



A drive along the Wetlands Cultural Byway through southeast Louisiana's Gulf Coast parishes of Lafourche and Terrebonne offers visitors an abundance of both natural beauty and cultural experiences. The byway corridor is situated on the fragile and fast-changing Mississippi River Delta, where there is an incessant danger of losing both land and the rich cultures thriving there. This Louisiana Scenic Byway provides a unique look into the rich history of the world's fastest-vanishing coastline where shrimping, trapping, and farming have been a way of life for hundreds of years, and close-knit families have preserved their cultural heritage despite outside influence. The varied cultures of the Native Americans and Cajuns in the region are demonstrated in food, music, customs, language, and traditional architectural styles. The landscape of the roadway is mainly prairie and wetland. With natural bayous and tree-lined swamps, fresh, brackish, and saltwater marshes surrounding much of the environment,

water dictates the byway's twists and turns, giving drivers a choice of entry and exit points along the two interconnected loops and three spurs. Visitors encounter antebellum plantations, historic downtowns, museums and cultural centers, natural heritage areas, birding opportunities, world-class fishing, a Gulf Coast beach, freshly-caught seafood restaurants, Native American burial mounds, bayou overlook areas, swamp and bayou tours, sculpture gardens, and more as they tour the area served by the byway.

Wetlands Cultural Byway



A trip along the Wetlands Cultural Byway in the heart of Louisiana's Cajun Country is the ideal way to take in the unique sights and sounds of life on the bayou. Here is a sample of what visitors will find:



Swamp Tours

Want to get up close and personal with an alligator? Explore Louisiana's back country along its meandering bayous, swamps, and marshes that are abundant with wildlife and exotic plant life by taking a family-friendly swamp tour. Trained navigators in Lafourche and Terrebonne Parishes are available to escort you into the murky waters of Louisiana swamps where you will get a different look at local scenery and wildlife and come face to face with the beauty and beasts of nature.

The Louisiana Coastal Birding Trail offers easy birding opportunities with observation decks overlooking marshland, filled with herons, egrets, ibises, ospreys, and in winter, waterfowl and bald eagles. The birding trail is located in both Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes where the byway begins, in the shady forests associated with the Mandalay National Wildlife Refuge and Point-aux-Chenes Wildlife Management Area.

Open: Daily
Admission: Free
 2415 Darnell Rd., New Iberia, LA 70517
 504.284.5267
www.louisianatravel.com/louisiana-birding-trails

Terrebonne Parish

a) Houma Historic Downtown and **Bayou Boardwalk** are rich in culture and tradition, with unique shops, local museums, and excellent restaurants offering a variety of tastes from local Cajun cuisine to fine dining.

Houma, LA 70360
 985.873.6408
www.houmamainstreet.org/index.html

b) Mandalay National Refuge Nature Trail provides a glimpse into three different habitat types within a 45-minute hike. Along the trail, there are opportunities for bird watching, wildlife observation, and photography. The trail is located in the 4,416 acre refuge that has a beautiful fresh-water marsh with ponds, cypress-tupelo swamp, levees and man-made canals, providing an excellent habitat for waterfowl, wading birds, and neotropical songbirds. With the exception of the nature trail, most of the refuge access is by boat only.

Open: Daily from legal sunrise to legal sunset; no night time use is allowed
Headquarters is located five miles west of Houma, on LA Highway 182
 985.853.1078 • www.fws.gov/mandalay



c) Southdown Plantation is a 19th century sugar manor house and home to the **Terrebonne Museum** of history, culture, and arts. Settled on four beautiful acres, tours of the house and worker's cabin are offered every hour; last tour begins at 3 p.m.

Open: Tuesday – Saturday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Admission: \$5 for children under 18, \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors
 1208 Museum Dr., Houma, LA 70360
 985.851.0154 • www.southdownmuseum.org

d) Regional Military Museum is dedicated to commemorating the sacrifices of the brave men and women who have defended our great nation throughout history, at home and abroad. The museum is a living history — vehicles still run, weapons really fire, and the library acts as a place of research for family military history as well as educational instruction — and is continually updated. Veteran volunteers offer first-hand accounts of what it was really like to lay one's life on the line to protect our freedom.

Open: Monday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Admission: \$1 for students, \$3 for adults, \$2 for seniors
 1154 Barrow St., Houma, LA 70363
 985.873.8200 • www.regionalmilitarymuseum.com

e) Terrebonne Folklife Culture Center offers exciting exhibits, unique work by local artists and craftsmen, and the chance to participate in fun-filled classes and workshops. The Cajun tool shed, Louisiana decoys, the historical Native American Indian artifacts exhibit, and live demonstrations give visitors a true taste of the area's rich and varied history.

Open: Tuesday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Admission: \$1
 317 Goode St., Houma, LA 70360
 985.873.6545 • www.terrebonnefolklife.org

f) Bayou Terrebonne Waterlife Museum preserves and promotes the area's long, colorful, and historically important cultural and economic ties with the seafood and water transportation industries, as well as other wetlands and water-based hunting, gathering, and mining occupations. The museum showcases the relationship between water and the local people who make their living from the water.

Open: Tuesday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Admission: \$2 for children 2-11 years, \$3 for adults, \$2.50 for seniors
 7910 Park Ave., Houma, LA 70364
 985.580.7200 • www.terrebonnewaterlifemuseum.org

g) Chauvin Sculpture Garden is a modern American folk-art gem that pulls visitors through the dreamscapes of a troubled soul. More than 100 sculptures were built starting in 1990 by the reclusive Kenny Hill, bricklayer by trade, while he rented a small plot on the banks of Bayou Petit Caillou. After 10 years of creating this deeply emotional landscape, he abruptly stopped working on the project and abandoned his home and sculptures.

Open: Monday – Saturday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Admission: Free
 5337 Bayou Side Dr., Chauvin, LA 70344
 985.594.2546 • www.nicholls.edu/folkartcenter

h) The Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) coordinates and stimulates Louisiana's activities in marine research and education. Exhibits provide information on the ecology, cultural history, and economy of the region. LUMCON's nine aquariums showcase fish and invertebrates that live in the Gulf of Mexico and Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary. With a panoramic view of Cocodrie and the surrounding marsh, the observation tower is a highlight of the center.

Open: Daily, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Admission: Free
 End of LA Hwy 56, Cocodrie, LA
 985.851.2800 • www.lumcon.edu

Lafourche Parish

i) St. John's Episcopal Church and Cemetery is one of the oldest Episcopal Churches west of the Mississippi, opening its doors in 1843. The cemetery contains remains of people of many faiths, including twice Louisiana Governor and Civil War General, Francis T. Nicholls.

718 Jackson St., Thibodaux, LA 70301
 985.447.2910 • www.stjohnsthobodaux.org

j) Jean Lafitte Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center features the lives of the Acadians (Cajuns) and others whose travels brought them to Louisiana's bayous. Recreation, clothing, home furnishings, religion, cuisine, and fishing are explored through exhibits, artifacts, videos, and films.

Open: Monday – Tuesday, 9 a.m. – 7 p.m.;
Wednesday – Thursday, 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.;
Friday – Saturday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Admission: Free
 314 St. Mary St., Thibodaux, LA 70301
 985.448.1375
www.nps.gov/jela/wetlands-acadian-cultural-center.htm

k) Edward Douglas White Historic Site displays exhibits about the life and accomplishments of both Governor E.D. White I and U.S. Chief Justice E.D. White II. Exhibits are contained in antebellum Creole cottages which sit on six acres of land dotted with massive oak trees, surrounded by sugar cane fields. Grounds are available for picnics and general recreation.

Open: Tuesday – Saturday, 10 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Admission: Free
 2995 LA Hwy 1, Thibodaux, LA 70301
 985.447.0915
www.crt.state.la.us/museum/properties/edwhite.aspx

l) Laurel Valley Plantation is the largest surviving 19th and 20th century sugar plantation in the United States. The sugar cane fields, slave quarters, and general store, featuring local arts and crafts, still exist as a tribute to a way of life of the early settlers along Bayou Lafourche.

Open: Tuesday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.;
Saturday – Sunday, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Admission: Free
 LA Hwy 308, approximately 1 mile south of Thibodaux, 70301
 985.447.5216

m) Historic Downtown Thibodaux lies on the quiet banks of winding Bayou Lafourche. Visitors and locals alike come downtown to experience the unique blend of beautiful historic architecture, quaint boutiques, fine dining, and spirited nightlife. Rich in history and southern charm, this reviving downtown area is a liveable, vibrant place to shop, dine, and visit with friends.

Thibodaux, LA 70301
 985.413.9886 • www.downtownthibodaux.org

n) Bayou Lafourche Folklife and Heritage Museum preserves, promotes, and interprets the human history, cultural heritage, natural history, arts, and folkways of the Bayou Lafourche region.

Open: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. and by appointment
Admission: \$1 for children under 12, \$2 for adults
 110 Main St., Lockport, LA 70374
 985.532.5909 • www.bayoumuseum.org

o) The Center for Traditional Louisiana Boat Building does research into building wooden boats throughout South Louisiana. Photographs, slides, oral history tapes, and artifacts are housed in the library on the Nicholls State University campus.

Open: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30 a.m. – 4 p.m., and by appointment
Admission: \$1 for children, \$5 for adults
 202 Main St., Lockport, LA 70374
 985.532.5106 • www.nicholls.edu/boat

p) Fourchon Beach is a great place to enjoy the coast of Louisiana. Catch some rays, go crabbing, play in the sand, or surf fish in the Gulf of Mexico at this public beach.

Open: Daily, from sunrise to sunset
Fourchon, LA 70357
 985.632.6701

