



ESSENTIAL RV LOUISIANA: DISCOVERING THE PELICAN STATE'S SUPERLATIVE ATTRACTIONS

by Suzanne Wright

It's exceedingly easy to fall under Louisiana's spell: paddling swamps, sucking the heads off crawfish, dancing to zydeco, meandering the above-ground cemeteries. Truly a state unlike any other, its counties (called parishes), are a nod to Louisiana's Roman Catholic history. Its culture resembles a spicy gumbo, a rich roux with roots in Africa, the Caribbean, France, French Canada, Haiti, and Spain. We've crisscrossed the state to spotlight recreational activities, historic sites, can't-miss adventures, and culinary destinations. As they say, *laissez les bons temps rouler*—let the good times roll!



① NEW ORLEANS AND THE NORTHSORE

[Bourbon Street](#) is the epicenter of the annual party that is [Mardi Gras](#). If your travel doesn't dovetail with carnival season, visit [Mardi Gras World](#) for a look at the fantastic parade floats. [City Park](#)—50 percent larger than NYC's Central Park—is an outdoor oasis with sculpture and botanical gardens. If your juju needs a tune-up, the [Marie Laveau House of Voodoo](#) in the French Quarter gives spiritual readings. NOLA is an antique lover's mecca, especially the shops that line Magazine Street. Eating here is a near-religious experience. [Café Du Monde](#) has been serving chicory-spiked coffee and powdered sugar-dusted beignets (fried donuts) since 1862. Grab a muffuletta from [Central Grocery](#), hop the [streetcar](#), and stroll the oak-shaded streets of the upscale [Garden District](#). For poboys, we like [Killer PoBoys](#); for oysters Rockefeller, [Antoine's Restaurant](#); and [Brennan's](#) for tableside bananas foster. Beyond Cajun and Creole specialties, the modern Israeli menu at [Shaya](#) slays. In Lacombe, [Bayou Adventure](#) will guide you through wild and beautiful Cane Bayou, dense with marine and land wildlife. Want to horseback ride? Folsom outfitters can accommodate equestrians of every skill level.

Where to Stay: If you want to be in the heart of the action, the pricey [French Quarter RV Resort](#) is a great option, but you must reserve. For calmer digs, head north over the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway, which spans 24 miles and connects the city to the lovely towns known collectively as the Northshore. At Mandeville's [Fountainebleau State Park](#), book an over-the-water cabin, hike, or cycle the rails-the-trails conversion [Tammany Trace](#), then catch a sunset on the pier.







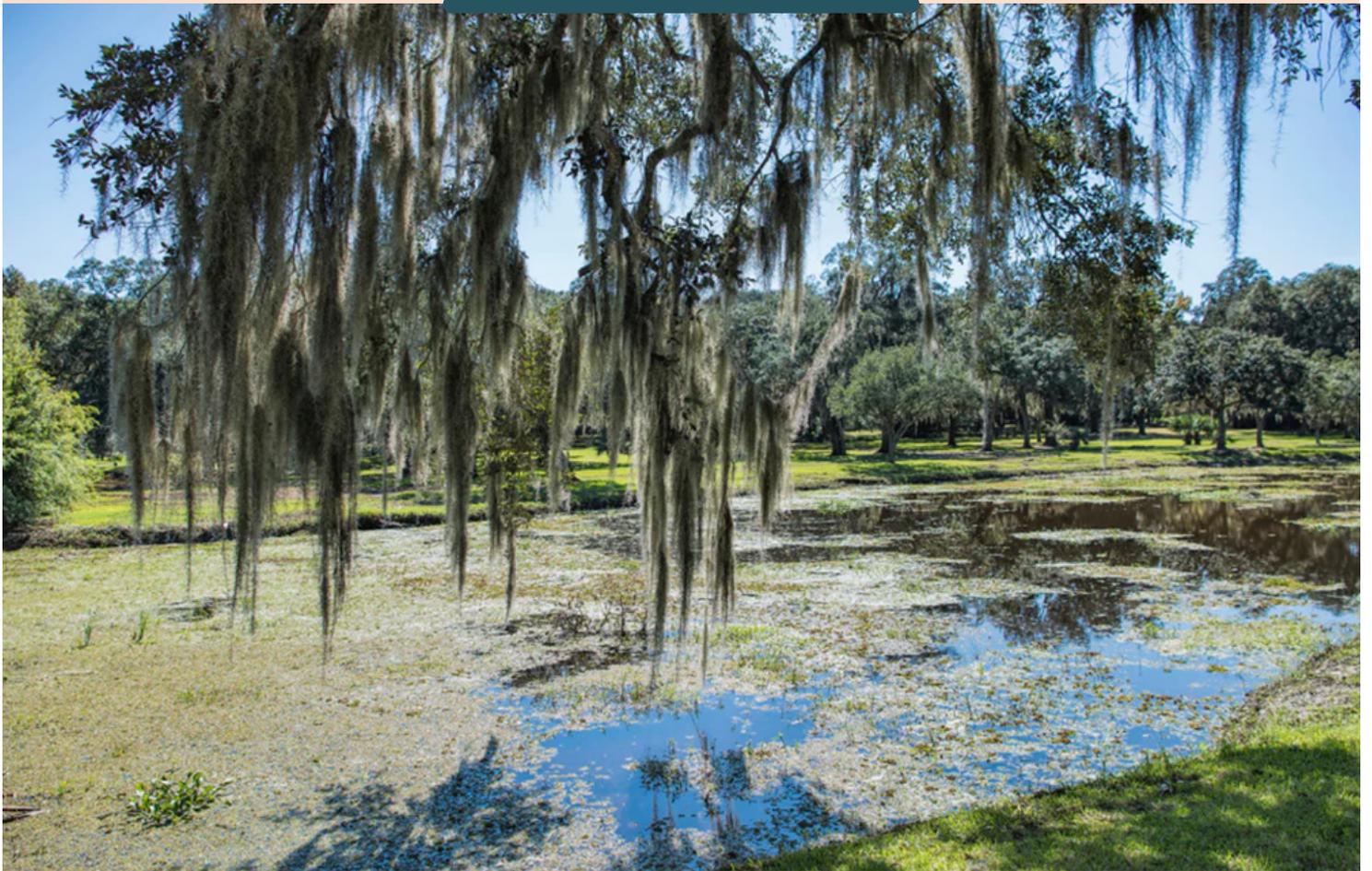
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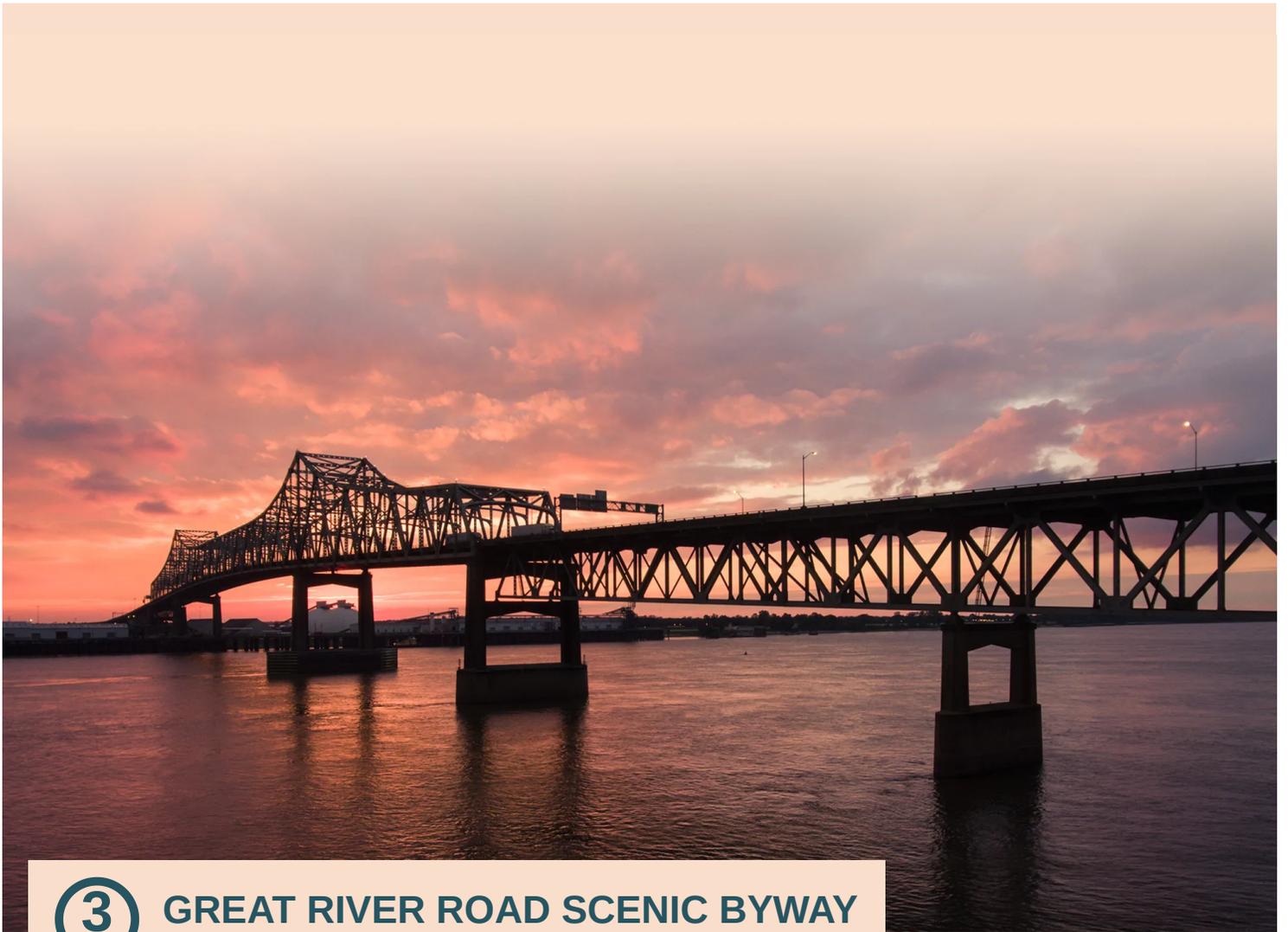
LAFAYETTE AND CAJUN COUNTRY

Lafayette is the gateway to Cajun Country. To gain an understanding of the grit and grace required to live in the Atchafalaya Basin, spend some time at [Acadian Village](#), which recreates a 19th century settlement. Kayaking or kayak fishing on Lake Martin is an unforgettable experience. [Pack & Paddle's](#) three-hour sunset swamp tour leisurely plies a bird rookery teeming with anhingas, egrets, herons, pelicans, and roseate spoonbills among bald cypress, oak, and tupelo trees cascading with silvery Spanish moss. The Honey Island Swamp with [Pearl River Eco Tours](#) allows you to spy 'gators, deer, and wild boar from your airboat or skiff. Two semi-tropical islands perched atop active salt mines are [Avery Island](#), the jungle home of Tabasco hot sauce, and [Jefferson Island](#), with the lush Rip Van Winkle Gardens. Music is a hallmark of every Cajun gathering. In charming Breaux Bridge, [Buck & Johnny's](#) hosts a rousing zydeco breakfast (order the grits topped with crawfish etoufee) on Saturdays.

Where to Stay: A central base camp, located just a ¼ mile off of I-10, is [Cajun Palms RV Resort](#), it boasts 300 deluxe sites, and a clubhouse with a resort-style pool. If you're looking for a quieter location, [Chicot State Park](#) north of Laffy, offers lakefront camping, while [Lake Fausse Pointe State Park](#), south of town, occupies a secluded 6,000-acre site that was once home to the Chitimacha Indians.





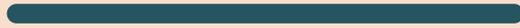


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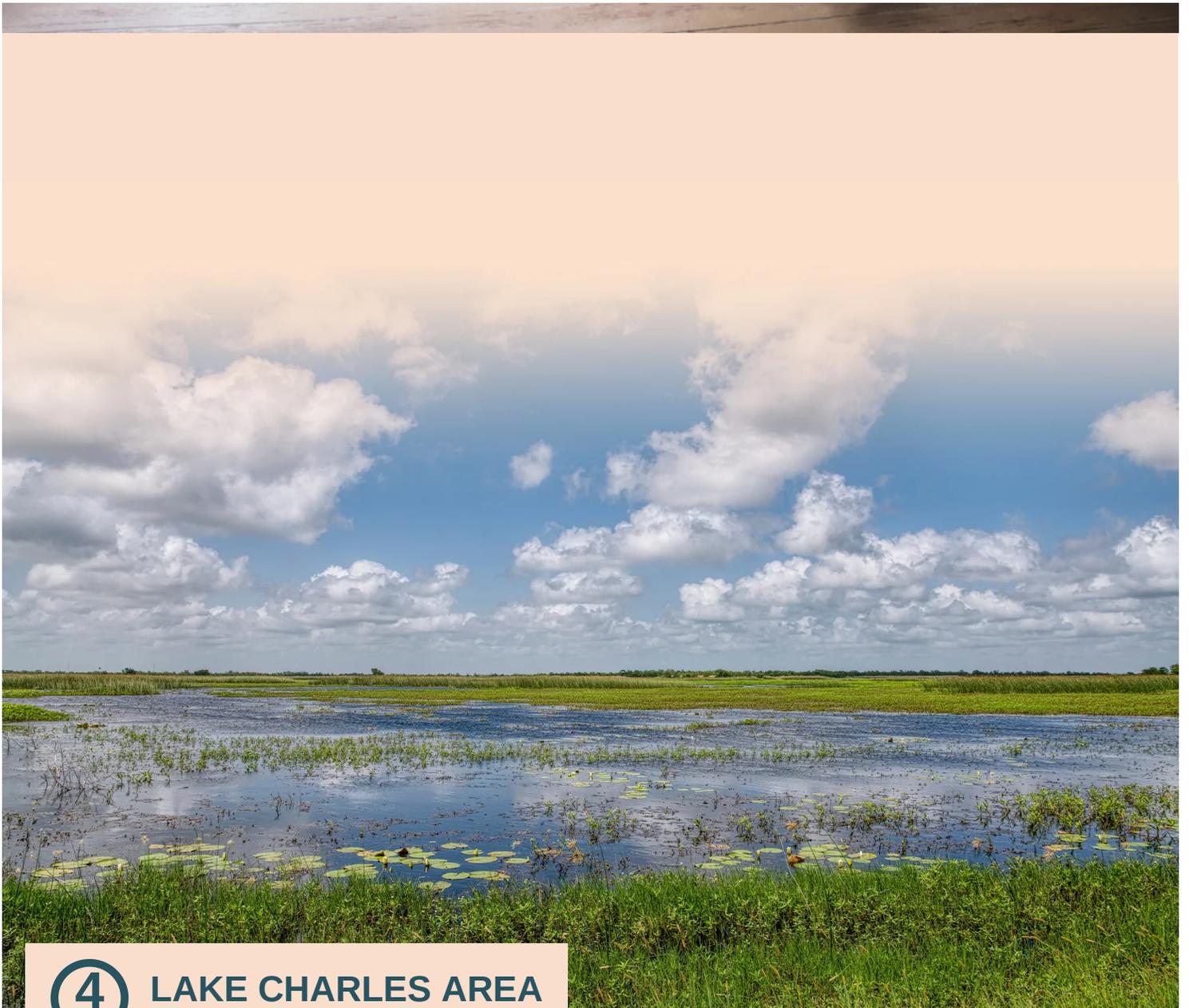
GREAT RIVER ROAD SCENIC BYWAY

Called by many as the greatest drive in America, the [Great River Road Scenic Byway](#) parallels the Mississippi River for 700 miles from its origination in Minnesota to its termination in Louisiana at the Gulf of Mexico. It passes through numerous historic towns including Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Plaquemine, St. Francisville, Tallulah, and Vidalia. The stretch between Baton Rouge and New Orleans is known as "Plantation Alley," is a juxtaposition of past and present economic realities, where contemporary hulking petrochemical plants share geography with sugarcane's grand mansions. [Whitney Plantation](#) unflinchingly details the oppressive practices enslaved people endured on this indigo, rice, and sugar plantation that dates to 1752. The original slave cabins and outbuildings hauntingly honor more than 100,000 people who were held here in bondage. [Laura Plantation](#) in Vacherie preserves Creole architecture, while [Oak Alley](#) and [The Houmas House](#) stand as testimony to the opulence of the antebellum South aristocracy. Taken together, the complex history of the region is revealed.

Where to Stay: [Riverview RV Park](#) in Vidalia is big-rig friendly and features riverfront sites.



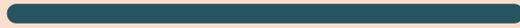




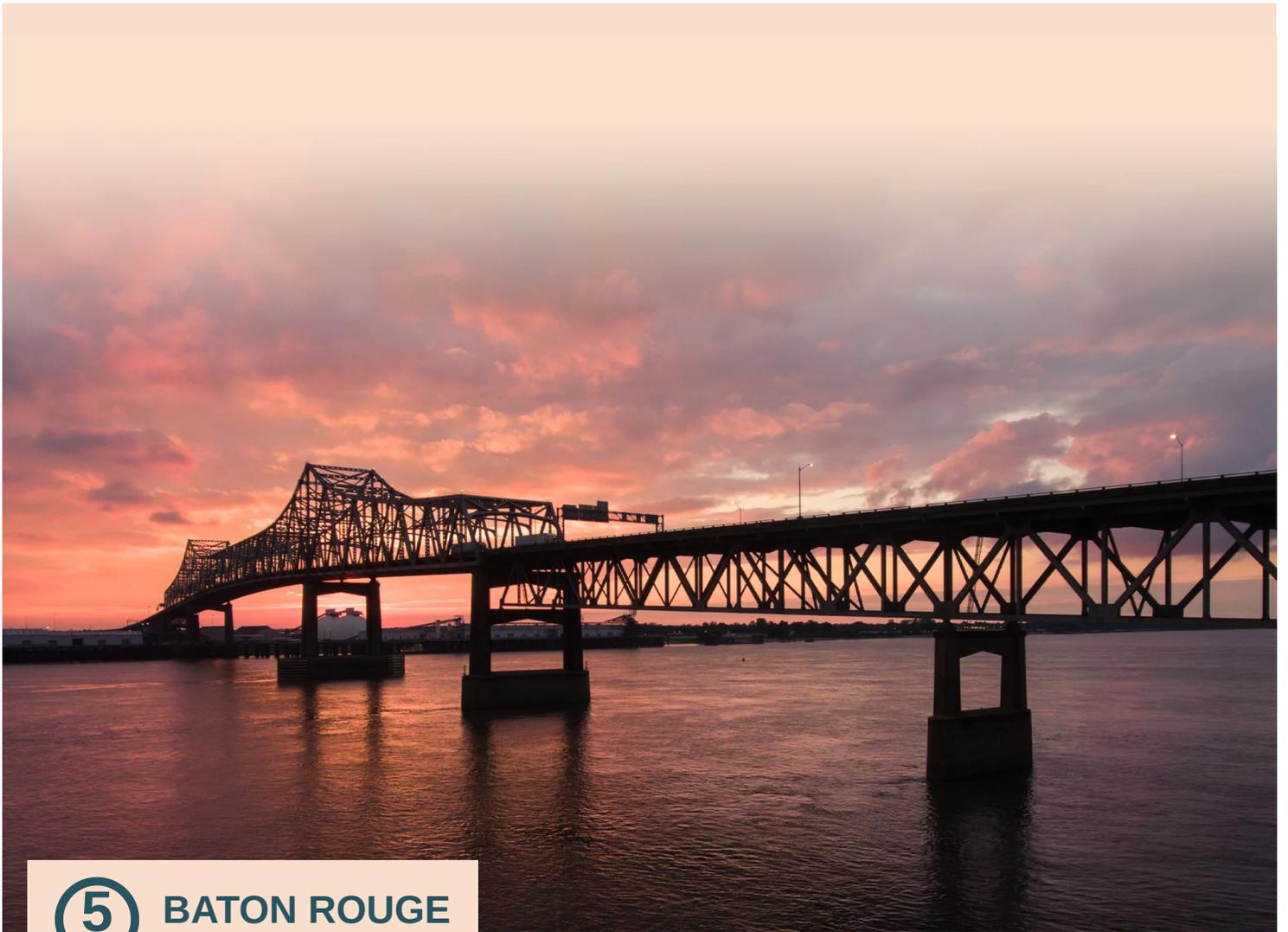
④ LAKE CHARLES AREA

Southwest Louisiana is a sportsman's paradise. Extending 180 miles from Sulphur to Lake Charles, [The Creole Nature Trail](#) is a birder's dream, with landscape that morphs from rural farmland to marshy flatlands called Cajun prairies. Watch shrimpers haul in catch at the 125,000-acre [Sabine National Wildlife Refuge](#), where you can also crab, fish, hunt, and train your lenses on the mesmerizing vistas. [The Charpentier Historic District](#) in downtown Lake Charles is known for its Victorian architecture which dates from the 1800s. [Rabideux's Sausage Kitchen](#) is a must-visit for boudin and cracklins', delicious local delicacies.

Where to Stay: [Cooling Springs RV Resort](#) and [Osprey Lakes RV Park](#) are both top-rated, laid-back options with full amenities.





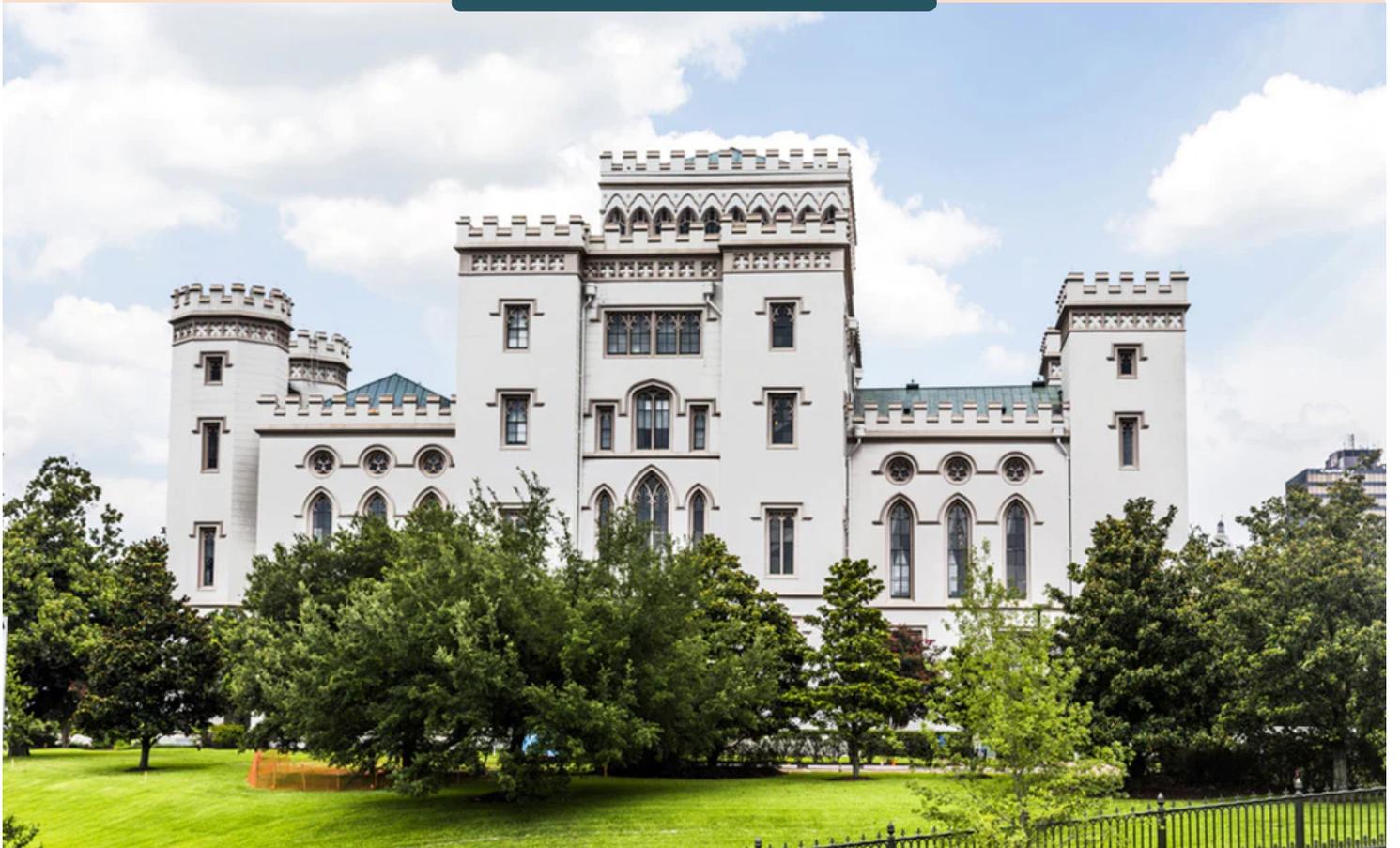


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BATON ROUGE

The state's capital literally translates in French as "red stick," and is home to Louisiana State University's formidable football Tigers. Music is life in these parts, and [Beauvoir Park](#) welcomes charismatic musicians to a mid-city indoor/outdoor venue. Seeking family-friendly fun after dark? Hop on a glow-in-the-dark bike with [Geaux Rides](#) and pedal the city streets. The award-winning [Beaufort Swamp Nature Center](#) features live animal, ecology and art exhibits, along with a vintage carved waterfowl collection. Those that amble the mile-long gravel trail are sometimes treated to armadillo, opossum, otter, and raccoon sightings.

Where to Stay: Horse enthusiasts will want to reserve at Farr Park Equestrian Center and RV Campground with an enviable location adjacent to the Mississippi River just six miles from downtown Baton Rouge. Amenity-rich [Lakeside RV Park in Livingston](#), boasts a 17-acre fishing lake, an enclosed bark park, a pool, and a children's playground.







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KISATCHIE NATIONAL FOREST

Located in central Louisiana, [Kisatchie National Forest](#) is the state's only forest, featuring 604,000 acres of longleaf pines and flatwoods vegetation spread across five ranger districts. Additionally, there are 200 miles of motorized trails for OHVs. In March and April, wild azaleas burst into bloom.

Where to Stay: If Kisatchie's campgrounds are unavailable, [Alexandria RV Park](#), tucked off I-49 in Boyce, offers comfortable and affordable sites.









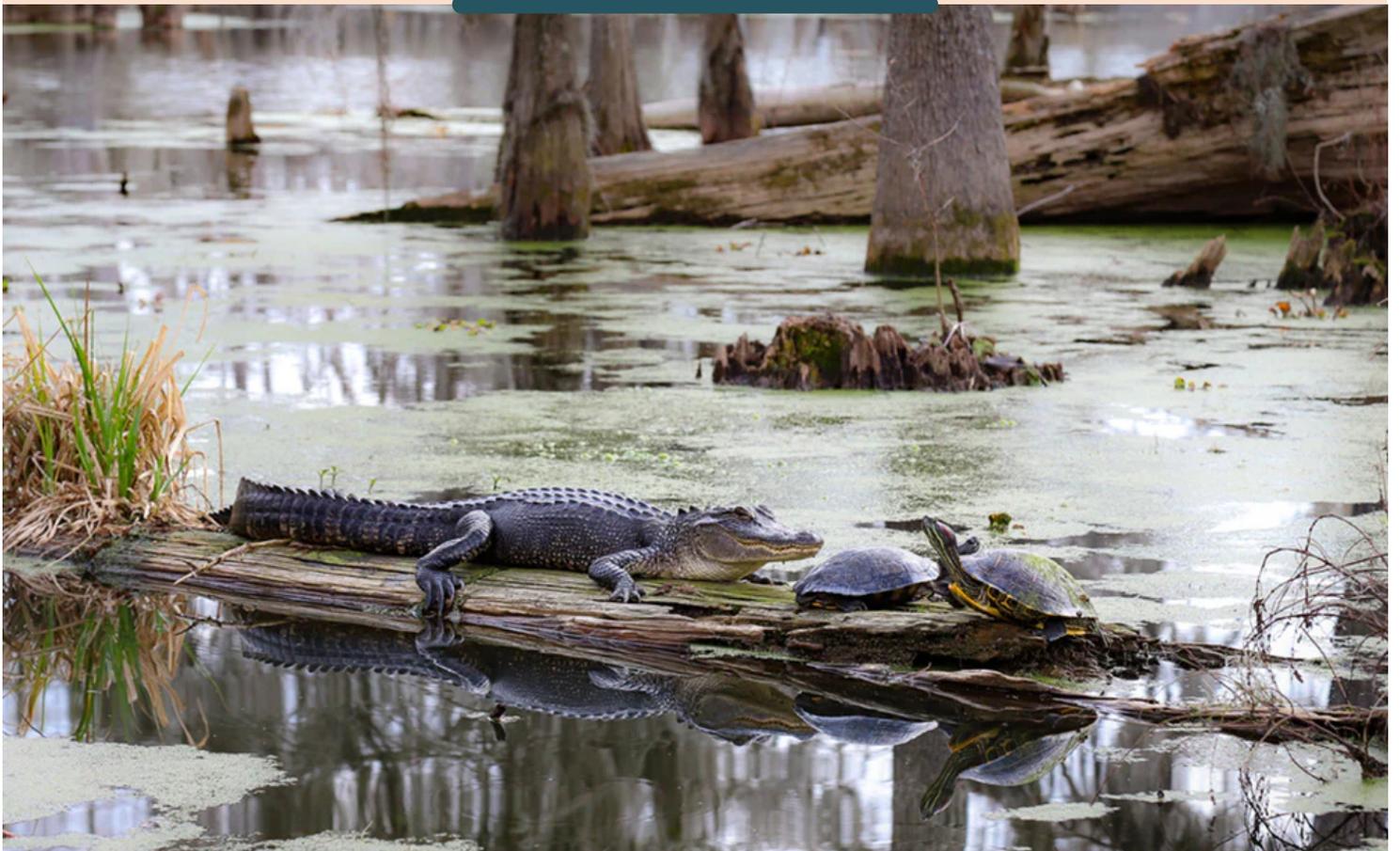
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MORGAN CITY AND THE CAJUN COAST

St. Mary Parish borders the Atchafalaya River and serves up a spooky kind of magic, along with unparalleled Cajun hospitality. This intriguing area (showcased on the Travel Channel) is steeped in history and peppered with paranormal activity. You can download a DIY ghost tour, or ride with [Captain Caviar](#) in a vintage Cadillac. Swamp tours and paddling on the exotic waterways are other popular pastimes.

Where to Stay: Morgan City has several RV parks, including the quiet and intimate (14 spots) [Cajun Country RV Park](#). Located right on the Atchafalaya River, it was once the site of a Union Army Fort that defended the island.









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HOUMA-THIBODAU-GRAND ISLE

Outdoor adventure abounds in the heart of Louisiana's wetlands, with world-class inland and offshore fishing, and spectacular avian sightings along a section of [America's Wetland Birding Trail](#). Thibodaux, a 7.5-mile long barrier island, was originally populated by descendants of the pirate Jean Lafitte's crew. Dubbed the Cajun Bayou, the region is blessed with breathtaking sunrises and sunsets, and home to a lively mix of oilfield workers and generations of townspeople. [The Cajun Bayou Food Trail](#) affords mouthwatering temptations throughout LaFourche Parish, including a local specialty, thin fried catfish "chips," and boudin, blood sausage.

Where to Stay: [Galliano RV Park](#) offers easy in-and-out paved access with 30- and 50-amp pedestals. The park is adjacent to the Cash Magic Truck Plaza & Casino, for gaming fun, and [Spahr's Restaurant](#), a local favorite that dishes up breakfast, lunch, and dinner (we recommend the crawfish pasta).







From rolling hills to low country and miles of unspoiled coastline, South Carolina's highways follow some of the most stunning scenery in the region. And with historic charm, hospitality and world-class recreation around every corner – and during every season – any time is a good time for this classic southern road trip.

