/d US$100/140; ) The Ibo Lele was a big player in the 1980s tourist-heavy years, but today it feels a bit lifeless. Rooms still maintain quality, and the huge pool can be a draw for non-guests to use (if you have transportation to get here). There are stunning views, as the hotel is perched high on the slopes above Pétionville proper.

La Villa Creole
(Hotel $55, Map p286; 2257-1570, 2257-0965; www.villa creole.com; Rue El Rancho; s/d from US$248/392; ) Although it lost a hotel block in the earthquake, the Villa Creole carries a slightly more relaxed air than its competitors. It’s nicely laid out, with the open reception area flowing down to the exceedingly pleasant bar and pool area. Rooms are medium to large, superbly appointed and comfortable, and the staff are well known for their service and attention to detail.

La Reserve
(Hotel $55, Map p286; 2257-5026; www.lareservehaiti.com; 2 Rue Marcel Toureou, Berthe; s/d from US$140/140; ) In a secluded part of Pétionville, this hotel is the old home of 1920s president Borno, and a one-time Dominican monastery. In shady grounds, it’s been kitted out as more than a comfortable hotel. Recently refurbished rooms are swish, and the open-air restaurant is a great place to eat.

Eating
There is a wide range of restaurants in Port-au-Prince. The default menu is Creole, with a smattering of French and American dishes. If you’re downtown, you should also consider the hotel restaurants — many restaurants close on Sundays and lots of places only open in daytime hours during the week (lunch is the big meal of the day). For a wider range of eating options, head up the hill to Pétionville — the post-quake influx of foreigners has actually led to a mini boom of new places opening up.

Le Tiffany
(French $55, Map p286; 2243-4496; 12 Blvd Harry Truman; mains from US$11; 9am-6pm Mon-Sat) This well-regarded restaurant has a cool, dark interior that attracts a slightly more well-heeled crowd, making this one of the few higher end downtown restaurants to hold its own against the gravitational pull of the Pétionville dining scene. The French-influenced menu and good wine list are equally attractive draws here.

Le Chou
(French $55, Map p286; 2243-4496; 12 Blvd Harry Truman; mains from US$11; 9am-6pm Mon-Sat) This well-regarded restaurant has a cool, dark interior that attracts a slightly more well-heeled crowd, making this one of the few higher end downtown restaurants to hold its own against the gravitational pull of the Pétionville dining scene. The French-influenced menu and good wine list are equally attractive draws here.

Épi d’Or
(Fast Food $55, Map p286; 2246-8560; Rue de Delmas, Delmas 56; sandwiches around US$2.50; 6am-9pm) This place is always busy; be warned of big queues at lunchtime. As well as good sandwiches, it also serves crepes, pizza and 'MaEpi' burgers, and there’s an in-house patisserie, all in bright surroundings and with air con. Pay first, then present your ticket to complete the order.

Big Star Market
(Supermarket $55, Map p286; Rue Capois) This is the most central supermarket for downtown hotels, with several other options along Lalou.

PÉTIONVILLE

Assiette Creole
(Fusion $55, Map p286; 6 Rue Ope; meals around US$3-4; 9am-8pm, closed Sun) Tastefully popular with local office workers, this place serves up very generous portions of excellent quality Creole cuisine. You can take away or sit at the tables with umbrellas.

Arc-en-Ciel
(Fusion $55, Map p286; 24 Rue Capois; mains around US$5; 9am-2am) This is a decent no-frills sort of a place, serving up healthyish large portions of Creole standards. Along with plates of gringo (pork), plantain and the like, there’s good jerk chicken and a dash of American fast food. Later in the evening, diners compete with dancers as the music and atmosphere crank up a pitch.

Chou Rosé
(French $55, Map p286; 2245-5286; cr Rue 4 Pacot & Bellevue; mains from US$8; 11am-9pm) The service and setting in this converted gingerbread are worth a detour. The menu is the expected mix of Creole and French dishes, nicely presented, with accompanying ambiance.

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(French $55, Map p286; 2243-4496; 12 Blvd Harry Truman; mains from US$11; 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) This well-regarded restaurant has a cool, dark interior that attracts a slightly more well-heeled crowd, making this one of the few higher end downtown restaurants to hold its own against the gravitational pull of the Pétionville dining scene. The French-influenced menu and good wine list are equally attractive draws here.

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