

Attractions

Places to see include the Black Heritage Gallery and the Mardi Gras Museum, both located in the Central School Arts & Humanities Center.

While downtown, either take a walking or carriage tour through the National Historic Register Charpentier Historic District, which covers 40 blocks of Victorian architecture. Also, check out the Children's Museum, the Imperial Calcasieu Museum and Epps Library in Lake Charles, the Brimstone Museum in Sulphur and the Railroad Museum in DeQuincy.

For sports-minded visitors, Southwest Louisiana has six world-class golf courses and some of the best fresh- and salt-water fishing in America, and it sits in the middle of two bird migration flyways.

The Creole Nature Trail All-American Road and the Southwest Louisiana Boudin Trail offer visitors a way to experience the rustic and delicious sides of the area.

Casinos are open for visitors who want to try their luck and experience the premier resort gaming destination in the South: Golden Nugget Lake Charles, L'Auberge Casino Resort, Isle of Capri Casino Hotel and Delta Downs Racetrack Casino & Hotel.



Festivals & Events

Southwest Louisiana residents love a party, and there are plenty of festivals.

Several festivals celebrate the cultural and historical significance of African-Americans and Creoles: the Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Festival, the Black Heritage Festival, Juneteenth, the Original Downtown Lake Charles Crawfish Festival, the Marshland Festival, BooZoo's Labor Day Festival and the Boudin Wars Food Competition and Festival.

Mardi Gras kicks off the state and local festival season at the beginning of every year. African-American krewes such as Krewe of Omega, Krewe Chetu Jadi, Krewe de Classique and Krewe de Magnifique are always crowd favorites. Other festivals of interest include: Lake Charles Black Rodeo and the Tournament of Stars Basketball Tournament.



Prepare yourself to hear a rhythm, feel a beat and taste a spice that will dazzle your soul.

Southwest Louisiana is located in a portion of the Bayou State where the people display resilient creativity and rustic elegance and relish sharing a collective soulful essence that tantalizes visitors.

Many who leave cannot wait to get back to search for more Creole Soul. The lifestyle Southwest Louisiana residents live is easy and inviting. We love our families and don't mind letting others become extended family.



Adventure Point

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VisitLakeCharles.org/CreoleSoul

Lake Charles Sulphur Westlake
DeQuincy Vinton Iowa

Music

Residents and visitors alike find that the rhythm and beat felt and heard on the streets and back roads of Southwest Louisiana are soothing to the soul.

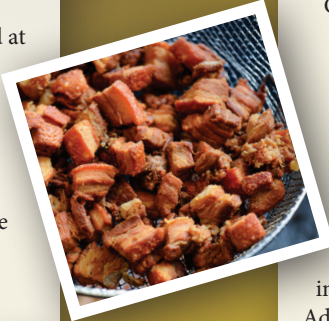
Music and the region are intricately tied together, especially when music giants like R&B singer Nellie Lutcher, blues master Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, Jazz musician Chester Daigle II and Zydeco legends like "Rockin' Sidney" Simien, Boozoo Chavis, Chris Ardoin, Lawrence Ardoin, Sean Ardoin, Keith Frank and Rusty Metoyer are part of the region's music history.

Zydeco is the predominant musical genre performed in Southwest Louisiana and is directly related to the Creole experience. It is a unique form of expression that was born in Southwest Louisiana. Known as "la la" music, Zydeco is influenced by French, Creole, West African, Cajun, Carribean and R&B music.

Soulful sounds can be found year-round at the casino resorts, local festivals, American Legion Halls and other music venues.

Many people think that Cajun and Zydeco music are interchangeable, but the Zydeco music of the Creole people differs from Cajun music not only with origin but also with instrumentation. While Zydeco has more of a rock beat with an electric guitar, Cajun music incorporates a fiddle or steel guitar; however, the instrument that unites them both is the accordion.

To compare these musical styles, go to Creole Nature Trail Adventure Point and jump onto the music stage!



Food

Nobody leaves Southwest with their bellies empty and taste buds not satisfied. Residents take food seriously all day, every day, all year.

The region is known for boudin (a European-inspired and Creole-seasoned sausage), cracklins (seasoned fried pork fat), smothered meat served over rice in its own gravy, fried or grilled seafood, étouffée, gumbo, Creole sauces—and the list goes on and scrumptiously on.

The Creole Soul experience can be found in small mom-and-pop restaurants, gas stations and meat markets. For a list of hot spots, go to: www.visitlakecharles.org/CreoleSoul

Like the people, Creole food is a blend of the various cultures of New Orleans, including Italian, Spanish, African, German, Caribbean, Native American and Portuguese.

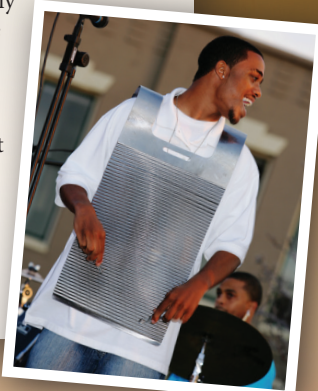
Creole cuisine is thought of as a little higher-brow or aristocratic compared to Cajun, as many of the dishes were prepared by servants in the kitchens of well-to-do members of society. With additional resources, dishes consisted of an array of spices from various regions and creamy soups and sauces.

You can compare Cajun & Creole seasonings in the kitchen exhibit at Creole Nature Trail Adventure Point.



Spirituality

Creole Soul is also found in both the Catholic and Protestant churches. Followers have the opportunity to worship several days a week at some of the most historically significant houses of worship in the region, such as the Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church, Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church, Reeves Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church and New Sunlight Baptist Church. Other churches of note can be found in Mossville, a settlement just outside of Lake Charles.

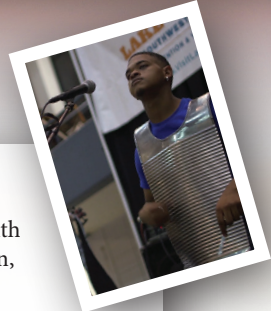


Creole Heritage

Creole is a Louisiana native with a mixture of African-American, American Indian, French and Spanish heritages.

The term has evolved over several centuries, and at one time was the descriptive phrase for children of first-generation French and Spanish immigrants who populated the Louisiana Territory and later, the state of Louisiana. But over time, with the intermixing of African slaves, white settlers and Native Americans, a whole new identity was created, and the word Creole was the term that brought a melting pot of people under a social umbrella. The Creoles were some of the "first families of Louisiana," and official records reflect that they have been here for over 300 years.

Creole Soul can be recognized in the religious, culinary, social and entertainment expressions of these people with deep Louisiana roots.



History

At the end of the Civil War, a group of freed slaves laid claim to a parcel of property west of Lake Charles. More than a hundred years later, many of those original settlers' descendants still live in what is now known as Mossville. The residents' history is being recorded and many of their ancestors' resting places can be viewed today.

Other points of historical importance include Goosport, Fisherville and Brownsville. These are three neighborhood sections of Lake Charles where many African-American residents call home, and the Creole culture is still dominant.

Lake Charles has birthed many African-Americans who have left a mark on society, such as Bishop H.R. Perry, the first African-American superior of a major religious order in the United States; former Detroit Pistons star Joe Dumars, who played at McNeese State University in Lake Charles; NFL Hall of Famer Charlie Joiner; artist Eddie Mormon; and Fox News analyst Ted Williams.

