Louisiana is full of stories. Yours begins here.

A bit of background

The National Scenic Byway Program is a federal initiative whose goal is to “identify, designate and promote scenic byways and to protect and enhance the intrinsic qualities of the areas through which these byways pass.”

The Louisiana program focuses on the interactions between the landscape and those whose heritage is tied to it. Forestry, agriculture and industries such as seafood have provided livelihoods for Louisianans for generations, and continue to do so today. More than 300 years ago, Spanish and French explorers arrived in what is today Louisiana, settling in the Mississippi River Delta and building outposts throughout the backcountry. Go back further in time, and you’ll find evidence of the American Indians who lived here thousands of years before the first Europeans made landfall. These people, plus the Germans, Italians, Africans and other groups who have made Louisiana their home over the past three centuries, have contributed to Louisiana’s food, music, artwork and traditions, making the state one of the top cultural destinations in the country.

The Louisiana Trails & Byways network takes visitors on 19 epic road trips through the state’s culture, geography and history. Make the most of your journey with maps and insider info that highlight noteworthy experiences along each — just visit LouisianaByways.com or one of the state’s Welcome Centers for maps of individual trails and suggested stops along each of them.

19 byways, countless stories.

Louisiana’s Trails & Byways are like book chapters. Each reveals something about Louisiana’s culture, but none alone can tell the whole story. The more you explore, the richer the story becomes.

To experience Louisiana’s music traditions, head to the Zydeco Cajun Prairie Byway that goes through Mamou, “the Cajun Music Capital of the World,” where Saturday morning concerts are a local tradition that will wake you up faster than a stout cup of coffee. In Opelousas, boogie down to the sounds of the city’s native son King of Zydeco, Clifton Chenier. In Crowley, visit the J.D. Miller Music Museum, a recording studio and museum where swamp pop musicians have been recording songs more than 50 years. In Ville Platte, hear the tunes of the prairie at the Louisiana Swamp Pop Museum. Travel the Louisiana Great River Road Byway, where concert venues, memorials and museums honor the region’s Delta blues and old-time country music traditions.

Next stop, Louisiana’s legendary culinary traditions. Connoisseurs of local cuisine will find no shortage of dining options in Louisiana. The San Bernards Byway, starting on the outskirts of New Orleans, takes visitors past southeast Louisiana plantations, swamps and Mississippi River vistas, while passing small-town restaurants serving up fresh seafood and roadside stands selling Louisiana-grown produce. Even more authentic Louisiana cuisine is found throughout the byways network, with flavorful Cajun fare on the Southern Swamps Byway and down-home, farm-to-table dishes on the history-rich Louisiana Colonial Trails Byway.

History fans will find plenty to love on the Louisiana Trails & Byways, where catching a glimpse into the past is as easy as driving up to it. Stops along the Boom or Bust Byway tell dramatic stories of southwest Louisiana’s oil and gas industry of yesteryear; the Myths and Legends Byway is a living history book filled with colorful characters such as the local outlaw Leather Britches Smith. On the Historic US 80 Byway, travelers wind through landscape largely unchanged from decades ago, as well as the 3,400-year-old Poverty Point World Heritage Site. The Cane River National Heritage Trail brings together tales of plantation life with scenes of rustic central Louisiana, and passes through downtown Natchitoches, the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase territory.

Diverse as these byways are, they all share a common theme: Spectacular roadside scenery that showcases the best of Louisiana. Get up-close with remote bayous and cypress forests along the Bayou Teche and Wetlands Cultural byways. The 20-mile Tunica Trace Byway is among the state’s shortest, but it delivers gorgeous scenes of south Louisiana’s hill country. The Longleaf Trail Byway and Toledo Bend Forest Scenic Byway take travelers through west Louisiana’s lesser-known forested landscapes steeped in Native American, Spanish, French and American history. And in southwest Louisiana, the Byway Byway and Creole Nature Trail All-American Road offer visitors views of one of North America’s largest bird migration routes, along with remote beaches and communities that make up Louisiana’s agricultural heartland.

Louisiana’s backroads have countless stories to tell. Use this Louisiana Trails & Byways guide to help make the most of your time in the Bayou State.

Contact information

For more information visit LouisianaByways.com or email Doug Bourgeois with Louisiana Trails and Byways dbourgeois@.crt.la.gov.

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BAYOU TECHE 123 miles – Hugging the western edge of the Atchafalaya Basin and following the scenic (and Last) Bayou Teche, this byway passes through some of Cajun Country’s most notable towns and landscapes. Visit the Waveland-Wilsonion Aviation and Railroad Museum in Waveland, the historic town of Bayfield, or ride a ferry across the bayou to see the world’s largest drive-in movie theater at Bayou Vista Drive-In. The bayou itself is a popular spot for canoeing, kayaking, and fishing. 

BOOM OR BUST 137 miles – Big oil towns dot the byway. With almost 200 oil refineries in and around the region, you’ll see it all on this byway that runs along the Mississippi River levee. The byway begins at Franklinton and heads north to St. Francisville, where you’ll see the site of the 1927 Mississippi River flood. Continue north to the town of Plaquemine, which was founded in 1717. From there, head west to the parish seat of St. Gabriel, which is known for its Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Orleans. Finally, head south to Abbeville, where you’ll find the Cane River Historic District, which includes the historic Euzen House and the Euzen Plantation House. 

CAJUN CORRIDOR 24 miles – The Cajun Corridor Byway runs through the self-proclaimed “most Cajun place on Earth” and takes you through the bayou country of eastern Louisiana. This byway features a variety of attractions, from local museums and Creole restaurants to a fishing camp and the historic site of the last great battle of the War of 1812, the Battle of New Orleans. 

CREOLE NATURE TRAIL ALL-AMERICAN ROAD 207 miles – This byway follows the Red River and offers visitors a chance to explore the natural beauty of Louisiana. The trail begins in Natchitoches and follows the Red River through the pine forests of Caroline Dormon Hiking and Horse Trail, and once you’ve worked up an appetite, grill out at a campground and enjoy the scenic views. 

HISTORIC US 80 112 miles – The Dixie Overland Highway was one of the first major auto routes connecting motorists from the East Coast to the West Coast. You’ll see it all on this byway, from the oldest cotton mill in the state of Louisiana to the site of the last great battle of the War of 1812. The trail begins in Natchitoches and follows the Red River through rich farmland and pretty towns, ending at Coushatta, where the river meets the Mississippi River. 

FLAYLYW 55 miles – This byway takes you on a scenic loop through Jefferson Davis Parish, offering a quick getaway to enjoy the countryside while experiencing the area’s natural beauty and local wildlife. Paddle the waterways or bike an extreme trail to the beautiful, untouched wetlands around the bayou. 

LONGLEAF TRAIL 17 miles – Nestled within the hills of central Louisiana’s Kisatchie National Forest, the Longleaf Trail provides visitors with a unique opportunity to experience the natural beauty of the area. The trail is a popular spot for birdwatching and hiking, and visitors can enjoy the stunning views of the surrounding landscapes. 

LOUISIANA COLONIAL TRAILS 484 miles – Discover the legends and locations that continue to provide lore and history to the region. This byway features highlights from the colonial period, including sites like the site of the 1718 Battle of Louisianna, the site of the 1814 Battle of New Orleans, and the site of the 1862 Battle of Cherry Log. 

MYTHS AND LEGENDS 181 miles – Louisiana’s Myths and Legends Byway is a drive to the stories, tales and life of a gumbo named Leaithe Breton Smith. The drive takes you through a region settled by the Acadian and Creole communities, a group of people who fled to the United States from France during the French and Indian War. 

SOUTHERN SWAMPS 20 miles – This byway gives visitors a look at the natural beauty of the swamp’s wetlands. Discover the legends and locations that continue to provide lore and history to the region. This byway features highlights from the colonial period, including sites like the site of the 1718 Battle of Louisianna, the site of the 1814 Battle of New Orleans, and the site of the 1862 Battle of Cherry Log. 

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TOLEDO BEND FOREST 26 miles – The largest remnant lake in the South, Toledo Bend Reservoir, is surrounded by some of Louisiana’s most impressive pines and hardwoods. In fact, Toledo Bend is so renowned for its fishing that it was named Best Lake by Bassmaster. The Toledo Bend area is also home to a variety of wildlife, including deer, raccoons, and turkey. 

TUNICA TRACE 20 miles – Flaged and wending, this byway near the Louisiana/Mississippi border was once an important route for the French to travel from New Orleans to Natchez. Today, Tunica Trace Byway gives travelers a sample of the region’s rich cultural history and natural beauty. 

WETLANDS CULTURAL 202 miles – Serving as a buffer between the country’s coast and the Gulf of Mexico, Louisiana’s wetlands have been home to human habitation for hundreds of years. Attractions along the byway include the Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center in Thibodaux, which features a display of Cajun artifacts; the Center for Traditional Louisiana Boat Building in Lockport, which showcases the region’s rich history; and the Louisiana/Mississippi state line, which marks the boundary between two states.

ZYDECO JUAN PRAIRIE 483 miles – The Zydeco Juan Prairie Byway pays tribute to the music of southern Louisiana, touching many music spots while avoiding the touristy countryside that is home to crawfish farms and rice fields. Music is the main attraction to this byway, and you’ll see it everywhere in the shapes of music spots and venues, like the Blue Moon and the Zydeco Music Center in New Iberia. 

NORTHUP TRAIL 31 miles – The Northup Trail takes visitors along the path of Solomon Northup during his 12-year journey as a slave in Louisiana. Originally from New York, Northup was kidnapped, sold as a slave in New Orleans and enslaved in Kentucky in 1841, where he remained until legally regaining his freedom at the Avoyelles Parish Courthouse in 1853. The trail follows his path through Rapides and Avoyelles parishes and ends at the site of the last great battle of the War of 1812, the Battle of New Orleans.

ZACHARY TAYLOR PARKWAY LOUISIANA’S MILITARY HISTORY 203 miles – Named for the only Louisiana to be elected President, Zachary Taylor Parkway is the State’s Byway of Military History and a treasure trove of natural resources, history, and culture. This byway takes visitors through the most agricultural region of the state, known for its rolling hills, tall forests, and fertile soil. Attractions along the byway include the Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center in Thibodaux, which features a display of Cajun artifacts; the Center for Traditional Louisiana Boat Building in Lockport, which showcases the region’s rich history; and the Louisiana/Mississippi state line, which marks the boundary between two states.

GREAT RIVER ROAD NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY 737 miles – Pansalating the mighty Mississippi, the Louisiana portion of the Great River Road byway begins at the Louisiana/Mississippi state line and ends at the little village of Ponchatoula, a historic town that once stood as the gateway to the Mississippi River valley. Attractions along the byway include the Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center in Thibodaux, which features a display of Cajun artifacts; the Center for Traditional Louisiana Boat Building in Lockport, which showcases the region’s rich history; and the Louisiana/Mississippi state line, which marks the boundary between two states.

SAN BERNARDO 30 miles – Like much of the area, St. Bernard Parish reflects a French and Spanish past, but also strong in this region is the influence of the black people from the Spanish Canary Islands. Natives of these islands were drawn here more than two centuries ago to work the sugar plantations. Learn more about the region’s unique history at the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge.

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You can also get free printed versions of maps at any of Louisiana's Welcome Centers and CVB visitor information areas.

Visit Louisiana Trails & Byways online at LouisianaByways.com, where you'll find detailed descriptions of each route and stops along them. You can also get free printed versions of maps at any of Louisiana's Welcome Centers and CVB visitor information areas.

Look for these signs along each byway.
The best of Louisiana can be found just off the interstate along one of our 19 Byways, our roadways into the real stories of Louisiana. Our Byways tell stories of the history, culture and people that have created not just a special state, but a state of mind and living found only in Louisiana.

Along the Byways, you can stop at local fishing spots and purchase the catch of the day right from the fisherman who caught it, watch a local artist at work in her own gallery, order a piece of pie and get the recipe from the cook who made it or take a historic house tour given by the owner or a descendant of the people who lived there.

Experience #OnlyLouisiana with the real people who live it each and every day. It’s just a Byway trip away.

Billy Nungesser
Lieutenant Governor

LouisianaByways.com