

GRAB A SEAT AT THE TABLE

CRAWFISH CRAVINGS | ABITA BEER MADE HERE | GREAT EATS IN COVINGTON



Explore

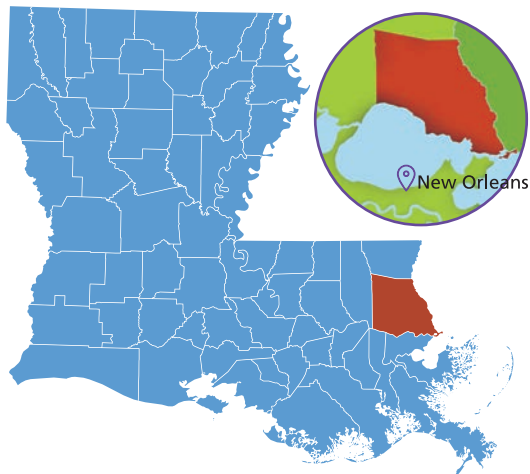
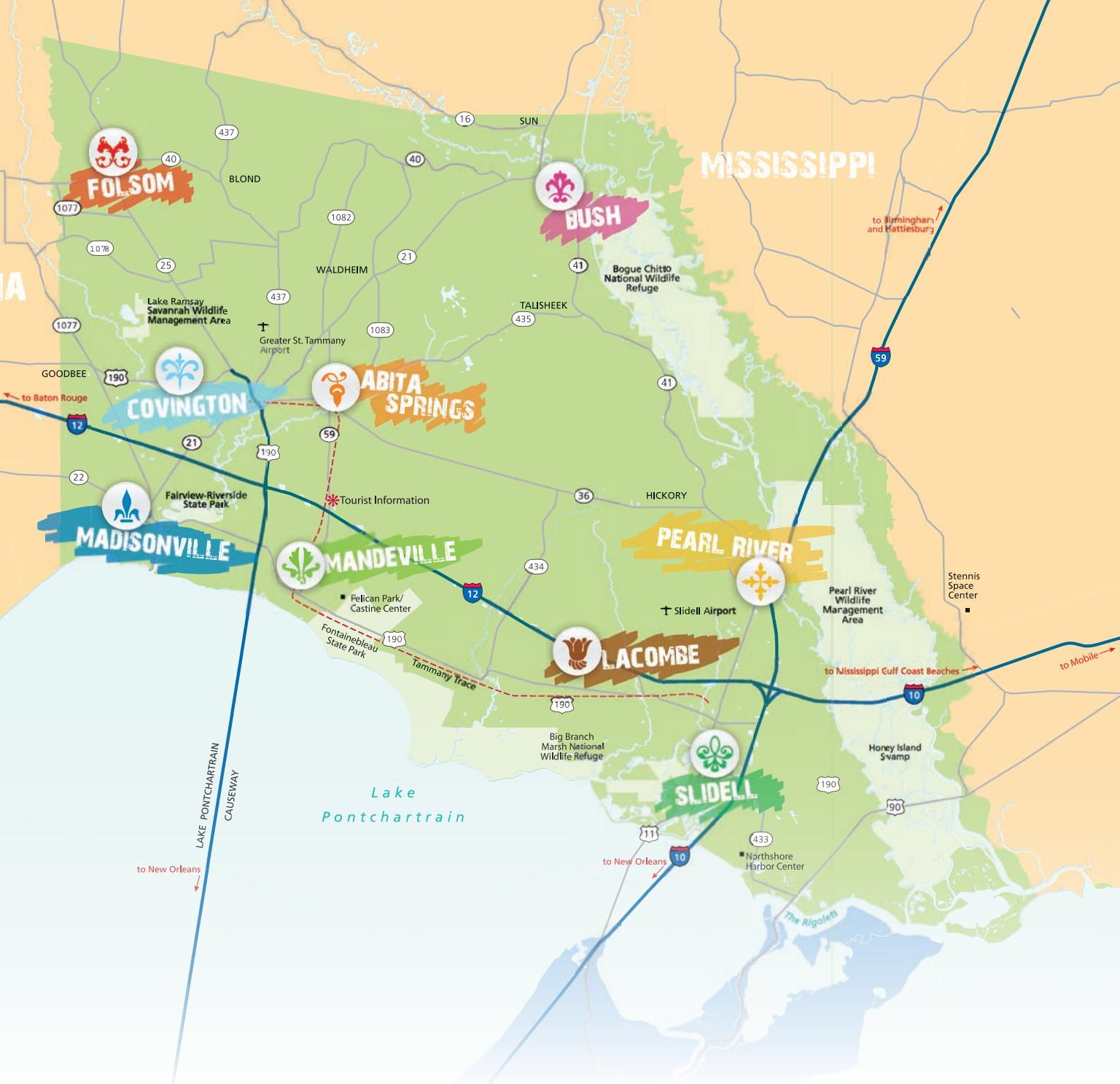
THE NORTHSHORE

FUN
ON THE
BAYOU

Adventure and beauty await
in St. Tammany Parish



Spring/Summer 2018



| LEGEND | |
|--------|--------------------------|
| | Interstate |
| | Secondary Road |
| | Hospital |
| | Parks & Wildlife Refuges |
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THE REAL LOUISIANA

Forget the reality shows, the swamp people, the gator wrasslin'. Stereotypes only tell part of the story. Shannon Bordelon, owner of Bayou Adventure in the heart of St. Tammany Parish, finds joy in sharing the area's profound natural beauty with visitors from around the world. They come to her for kayak rentals and sunset paddle tours. They leave with love and understanding of what Bordelon calls "the real Louisiana."

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04 COME PARTY

Festivals, street parties, antiques fairs, concerts on the lakefront ... There's always a reason to celebrate on the Northshore.

07 COME EXPERIENCE

Louisiana culture is meant to be heard, seen and felt at places like the historic Dew Drop Jazz Hall, area galleries and the Abita Opry.

13 COME EAT

Grab a seat for po-boys, boiled crawfish and contemporary Coastal fare. You'll need sustenance for those grueling brewery tours.

20 COME PLAY

Ever tubed down a river or caught monster trout on a charter boat? Fishing, hiking, paddleboarding and more are waiting for you.

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See alligators in Honey Island Swamp or at Insta-Gator Ranch. Feed a giraffe at Global Wildlife and marvel at Abita Mystery House.

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Northshore museums and historic points of interest shed light on cultures and events that shaped St. Tammany Parish.

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Urge to splurge? Check out Northshore boutiques, malls and shopping districts for everything from souvenirs to varied treasures.

PHOTO KEVIN GARRETT

ABOUT THE COVER

Southeastern Louisiana University student Anna Strider enjoys an afternoon paddle near the cabins at Fontainebleau State Park on Lake Pontchartrain. Kayak courtesy Bayou Adventure.

PHOTO BY KEVIN GARRETT
KEVINGARRETT.COM

From the Editor

It Starts With Beauty

I grew up in New Orleans, less than an hour from where I sit writing this today. Though a lovely park was part of my neighborhood, it wasn't until my family made a weekend drive across Lake Pontchartrain, on the world's longest bridge, that I first walked barefoot on a soft blanket of pine needles or breathed air so fresh it smelled of flowers. I was 8 and to this day I can close my eyes and be back in that magical place.

That place was Fontainebleau State Park, on the edge of Mandeville. The specialness of that park was one of the reasons why, when I returned to Louisiana as an adult after years of living away, I chose to make my home in St. Tammany Parish, commonly called the Northshore.

I still love New Orleans, but on a clear day I can see it there across the lake. Like many of the increasing numbers of visitors discovering the Northshore, we who live here know we have the best of both worlds: proximity to one of the world's unique cities, but escape from it, too.

We share the city's embrace of Louisiana culture, great music, great food, Mardi Gras and a zest for living life every minute. There's a vibrancy here, felt in each Northshore town despite their very



different personalities. Covington, with its historic, walkable downtown full of shops and restaurants is very different from quirky, artsy little Abita or bustling Slidell on the edge of the Honey Island Swamp. But in each place, the energy is positive and welcoming.

And everywhere there is natural beauty. Green for miles. There are more than 80,000 acres of wilderness preserve in St. Tammany Parish, much of it made accessible for hiking, biking, kayaking and paddleboarding, by people like Shannon and Jeff Bordelon, showcased in our feature story starting on page 24.

Fontainebleau State Park is still a dreamy landscape of giant oaks and pine-scented forest floors, with hiking trails, a sandy beach and cabins built over gentle lake waters. As a child, I didn't know Fontainebleau was just the beginning of the Northshore's beauty. Come discover our Northshore for yourself. Make your own sweet memories.

Renée Kientz

EDITOR

Explore

THE NORTHSHORE

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Azaleas in full bloom
in Abita Springs



NORTHSHORE Come Party



There's always something fun afoot on the Northshore, land of festivals, street parties, open-air concerts and letting loose. We celebrate crawfish season, street musicians, bird migration and bicycles, dragon boats and wooden boats and anything else that brings joy our way. Take your vitamins, put on your dancing shoes and come join the party.

The Northshore Planner

Head to louisiananorthshore.com/events to find out more



MARCH 18

Chef Soiree

Outdoor feasting fest in Covington



APRIL 11-15

A Taste of Covington

Four days of wine, food and fun



APRIL 13-15

Louisiana Bird Fest

Mandeville



APRIL 14

Spring for Art

Original art, music in Covington



APRIL 21

Crawfish Cookoff

Slidell



APRIL 21-22

Antiques & Uniques Fest

Covington



MAY 12

International Dragon Boat Festival

Madisonville



MAY 26

Jazz and Blues Fest

Slidell



JULY 4

Fourth of July

Fireworks across the Northshore

COMING UP LATER THIS YEAR

Freddy Drennan's Wild Game Cook-off

Slidell

Camellia City Smooth Jazz Fest

Slidell

St. Tammany Parish Fair & Parade

Covington

Wild Things Fest

Big Branch National Wildlife Reserve, Lacombe

Harvest Cup Polo Classic

Covington

Three Rivers Art Festival

Outdoor juried art show, Covington

Wooden Boat Festival

Madisonville

Winter on the Water Parade

Mandeville



Find vintage glass, collectibles and treasure at Slidell's Spring Antiques Fair.

Check Out Slidell for Antiques

Spring Street Fair known for vintage furniture, collectibles, jewelry and all-around great browsing

Antiques shops like Barbara's Victorian Closet and Carolyn's Wonderland beckon shoppers year-round in Slidell's historic Olde Towne District but the treasure hunt spills into the surrounding area for one weekend each fall and spring. The Historical Slidell Antique Association's Street Fairs attract scores of dealers selling everything vintage, antique and collectible.

The 37th annual Spring Street Fair sets up Saturday and Sun-

day, March 24-25, centered around Olde Towne's First, Second and Erlanger streets. Expect antique furniture and decorative items, vintage jewelry, art, ephemera, glassware, toys and clothing. There's ample free parking and no admission charge, just lots of temptation, live music and food vendors.

Olde Towne's shops, restaurants and other attractions are open, too. The fun happens again in the fall, usually the last weekend in October. 🐛

Don't Miss...



WHOLE TOWN GARAGE SALE: Prepare to pick. Little Abita Springs hosts a town-wide garage sale and flea market the last Saturday each March. Expect scores of vendors set up in the field across from Town Hall, and hundreds of individual garage sales happen simultaneously in old Abita neighborhoods. Free to park.

MARCH 31, ABITA SPRINGS



BUSKER FESTIVAL: It's a day of fun and eclectic music when some of the New Orleans area's best street performers play on a real stage in Abita Springs' Park. There's no admission charge, just bring lawn chairs and your dancing shoes. Sponsored by the Abita Springs Opry and the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation.

APRIL 22, ABITA SPRINGS



LOUISIANA BICYCLE FESTIVAL: This whimsical event celebrates everything on two wheels (or one, or three) and includes a swap meet and procession through town. There are vintage bikes, wacky bikes, art bikes and a whole lot of talking about ... bikes. Held the Saturday before Father's Day, this is a free event.

JUNE 16, ABITA SPRINGS



Rockin' bands like Redline keep the joint hopping at Ruby's Roadhouse in Mandeville.

The Northshore's vibrant culture is an expression of Louisiana's love for life and passing a good time. Hear live Louisiana roots music, learn to dance Cajun-style, take in a play or an art gallery. Here, we don't just be. We DO. Come be part of the fun.

Come Experience

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

The Dew Drop Jazz Hall showcases great Louisiana musicians like Dr. Michael White's band and famed trumpeter Kermit Ruffins; when the rustic 1895 hall fills up, the crowd listens from outside; Big Chief Monk Boudreaux sings the blues.

PHOTOS ROBERTA CARROW-JACKSON; ERIN HELTZ; MAX CUSIMANO



Drop by the Dew

There's plenty life left in the Dew Drop, the world's oldest, and unaltered, rural jazz hall

The unpainted cypress structure doesn't look like much from the street, just a raised building with few windows, a pitched roof and an easily missed marker out front. But the tiny Dew Drop Jazz Hall looms large for aficionados looking to understand the history of jazz. Area musicians say gigs there feel special, maybe even spiritual, and a devoted clutch of German jazz musicians makes the journey every couple of years just to play on the rustic stage of what is believed to be the world's oldest rural jazz hall.

The Dew Drop Social and Benevolent Hall was opened in what is now Old Mandeville in 1895 by a group of civic-minded African-American residents as a venue for raising funds for needy individuals in the community. Located in the 400 block of Lar-marque, just blocks from the Mandeville lakefront, the Dew Drop looks much as it did more than a century ago when musicians playing a new type of music called jazz took steamboats across the lake from New Orleans to play at the hall. Among them were early greats Buddy Petit and Kid Ory; later a young Louis Armstrong (whose family lived nearby) played there.

The Dew Drop is still hosting fine regional musicians on its stage, brought in by the Friends of the Dew Drop organization, which presents fall and spring concert series there. The audience arrives early for prized seating on benches inside the little building, while others set up lawn chairs outside under large oaks and enjoy the music spilling out old windows with shutters opened wide. Purchase a glass of wine or an Abita Beer from a table out front, or a dinner plate from one of the church ladies at First Free Mission Baptist next door.

There's more than music in the air at the Dew Drop. There's magic and history you can dance to. 🦋

CHECK OUT A VIDEO OF A LIVE PERFORMANCE AT THE DEW DROP AT WWW.LOUISIANANORTHSHORE.COM/DEWDROP



5 SPOTS... FOR LIVE THEATER

PLAYMAKERS, INC.: This non-profit amateur theater stages six productions each year. Coming up for spring: "All the King's Men," "The Graduate" and "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang."

19106 PLAYMAKERS ROAD, COVINGTON

30 BY NINETY: Known for shows that challenge and entertain. Coming up: "The Foreigner," "Rabbit Hole," and "Nonsense."

880 LAFAYETTE, MANDEVILLE

SLIDELL LITTLE: This 200-seat community theater presents six productions a year, plus summer youth theater. Coming up: "45 Seconds from Broadway" and "The Addams Family Musical."

2024 NELLIE DRIVE, SLIDELL

CAFÉ LUKE DINNER THEATRE: Dinner theater's held inside Slidell's historic Grande Manor. Coming up: "What About Luv?," "The Kitchen Witches" and "Hollywood Manor."

153 ROBERT ST., SLIDELL

CUTTING EDGE: Cleverly named theater stages original shows and off-Broadway hits inside Attractions Salon. Coming up: "We Will Rock You." 747 ROBERT BLVD., SLIDELL





Catch Christian Serpas and Ghost Town at venues and events around the Northshore.

Rockabilly Ode to Joy

The Northshore's Christian Serpas and Ghost Town get you rompin', stompin' and rockin'

With the exception of Tim McGraw, Louisiana isn't really known for country music. But that doesn't stop the Northshore's Christian Serpas from taking a hard Western swing through Cajun territory. At 6'7", the Louisiana-born Serpas is a tall drink of swamp water, a lank and lean gentle giant with a serious twang and songwriting chops.

Don't expect sad love songs, though. Serpas' world is steeped in rockabilly joy and he and his band, Ghost Town, rip it up, dance and flat out have fun on stage. Their sound has been described as "Led Zeppelin playing Johnny Cash." No crying in your beer here. It's the kind of music that makes you happy to be alive, that makes women pull their men up on the dance floor and toddlers take their first two-step.

Catch Serpas playing all around the region, locally in venues such as K.Gee's and the Beach House, both in Mandeville, at area festivals, including New Orleans Jazz Fest, and beyond. He

and his band, now with seven CDs behind them, have opened for a lot of names you'd recognize, including Merle Haggard, Blake Shelton and Robert Earl Keen. Ghost Town performs originals with titles like "Hoot and Holler," "Revved Up and Ready to Go," and "Read 'Em and Weep," as well as covers like Elvis's "That's All Right" and a hard-rocking version of Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues."

Serpas and his wife Melissa are hard-core animal lovers and volunteer their time for rescue causes like the St. Tammany Humane Society and Big Sky Ranch in Folsom. With four cats and two dogs (for now), Serpas is all softy and no sass offstage. On stage, however, a different persona presents itself. Like a true showman, Serpas romps, stomps and spansks his guitar into submission, whipping the crowd into a frenzy. "That's it. I quit. I'm gone," he sings. But the twinkle in his eye tells you he's here for the duration and you're going to enjoy the ride. 🦄

5 SPOTS... FOR FINE ART

PHOTO: NOAH CUSTER

ST. TAMMANY ART ASSOCIATION:

A lovely 19th-century building in Covington's historic St. John District houses rotating exhibits by regional and national artists, juried competitions, member artist gallery, classes and lectures.

320 N. COLUMBIA ST., COVINGTON

PINEAPPLE GALLERY: Original works by local and regional artists including watercolorist Carol Hallock hang in this Mandeville gallery also known for conservation framing.

829 ASBURY DRIVE, MANDEVILLE

MARTKETPLACE AT THE CHAMBER: This multi-artist gallery features original works in various media. Among the exhibitors are Adam Sambola, Pottery Studio KLH, Mardi Gras Mis-Chief Gallery, Bead Society of Slidell and others. 1808 FRONT ST., SLIDELL

COLUMBIA COWORKING: Fine art gallery showcases works of numerous artists including Leslie Vinson, Chase Dwight, and Barbara Brocato. Viewing by appointment.

215 N. COLUMBIA ST., COVINGTON

CITY OF SLIDELL CULTURAL CENTER: This gallery inside Slidell's City Hall hosts multi-artist shows and juried exhibitions. 2055 SECOND ST., SLIDELL



SALADINO Gallery

LONG RECOGNIZED AS AN ART-FRIENDLY TOWN, COVINGTON IS HOME TO A number of fine galleries and the St. Tammany Art Association, itself a fine exhibition space. SALADINO Gallery, since opening in 2016, has gained respect as a regional art powerhouse, showing works by a number of the south's finest artists including Steve Martin and Scott Ewen, many of whose works hang in the elegant Southern Hotel across the street. 409 E. BOSTON ST., COVINGTON



Cajun Dance Lessons

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE CAJUN TO "PASS A GOOD TIME" ON THE DANCE FLOOR WHEN THE Northshore Cajun Dancers convene monthly at Abita Springs' Town Hall. Everyone's welcome to join in. Don't know how to Cajun dance but want to learn? Free lessons are given from 7-7:30 p.m. Live music from the likes of Bruce Daigrepoint, Jay Cormier, Choupique and Lee Benoit commences at 8 (\$10 cover charge). It's a classically Cajun evening of joie d'vivre, food and drink, with all ages and skill levels fast-stepping across the floor.



Hear Louisiana roots music in all its guises at the always-fun Abita Springs Opry.

Music, Music, Music

From Abita Opry to Jazz'n the Vines to Slidell's Bayou Jam, dozens of concerts provide the soundtrack for spring

Live music is everywhere on the Northshore in the spring when popular venues and public gathering spaces all host concert series showcasing great regional talent. Many shows are free, and when they are not, the cover charge is minimal, maybe \$10-15. You can check up to date listings at LouisianaNorthshore.com but here are a few spots to keep in mind.

Downtown Covington hosts free music concert series, including Rockin' the Rails at the Covington Trailhead and Sunset at the Landing on the banks of the Bogue Falaya River. Both showcase area musical acts and encourage families to come out with lawn chairs and picnics for an evening of music.

In nearby Abita, the Abita Springs Opry has for years celebrated the best of Louisiana roots music with its spring (and fall) seasons of multi-performer shows playing jazz, blues, bluegrass, country, Zydeco and Cajun. The public can gather to hear impromptu music sessions on the Town Hall front porch before taking a seat inside for the Opry. Go early; tickets often sell out.

In Mandeville, the Dew Drop Jazz Hall (see page 8) also hosts a spring concert series. The tiny structure's benches fill up fast so music-lovers bring lawn chairs and fill the side yard to hear the sounds of some of Louisiana's best musicians wafting through the open windows. Nearby, the city hosts the free and popular Mandeville Live! series at the Trailhead outdoor amphitheater.

Wine, music and warm starry nights make for magical moments at Pontchartrain Vineyards' popular Jazz'n the Vines concerts. Performers like Don Vappie and Charmaine Neville take the small stage outside the tasting room and play for the audience before them, on blankets and in lawn chairs. The greening vines form the backdrop as afternoon turns to a starry evening.

Over in Slidell, lovely Heritage Park, on the banks of historic Bayou Bonfouca, is the venue for the Bayou Jam concert series. Another popular event, Bayou Jam is free and picnicking is encouraged. There's plenty of free parking and fun for all ages. There's also plenty of room to toss the Frisbee. 🦋

Life's a feast on the Northshore, where the culinary perspective has been shaped by the area's diverse cultures as well as the bounty of the bayou. Feed your soul at mom-and-pop po-boy shops, seafood stands and dining rooms conceived by talented chefs. Sample your way through breweries and vineyards and great farmers markets. St. Tammany's culinary scene is deep and wide and delicious and there's a place at the table waiting for you.



The savory smoked shrimp and caramelized onion cheesecake at Annadele's Plantation.

NOUVEAU *Come Eat* STORE



Chef Jeffrey Hansell's fried frog legs in hot sauce butter are an Oxlot 9 favorite.



HANSELL'S COOKING IS INFORMED BY HIS GULF COAST CHILDHOOD, AS WELL AS FAVORED FLAVORS OF THE SOUTH AND NEW ORLEANS.

Eating Well at Oxlot 9

Jeffrey Hansell draws on Southern roots for inspired fare in his Covington restaurant

Since opening Oxlot 9 in downtown Covington in the summer of 2014, owner/chef Jeffrey Hansell has earned accolades and a fan base appreciative of his contemporary approach to coast-inspired fare. Hansell's cooking is informed by his Gulf Coast childhood, as well as favored flavors of the South and New Orleans.

Pan-fried stuffed rabbit. Lovely spear-caught pompano crisped in brown butter. The best crab cake ever. Venison meat pie. Grilled Heritage pork chop with duck fat new potatoes. And the ultimate finale, the Campfire, a chef's homage to childhood memories with housemade graham cracker base, cold-smoked vanilla ice cream, chocolate ganache, all enveloped in impossibly light honey meringue.

Hansell formerly worked under Executive Chef Tory McPhail at the renowned Commander's Palace as well as at Lüke in New Orleans, at Birmingham's Veranda on Highland and Montagna

at the Little Nell in Aspen. After taking over as executive chef at Veranda on Highland, Hansell was featured in "Best Chefs of America" and "Best Chef of the American South" and was a nominee for Food & Wine Best New Chef 2014, representing the Gulf Coast.

Since opening Oxlot 9, in downtown Covington's historic Southern Hotel, Hansell has received Country Roads magazine's 2017 Small Town Chefs award, been named "Chef to Watch" by Louisiana Cookin' magazine and NOLA.com, and ranked among the "Top 10 Best Known Chefs of Louisiana" by LouisianaTravel.com. Hansell operates Oxlot 9 with wife and partner, Amy Hansell. The duo also opened Smoke BBQ in Covington in July 2015, a popular casual eatery with a focus on smoked barbecue and down-home Southern sides. In May 2017, Smoke BBQ was named to NOLA.com's list of "Top 10 New Orleans Barbecue" restaurants. 🦋

Around Town

Jeffrey Hansell's Oxlot 9 is just one of the highlights of dining in Covington. A number of accomplished chef-driven restaurants are located there, including:



DEL PORTO RISTORANTE: Included in New Orleans food critic Brett Anderson's list of top 10 restaurants in the New Orleans area, Del Porto is a local favorite for its emphasis on seasonal and locally sourced ingredients and contemporary Italian fare. Husband-wife chef team David and Torre Solazzo are three-time James Beard Award nominees. One bite of their stellar crudo, one spoon of risotto, and you know why. 501 E. BOSTON

LOLA: Another husband-wife chef team, Keith and Nealy Frenz, operate this cute dining room in Covington's old train depot. The pair met when both were chefs at world-famous Brennan's in New Orleans. House-made everything pleases LOLA's lunch crowds with blue plate specials, great salads and desserts. Dinner is more upscale but fresh, smart, and creative. 517 N. NEW HAMPSHIRE



DAKOTA: Chef Kim Kringle still helms this grand dame of fine dining in Covington. Kringle's signature crabmeat and Brie soup earns new fans daily and his take on contemporary Louisiana flavors produces stunners like crispy softshell crab stuffed with shrimp and crawfish, served on pecan rice, and honey-glazed duck confit. 629 N. HIGHWAY 190

GALLAGHER'S GRILL & COURTYARD: Longtime local favorite chef Pat Gallagher knows his way around a steak. You may never have a better filet served in sizzling butter. Expect divine crabcakes and a deft touch with Louisiana seafood like pompano and redfish, as well as Colorado rack of lamb, veal rib chop and char-grilled quail. 509 S. TYLER

15TH ANNUAL HFOS CRAWFISH COOKOFF:

This may be the world's largest crawfish cookoff with more than 20 tons of the spicy crustaceans boiled for the masses in attendance. It's all you can eat for the fest, held in Slidell's Fritchie Park and benefiting the Hospice Foundation of the South. Live music, lots for the kids (ages 12 and under get in free). **APRIL 21, SLIDELL**

FROM LEFT: A traditional crawfish boil fresh from the pot; locals love the fresh and boiled seafood at Kenney Seafood in Slidell.



It's Crawfish Season, Y'all

Prepare to spice up your life with the national dish of Louisiana

Family and social life in Louisiana both revolve around food and nothing illustrates that better than crawfish season. Arrivals of the year's first sacks of crawfish usually merit an announcement on the evening news, kicking off a feeding frenzy that lasts for months. Though the season can vary a little, supplies are most plentiful and most reliable from January to June.

At peak season, around April, Louisianans celebrate spring with huge crawfish boils, cooking up 30- and 40-pound sacks of the crustaceans in cauldrons of spiced-up boiling water. There's almost always crab boil (usually Zatarain's) involved, and cayenne pepper. And salt, and lemons. Different cooks favor varied additions – corn on the cob, potatoes, mushrooms, whole garlic pods, sausage, among them. The crawfish et al often are dumped, steaming, onto a tall table that has been lined with newspaper and family and friends gather

around, standing, to feast, drink, laugh and repeat.

Visitors sometimes are invited to these convivial crawfish boils (or are lucky enough to take part in one at Lacombe's Bayou Adventure which sometimes hosts them for visiting groups like Habitat for Humanity). But seafood markets and restaurants get in on the action, too, selling hot boiled crawfish by the pound. (Expect to eat, on average, 3-5 pounds each!) Crawfish aren't just served boiled. You'll find them in iconic Louisiana dishes like crawfish etouffee or silky bisque, thrown into fettucine and other pasta dishes, battered and fried.

Just a few spots for boiled crawfish on the Northshore: Crabby Shack in Madisonville, Don's in Covington, Bateau's Seafood Market or Mandeville Seafood in Mandeville, and Kenney Seafood and Peck's in Slidell. 🦞

5 SPOTS... TO EAT GATOR

PECK'S SEAFOOD: Chopped gator stars in the golden-fried Gator Pup-pies, served with remoulade sauce. 2315 GAUSE BLVD. EAST, SLIDELL

DON'S SEAFOOD: Fried, farm-raised gator from Don's, a Louisiana flavors mainstay for years. 126 LAKE DRIVE, COVINGTON

VERA'S SEAFOOD: Chomp down on alligator sausage, served as an appetizer or in a po-boy. 2020 GAUSE BLVD. WEST, SLIDELL

THE CHIMES: Fried nuggets of Louisiana alligator's on the appetizer menu at this Covington spot. 19130 W. FRONT ST., COVINGTON

TREY YUEN: Chef Tommy Wong gives gator the Tong Cho treatment, napping it in garlicky, sweet/hot pepper sauce. 600 N. CAUSEWAY, MANDEVILLE



HOW TO EAT A CRAWFISH

HOLD THE HEAD WITH ONE HAND, GRAB THE TAIL WITH THE OTHER, GRASPING IT HIGH, CLOSE TO WHERE THE TWO MEET. GENTLY TWIST THE TAIL AND PULL. THE TWO WILL SEPARATE. IF YOU'RE FEELING BRAVE, SUCK THE HEAD FOR SPICY JUICES BEFORE SETTING IT ASIDE. HOLDING THE TAIL, PEEL AWAY THE FIRST COUPLE OF RINGS OF SHELL, THEN PINCH THE TAIL AT THE BOTTOM. SLIDE THE MEAT OUT AND POP INTO YOUR MOUTH.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
Abita Brewery tap room, Covington Brewhouse,
Chafunkta tap room and Old Rail brew pub.

Bon Temps on Tap

From Purple Haze to Bayou Blaze, something's brewing on the Northshore

The Northshore is well represented on the Louisiana Brewery Trail with three breweries here, including the state's best-known, Abita, as well as Covington Brewhouse and Chafunkta.

Popular tours tell the tale of how tiny little Abita became one of America's favorite craft breweries. Started operation in 1986 with two beers based on the area's pure spring water. Expanded. Moved down the road. Expanded. Built out its big beautiful new taproom, visitor center and bar where anyone can belly up and taste what master brewers, deep-well Artesian water, and three decades of experience can produce.

Now the country's 14th largest craft brewery, **Abita Brewery** beers can be found in all 50 states. Visitors come by car and by tour bus (and sometimes by bike, arriving via the nearby Tammany Trace path) to taste favorites like Purple Haze and Turbogod at the source. Favorites are joined by harvest and seasonal brews, some made with locally sourced produce like satsumas, strawberries and pecans.

Self-guided tours are free; guided tours with tastings are \$5.

The visitor center and gift shop are open seven days a week.

A few miles down the road is **Covington Brewhouse**, housed in an historic old structure in the shadow of the town of Covington's looming water tower. Known for German-style beers, the Brewhouse turns out Pontchartrain Pilsner, Kolsch, Bayou Bock and seasonal beers like Fest Bier (for Oktoberfest).

The brewery offers free tours at 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays and opens the tasting room to the public Thursday-Sunday (check for hours).

In nearby Mandeville, **Chafunkta Brewing Company** is the baby of beer lovers Josh and Jamie Erickson. Launched in April 2011, the nanobrewery became a regional favorite with its Voo Ka Ray IPA as well as Old 504 Coffee Porter, Kingfish Ale and Bayou Blaze, an Irish red, have joined the Chafunkta lineup. Chafunkta's tap room is open Thursday-Sunday (check for hours).

Beer aficionados also will be pleased with the in-house brews turned out at Mandeville's **Old Rail Brewing Company** as well as the great selection of beers on tap at places like the **Chimes**, **Columbia Street Tap Room** and the **Barley Oak**. 🍷

Keep Your Cool

THE SWEET TREATS OF SHAVED ICE AND FLAVORED SYRUP MAY be called snow cones (or ices or granita) in some parts of the planet, but in Louisiana, we call them snowballs and we take them seriously. Don't expect to choose from four or five flavors. Any snowball stand worthy of the name will offer at least 20 flavors and some will have scores, a dizzying list of choices.

Spearmint. Nectar. Cherry. Wedding cake. Orange. Tutti Frutti . . . Most stands will fix you up with a half and half if you can't decide. Old-timers like "cream," usually evaporated milk, or a shot of condensed milk over the top.

Most snowball stands are seasonal, but summer's a long season in Louisiana. There's a stand in just about every neighborhood, so watch for them. Be prepared to just sit and enjoy your snowball; driving with one is almost as risky as texting behind the wheel. Besides, it's all about savoring the moment. Just chill.



5 SPOTS TO DINE OUTDOORS

LAKEHOUSE: Lovely garden, historic house, view of the lake AND good food make for a perfect spot on a pretty day.

2025 LAKESHORE DRIVE, MANDEVILLE

PALMETTOS: Dine on gumbo and other Louisiana staples on Palmettos' large decks overlooking the banks of Bayou Bonfouca.

1901 BAYOU LANE, SLIDELL

BLIND TIGER: Arrive by car or by boat to this new eatery overlooking the marina. Make sure to try the fish tacos. 37330 LAKESHORE MARINA DRIVE, SLIDELL

THE CHIMES: Charbroiled oysters, burgers, huge salads abound. Arrive early for a spot on the decks overlooking Bogue Falaya River.

19130 W. FRONT ST., COVINGTON

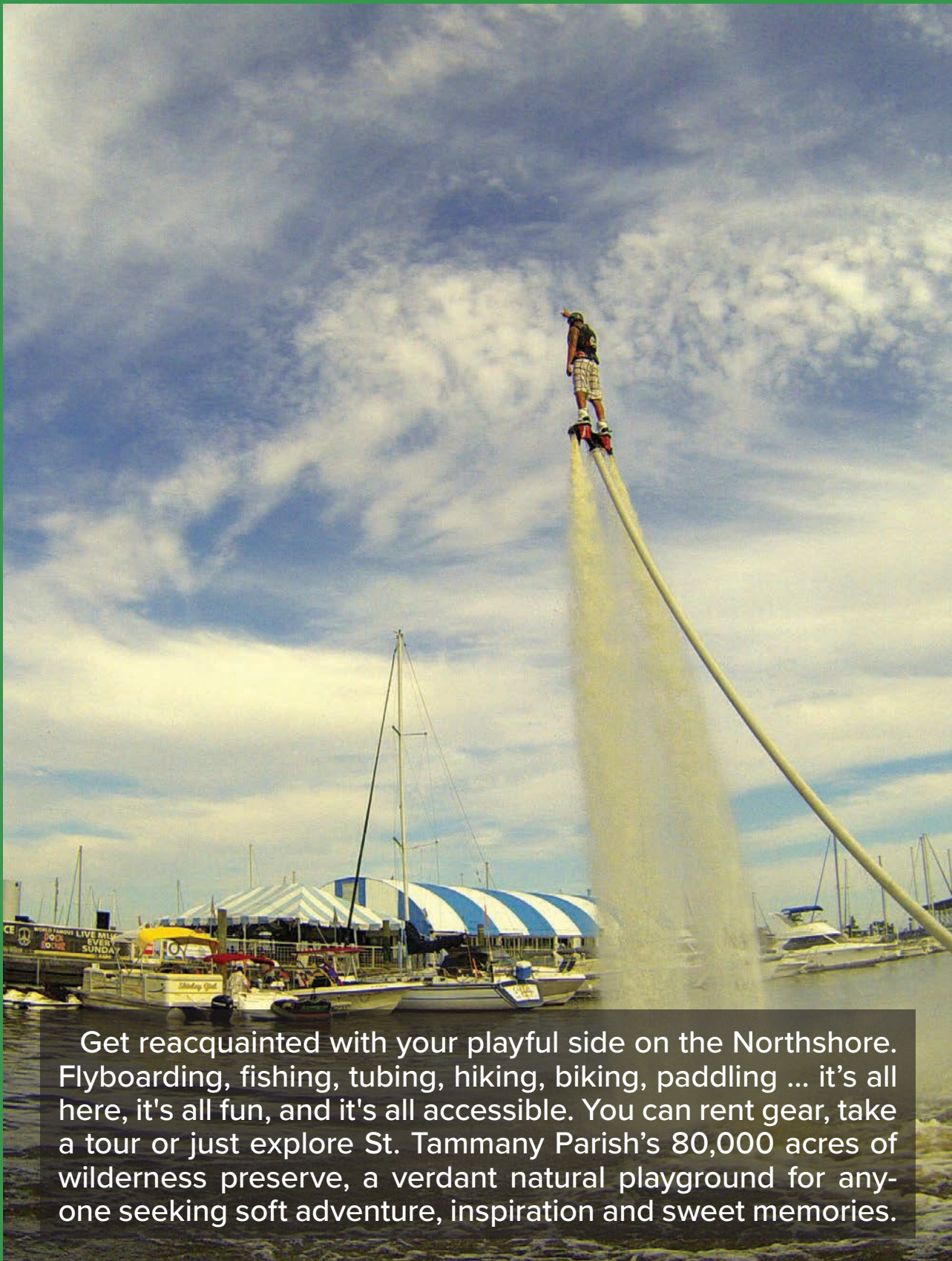
COQUILLE'S RIVER & RYE: Live music, great burgers, poboys and the marina view make Coquille's a river-front favorite. 100 MARINA DEL RAY DRIVE, MADISONVILLE



Join Liz for Breakfast

YOU KNOW SOMETHING SPECIAL'S GOING ON WHEN YOU DRIVE BY THE COLORFUL LITTLE cinderblock building and there's a line of hungry people waiting to get in. And they're smiling, talking, holding cups of hot coffee (provided gratis to help pass the time). Open seven days a week for breakfast and lunch only, little Liz's Where Y'at Diner may be the most popular spot in Mandeville. It's not fancy. It's just really friendly, and it feeds you well. Breakfast scramblers, cheesy grits, fluffy biscuits and a positive vibe are great ways to start your day. Shrimp salad or fried green tomatoes, red beans and rice, crawfish etouffee and po-boys fill bellies and warm hearts. Smiling servers, well-schooled by Liz Munson herself, buzz around the room making sure your coffee cup is full and your welcome is genuine. 2500 FLORIDA ST., MANDEVILLE

NORTHSHORE *Come Play*



Get reacquainted with your playful side on the Northshore. Flyboarding, fishing, tubing, hiking, biking, paddling ... it's all here, it's all fun, and it's all accessible. You can rent gear, take a tour or just explore St. Tammany Parish's 80,000 acres of wilderness preserve, a verdant natural playground for anyone seeking soft adventure, inspiration and sweet memories.

FROM LEFT: Soar above the water with Aquafly New Orleans at The Dock in Slidell; enjoy a day on the lake with charters like Angling Adventures.



The Fish are Jumping

Pier pleasure is reel but there's nothing like a day out on the lake on a boat

Fishing's a favorite pastime on the Northshore and a fun activity year-round for families who can throw out a line from the Mandeville sea wall, or along Lake Road's marshy banks in Lacombe, or from the St. Tammany Parish Fishing Pier in Slidell. But there's action for serious anglers, too, thanks to the many charter captains working out of Northshore marinas.

With easy access to Lake Pontchartrain, Lake Borgne, the Rigolets Pass and the Biloxi Marsh, charters are a great way to spend the day on the water. Area captains know where to go for trophy trout, record redfish, largemouth bass, sheepshead, tripletail, flounder and drum. Some, like Mike Gallo of Angling Adventures of Louisiana and Dudley Vandendorre, famous for his Deadly Dudley lures, make regular appearances on Louisiana fishing shows, sharing expertise and tips on where fish are biting.

BUT THERE'S ACTION FOR SERIOUS ANGLERS, TOO, THANKS TO THE MANY CHARTER CAPTAINS WORKING OUT OF NORTHSHORE MARINAS.

Basic info: Charters often start just before daylight and end early afternoon. Most charters can carry 5-6 people. You don't need to know the difference between spinnerbait and jigging spoons; most welcome anglers of all skill levels and all ages, too. You'll need to make a reservation. You won't have to clean your fish; your captain does that for you. 🦀



5 SPOTS... TO RENT GEAR

BAYOU ADVENTURE: One-stop shop has everything you'll need for soft adventure on the Northshore. Rent kayaks, bicycles, paddleboards, crab nets, fishing gear and tackle boxes. 27725 MAIN ST., LACOMBE

BROOKS' BIKE SHOP: Bike and kayak rentals for rides on the Tammany Trace or paddling the Bogue Falaya River, in downtown Covington. Mandeville location, too. 416 E. GIBSON ST., COVINGTON; 128 GIROD ST., MANDEVILLE

ABITA BOARD BARN: Stand-up paddle boards for sale or rent, plus stand-up paddling instructions. 71350 HIGHWAY 59, ABITA SPRINGS

SHACK DE VILLE: Bicycle rentals adjacent to the Tammany Trace in old Mandeville. Snowball stand and café, too. 2020 WOODROW ST., MANDEVILLE

THE BAIT SHOP ON FRONT STREET: Kayak rentals for exploring Bayou Bonfouca or the Honey Island Swamp. Bait, tackle and propane, too. 1604 FRONT ST., SLIDELL

Time to Make a Splash

Tour operators make it easy when you're ready to tube the Bogue Chitto

Many a Louisiana childhood memory has been made along the Bogue Chitto River, a sleepy, scenic, tree-lined waterway perfect for tubing. Drifting lazily in an oversized float, the sounds of laughter and splashing water all around, is a summer ritual.

Several operators offer tubing trips down the Bogue Chitto, including tube rental, life vests and shuttles. Some rent special tubes for ice chests, too. The fun goes like this: Park, float for a couple blissful hours, get picked up and shuttled back to your car. Operators include Bogue Chitto Tubing Center in Bogalusa and Louisiana River Adventures and Rocky Bottom Tubing, both in Franklinton. 🦋


Pick Up Paddleboarding

You can join a tour or opt for a rental to explore the Northshore by water

Fun for all ages, stand-up paddleboarding has been growing rapidly on the Northshore. The Bayou Paddle Company, based in Mandeville and founded by enthusiast Mark Salvetti (at right), offers guided excursions on the Techefuncte and Bogue Falaya rivers and out on Lake Pontchartrain.

You can also rent paddleboards at several locations, including the Abita Board Barn, Seal Sports, Brooks' Bike Shop and Bayou Adventure. A couple favorite paddleboarding spots: the gentle waters just off the sandy beach at Fontainebleau State Park and the shallow Bogue Falaya River as it flows into Covington. Paddleboarders here often stop for a burger and beer break at The Chimes along the river's banks. 🦋





GREAT LOUISIANA BIRDFEST: The Northshore's status as a migratory flyway is celebrated each spring by Mandeville's Northlake Nature Center with a series of birding workshops and field trips. Birders can add to their checklists observing the many migrating species winging through on their way from Mexico and South America.

APRIL 13-15, MANDEVILLE AND NEARBY LOCATIONS

It's Only Natural

Wander trails at Northlake Nature Center along Mandeville's scenic Bayou Castine

Spring and summer are fantastic times to explore the Northlake Nature Center, a 400-acre preserve located along the banks of Bayou Castine. Enter the park, on the outskirts of Mandeville, from Highway 190 and explore the verdant grounds on foot. There are about 7 miles of trails taking you through three different eco-systems: hardwood forest, pond swamp and pine-hardwood forest. Trails are of varying lengths, so you can take one or several. Among the sights: a grove of giant magnolias, boardwalk overlooking a beaver lodge, and, if you're lucky, you might catch a glimpse of the center's flock of wild turkeys.

Birding is a favorite activity at Northlake Nature Center, which hosts the Great Louisiana BirdFest each spring as migrating species are making their way north from Mexico and South America. Participants add to their checklists and enjoy workshops and camaraderie with like-minded bird lovers. 🐦

Bayou Adventure's sunset paddles arrive at Lake Pontchartrain just in time to see a spectacular sky.

The Real

LOUISIANA







Think you know Louisiana? Think again, says Shannon Bordelon. “People only know what they have seen on TV. It is put-on. They’ve watched *Swamp People*. I like to take them out and show them what’s real.”

“Real” is the distant sound of a pileated woodpecker tapping for dinner, Spanish moss swaying in a warm, soft breeze, the splash of an osprey plunging into gumbo-hued water after a fish. The bayou is a mysterious and beautiful place, more about harmony in nature than encounters with desperate Cajuns and menacing rogue reptiles.

Shannon and her husband, Jeff, operate Bayou Adventure in Lacombe, a hamlet in the heart of St. Tammany Parish. Their colorful little storefront on Lacombe’s main thoroughfare is the beating heart of outdoor exploration on the Northshore, an area rich in natural beauty and opportunities for soft adventure. What started as a bait stand seven years ago has evolved into a must-stop outfitter center for gear, a town gathering spot, a learning center, even a wedding chapel.

Visitors from all over the world, eager to experience the genuine Louisiana, have strolled through the doors, stood among the displays of shrimp boots and rods, lures and live bait tanks. They’ve read the signs touting turkey necks, chicken necks and live shrimp, warily eyed the taxidermied critters and lingered in front of refrigerated cases full of Louisiana craft beer. Some just come in for bait and a little advice; others go for

PHOTO: PREVIOUS SPREAD JESSICA BROOM PHOTO: THIS PAGE LANA GRAMLICH

Brilliant green in spring, cypress trees lend primeval beauty to the bayou.



the gusto. Bayou Adventure rents kayaks, paddleboards, fishing gear and tackle boxes (fresh and salt water, your choice), even GoPro cameras and drones. And bicycles for riding the Tammany Trace path, a 31-mile paved trail that passes nearby.

For those wanting a guide on the water, Jeff leads kayak tours down scenic Cane Bayou to where it meets Lake Pontchartrain. “It’s the perfect paddle,” says Shannon. “You get to see wildlife, experience changing scenery, see Lake Pontchartrain, and when it’s a clear day, you can even see downtown New Orleans.”

The leisurely paddle takes about 2.5 hours and is doable for all skill levels. Bayou Adventure uses 11’ Jackson Runner kayaks. Junior kayaks are available, too, for ages 6 and older, that can be tethered to parents’ kayaks and pulled along. “People sometimes have a misconception about kayaks,” says Shannon. “They’ve seen pictures of the kayaks going up rapids and rolling over in the water. But ‘bayou’ by definition means slow-moving body of water. There is nothing like waves and rapids here. It’s slow and easy and you’re not rolling over.”

There are misconceptions about alligators, too, she says. It’s not always easy to convince visitors, but “alligators are not aggressive,” says Shannon. “Alligators are

not interested in eating them. They’re not going to come after you.”

That doesn’t mean you won’t see them. Visitors often are intimidated but ultimately delighted at the sight of Big Momma, an 11-foot gator that lives in Cane Bayou. Look but don’t feed, says Shannon. “What we do is an eco-tour. We don’t feed the alligators. We don’t want them to see people as a food source.”

“If an alligator comes to see people as a source of their food, they have to be removed. We tell customers that if it’s more than 5 feet long, then it has to be removed and has to be killed,” says Shannon, who adds wryly, “and then I try to sell them alligator sausage.”

“YOU GET TO SEE WILDLIFE, EXPERIENCE CHANGING SCENERY, SEE LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN, AND WHEN IT’S A CLEAR DAY, YOU CAN EVEN SEE DOWNTOWN NEW ORLEANS.”



FROM LEFT:
Kids love fishing along Lacombe's Lake Road. Kayakers paddling down Cane Bayou are likely to see a variety of birds and, yes, an alligator or two.

THE WORLD COMES TO LACOMBE

Shannon estimates half of her customers are from outside of Louisiana. "We've had people come from every state, and increasingly a lot of international visitors," she says, adding that in one recent week they welcomed travelers from Israel, Shanghai, the Netherlands, Spain and France.

Bayou Adventure has added pick-up service from New Orleans hotels, and also is hosting domestic group paddles, like recent excursions planned for visiting Habitat for Humanity volunteers. "We take them crabbing. We show them how to catch the crabs, how to boil the crabs, how to crack and eat them. We cook gumbo, give them deer sausage and alligator sausage and boudin. They love it; it's a taste of Louisiana."

Jeff also leads special sunset paddles. Starting about 90 minutes before sunset, the group

makes its way down Cane Bayou to arrive at its mouth, at the lake, in time to watch the sunset. Pink, purple and tangerine skies viewed from the calm lake waters are spectacular. Once night has fallen, the group paddles back.

"After dark, the paddle is a completely different experience," says Shannon. "You are dependent on your senses when you come back, or on your head lamp if you use one. Or the moon. You're watching reflections on the water. You're much more in tune with your surroundings. And you're listening to hear the different animals that come out at night, the grunting of alligators, deer, raccoons, hogs rustling through the grasses. Frogs come out in the evening, singing."

SHANNON'S STORY

Shannon's love of paddling dates to experiences she had as a teenager in the AmeriCorps program, during which she was tasked with canoeing through Bayou Sauvage, northeast of New Orleans, removing non-indigenous trees and plants from the water. Shannon says she thought she wanted to be a teacher and majored in education

5 SPOTS... TO JOIN A TOUR

BAYOU ADVENTURE: Guided eco, sunset and fishing tours on Cane Bayou and Big Branch Marsh. WWW.BAYOUADVENTURE.COM

CANOE AND TRAIL ADVENTURES: Eco-friendly canoe and kayak tours on Cane Bayou. Twilight and group tours. WWW.CANOEANDTRAIL.COM

BAYOU PADDLE COMPANY: Guided paddleboard tours on the Bogue Falaya River. (INSIDE SPOKESMAN BICYCLE SHOP, COVINGTON.)

HONEY ISLAND KAYAK TOURS: Guided kayak tours of the Honey Island Swamp for ages 6 and up. March-November. WWW.HONEYISLANDKAYAKTOURS.COM

MASSEY'S PROFESSIONAL OUTFITTERS: Fishing, canoe and kayak trips on Cane Bayou and Bogue Chitto River. WWW.MASSEYSOUTFITTERS.COM

but couldn't get the bayou out of her system. "Being in nature was important to me. Every opportunity I had to do something outdoors, on the water, I was there."

Initially, Shannon's career headed in a different direction. She was education manager for the American Diabetes Association, operated her own musical talent agency for a bit and managed New Orleans' legendary Rock 'n' Bowl, a bowling and music venue, where she worked with great Louisiana musicians like Ernie K Doe, Johnny Adams and Gatemouth Brown.

"I love the culture of Louisiana," she says. "I was born in New Orleans. And I've been around the world visiting, but they say New Orleans girls always come home. The culture, the music and the bayou are all a huge part of who I am."

When Shannon first laid eyes on the little bait shop in Lacombe in 2011, something clicked. She cleaned it up, added products, kept the bait tanks full and coffee hot. She

"AFTER DARK, THE PADDLE IS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE."

introduced bike rentals, then kayaks. A justice of the peace, she became a key player in the community that came to trust and respect her as a businesswoman and leader. She has performed more than one marriage wearing her iconically Louisiana white shrimp boots.

Shannon ran Bayou Adventure on her own until 2016 when she started dating someone she'd known since childhood. She and Jeff Bordelon had grown up down the street from each other in New Orleans. Both had been married before and had children. Both loved the bayou. The couple married in December 2016, growing their family with the birth of little Liza, now often in the shop with her parents, and the business. Moving to the larger space behind the orig-

inal shop, Bayou Adventure has expanded to include everything anyone could need to explore the area's natural beauty.

They've recently added a kitchen, where visitors can try foods like alligator sausage and gumbo, and a B&B, a cabin sleeping 6 just down Lake Road. There's a learning center hosting guest chef demos; programs geared toward introducing girls and young women to outdoors sports; weekly fishing seminars by local angler Forrest Green; and craft beer tastings on weekends.

Bayou Adventure was nominated in 2017 for the Best of Louisiana Outdoors Awards, in the categories of Best Eco Tour, Best Bait & Tackle, Best Outdoors Spokesman and even

Best Bug Spray (they sell their own, formulated by a friend). They've been written up in mommy blogs, Canadian newspapers and even French *GQ* magazine. The awards and attention are nice but it is the feedback they receive from their cus-

tomers, many of whom become friends, that means the most to them. There aren't many mom and pop businesses with 5,000-plus followers on Facebook and even fewer that can boast having a 4.9 out of 5 star approval rating in reviews.

One typical visitor, who'd enjoyed a sunset kayak tour and crawfish boil, said it had been a "once in a lifetime experience. Thank you for making a New Yorker's first time in Louisiana unforgettable." Another called it "the hidden gem of Louisiana."

Shannon loves that little Lacombe, situated between Fontainebleau State Park, Big Branch National Wildlife Reserve and Lake Pontchartrain, has become the hub of outdoor adventure for the Northshore. "We're not a town, we're not a village, just a zip code," she once told a reporter. "But we are definitely a community. Everyone comes to my shop to yak."

And to play. And to discover Louisiana. The real one. 🦋

PHOTOS DAVID HALLORAN (3)

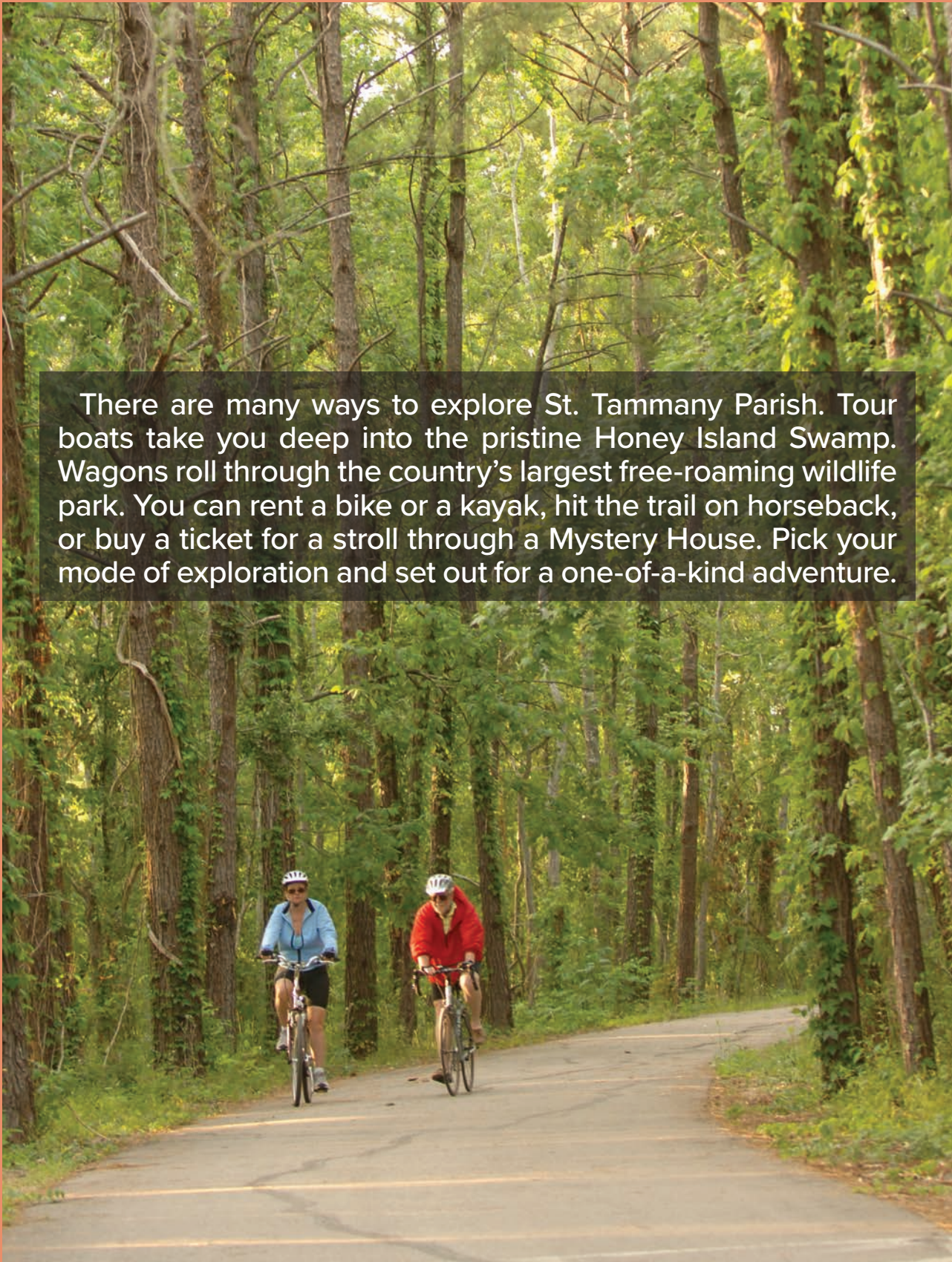




LEFT AND ABOVE: Jeff and Shannon Bordelon with baby Liza at Bayou Adventure, their one-stop shop for all things outdoors.

BELOW: Local angler Forrest Green is known for his skills and weekly fishing seminars.





There are many ways to explore St. Tammany Parish. Tour boats take you deep into the pristine Honey Island Swamp. Wagons roll through the country's largest free-roaming wildlife park. You can rent a bike or a kayak, hit the trail on horseback, or buy a ticket for a stroll through a Mystery House. Pick your mode of exploration and set out for a one-of-a-kind adventure.



FROM LEFT: Cyclists love the Tammany Trace, a rails to trails conversion winding through St. Tammany Parish; several operators offer tours of the Honey Island Swamp.

Lovely, Dark and Deep

See nature at its most beautiful (and gators, too) in the Honey Island Swamp near Slidell

Forget the swamps you've seen in movies. You know, the ones with 20-foot gators launching themselves into canoes and hissing black snakes dangling from every moss-hung tree. Pure Hollywood.

What you can expect to find in the Honey Island Swamp, on the northeast edge of St. Tammany Parish, is pristine beauty, lush nature in harmony, and abundant wildlife. There are gators, to be sure. You'll see them sunning themselves on logs or watching warily from the banks (you make them nervous); if they swim out to the boat it will be to score a few marshmallows thrown by the tour guide to lure them closer.

You probably won't be seeing any snakes, though they're out there. And despite reported sightings that date back centuries, odds are you won't be catching a glimpse of the Honey Island swamp monster, either.

You will see turtles, maybe an eagle overhead, and snowy white egrets patiently stalking a bullfrog dinner. You might see boar, a nutria, prehistoric-looking Pileated woodpeckers, or great blue herons, depending on what time of year you visit. You'll see an absolutely lovely patch of planet Earth, one that's been largely protected from... us.


The Honey Island Swamp encompasses almost 70,000 acres, more than half of which is preserved for posterity as part of

the Pearl River Wildlife Management Area. The PRWMA is swampy in the south, more hardwood bottomland to the north, home to black bears, feral pigs, cougars, nutria and an abundant year-round and migratory bird population.

Several swamp tour companies take visitors into the Honey Island Swamp (and yes, bring them out, too). Reservations aren't mandatory but much appreciated and may avoid disappointment on your part. Most tours run around two hours in length. What you learn depends on your own powers of observation and on the perspective and personalities of your tour guide, each of whom seem to have a slightly different spin on the swamp.

Pearl River Eco-Tours captain Neil Benson says the view is different every time as the swamp is constantly changing. Visitors in spring will see the most color, as irises and water hyacinths bloom in profusion; summer is prime time to see alligators. In the fall, the cypress trees begin changing from brilliant green to a rust color. And winter has its own beauty, the cypress trees bare, the gators mostly dormant but other wildlife more active and visible.

Several tour companies operate out of the Slidell area, most offering boats that seat 15 to 24 passengers, though tours by kayak are available, too. 🦋



Giraffes aren't native to the Northshore,
but they're right at home here.

Where the Wild Things Are

Feed, even pet, giraffes and other creatures at the amazing Global Wildlife Center

The excitement builds on the approach. Scenery along rural, tree-lined Highway 40, as it ribbons through the northwestern corner of St. Tammany Parish, begins subtly to change. Suddenly open grassland resembles an African savanna – and in more ways than one. The sight of decidedly not native creatures – zebras and Father David deer, giraffes and elands – signal that you are about to enter a special place.

Global Wildlife Center is the largest free-roaming wildlife preserve in the U.S., home to more than 4,000 exotic and endangered animals living on 900 scenic acres. Visitors have two options to explore Global. Many opt for the safari tours in large motorized wagons that travel the grounds, providing on-high views and the opportunity to toss feed to many of the animals as they approach the wagon.

The private Pinzgauer tours are a great choice for families and animal lovers who want a unique and once-in-a-lifetime encounter. Seating up to 8 people, the 4x4 vehicles put guests eye level with Global's inhabitants who often follow or surround the vehicle. Stroke a giraffe's neck as she leans over your shoulder. Amazingly beautiful up close, the giraffes are persistent – they want that corn! – but gentle. Touch the massive, woolly head of an American bison, or the horn of Watusi cattle, as it feeds from your hand. Deer, llamas and zebras come up close, and gaggles of fat geese waddle at top speed behind the Pinz as it pulls away. Safari tours are given several times daily; Pinzgauer tours require reservations. Both make unforgettable memories for kids of all ages. 🦋



PHOTOS ADAM PITLUK (3)

You never know what you're going to see at the Abita Mystery House.

Mysteries Abound Here

Abita's eccentric artsy/kitschy museum a wacko maze of Southern wit and eccentricity

The Abita Mystery House celebrates itself as Louisiana's "most eccentric museum" and likely is. The funky-licious little place, cool and goofy at the same time, is a short stroll from Abita Springs Town Hall and has welcomed the curious from all over the world. Sprung from the brain of Abita impresario/artist John Preble, the Mystery House is a roadside attraction-like emporium crammed with outsider art, Southern wit and the flotsam and jetsam of modern life. Fun for

all ages, the Mystery House has hands-on exhibits, mythical creatures like the Bassigator (half fish, half gator) and the Dogigator (half dog, half ... you know), and what may be the state's best gift shop. Enjoy the place at face value or cogitate on the Nature of Art, just not too hard. Bring your sense of humor. And three bucks. Because that's what it costs to get in at the Mystery House, where "everyone is welcome, even your family." 🦋

Don't Miss...



INSTA-GATOR RANCH & HATCHERY: Home to more than 2,000 alligators, Insta-Gator offers a fun and educational program and the chance to view and even touch one. You can even make a reservation to hatch one in your hand in August, when the baby reptiles emerge from their eggs.
23440 LOWE DAVIS ROAD, COVINGTON



FONTAINEBLEAU STATE PARK: Wander the park's 2,800 beautiful acres, draped along the shores of Lake Pontchartrain. There are nature trails, a sandy beach, camping sites, the ruins of an 1829 sugar mill, pavilion and furnished built-over-water cabins available for rent.
62883 HIGHWAY 1089, MANDEVILLE



SPLENDOR FARMS: Hit the trail for an afternoon of scenic horseback riding, with access to 1,000 acres of trails. Then, stable those horses and visit the petting zoo, enjoy the pool, play lawn games or have a picnic. Bed and breakfast on site.
27329 MILL CREEK ROAD, BUSH

PHOTO CARL BORDELON

See the ruins of an 1829 sugar mill on the grounds of Fontainebleau State Park.

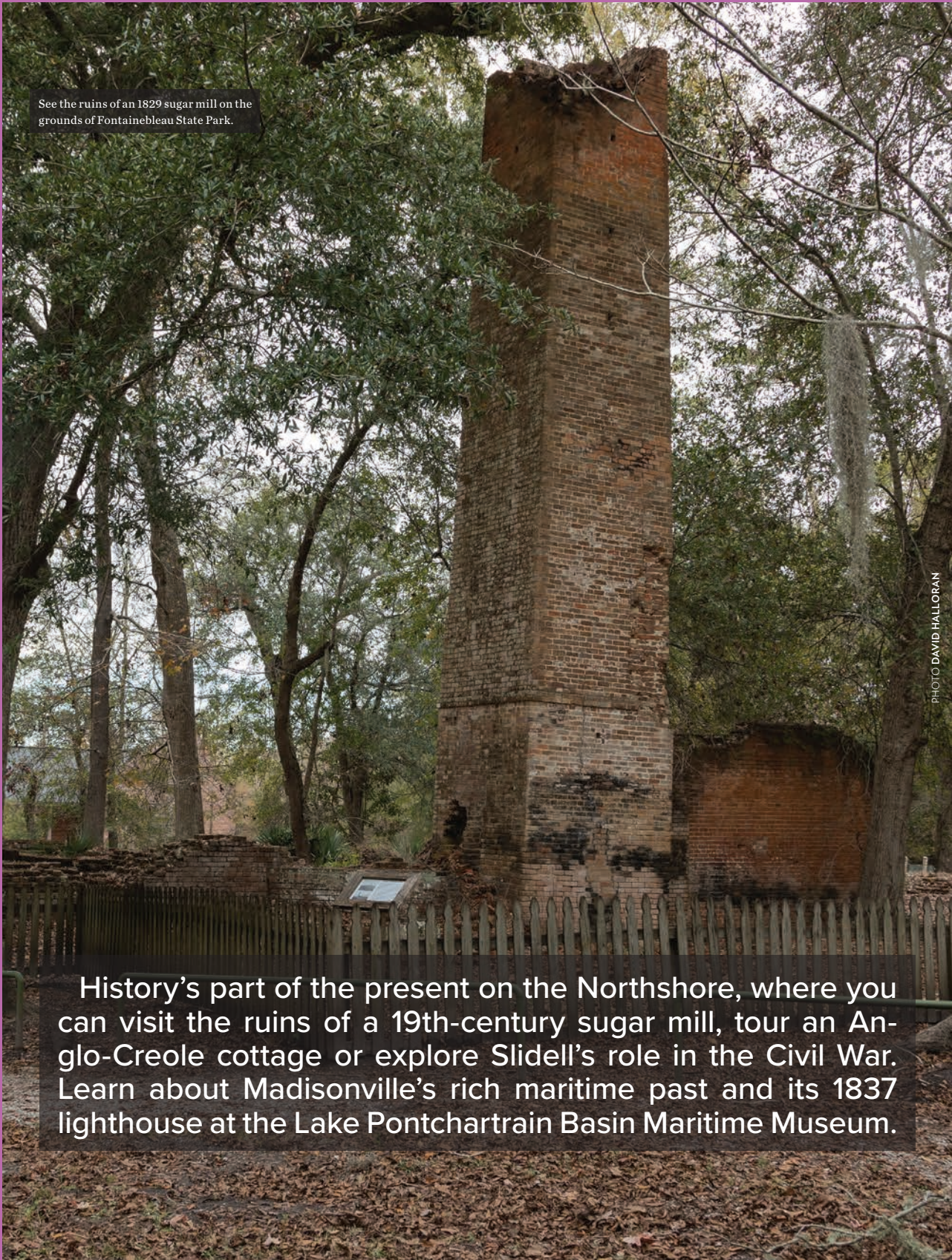


PHOTO DAVID HALLORAN

History's part of the present on the Northshore, where you can visit the ruins of a 19th-century sugar mill, tour an Anglo-Creole cottage or explore Slidell's role in the Civil War. Learn about Madisonville's rich maritime past and its 1837 lighthouse at the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Maritime Museum.



History Lives at the Lang

Cottage-turned-museum gives glimpse into life of early Mandeville residents

From the street, the Jean Baptiste Lang House looks perfectly suited to its site, blending gracefully into this historic Old Mandeville neighborhood as if it had held that spot for all of its 160-plus years. Picket fence, welcoming porch. As serene and nestled into its environs as it is, the Lang House didn't begin its life on Carroll Street. And it has a story to tell.

A classic example of an indigenous architectural style, the Anglo-Creole cottage, the Lang House was a raggedy mess. Hurricane Katrina pushed flood waters into the structure, where it stood on its original site along the Mandeville lakefront. The water and the wind stripped off boards and mangled the porch. Facing demolition, the little house was rescued in 2011 by preservationists and moved a few blocks inland. Today, restored and with new purpose, the cottage has become the Jean Baptiste Lang House Museum, offering a unique glimpse into the history of Mandeville.

Tour the Lang House and learn that it was built in the early 1850s, believed to have been finished in 1852, by Belgian-born

Jean Baptiste Lang, a prosperous tobacconist who operated two shops in New Orleans' French Quarter. The little cottage was meant to be a summer home, as were many in Mandeville; wealthy New Orleanians used the Northshore as a means to get away from the city's brutal summer heat, mosquitoes and yellow fever. Lang, also escaping a nasty divorce, resided there off and on for almost a decade before returning to his native Belgium just before the start of the Civil War. He died in 1861.

Adele Foster, the little museum's curator, was among those spearheading renovations of the Lang House, along with her husband Mark. A teacher, Foster relishes the chance to share the home with visitors and school groups who learn about its history and architectural features. She points out the mortise and tenon construction, exposed scarf joints, original box columns and walls of shiplap cypress planking. Some portions of the walls have faux bois (literally meaning 'fake wood'), a technique of hand painting on woodgrain pattern to replicate more expensive woods. 🦋

St. Tammany Timeline

Originally home to Choctaw and other tribes, the parish has been shaped by various cultures, events

5 SPOTS... TO VISIT HISTORY

FONTAINEBLEAU SUGAR MILL RUINS:

Dating to 1829, the old brick ruins are all that are left of the sugar plantation and mill built by Bernard de Marigny de Mandeville, founder of the town that would take his name. Located on the grounds of Fontainebleau State Park.

62883 HIGHWAY 1089, MANDEVILLE

OTIS HOUSE MUSEUM: Guided tours of this late 19th-century lumber baron's home include memorabilia and photographs from the area. The Queen Anne-style home is on the grounds of Fairview-Riverside State Park.

119 FAIRVIEW DRIVE, MADISONVILLE

SLIDELL MUSEUM: Housed in the old town's jail, the museum displays two floors of photos and memorabilia from Slidell's history as well as the South's role in the Civil War. Also on site is the Mardi Gras Museum, with more than 800 Carnival items.

2020 FIRST ST., SLIDELL

HJ SMITH & SONS GENERAL STORE MUSEUM: Family owned and operated since 1876, the still-operating store houses a free museum with hundreds of items from the past, including a 20-foot cypress dugout boat, cast iron casket, old farm tools, a 1920s gas pump and much more.

308 N. COLUMBIA ST., COVINGTON

LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN BASIN MARITIME MUSEUM: Explore the area's rich maritime history up-close via a film, detailed exhibits and boat models. Learn more about the 1837 Tchecfuncte River lighthouse and visit the lighthouse keeper's house.

133 MABEL DRIVE, MADISONVILLE

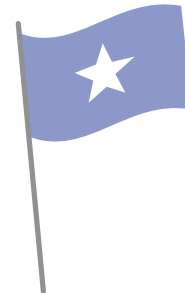
1600 B.C.

The Choctaw inhabit the northern shore of Lake Pontchartrain.



1699

Explorers Pierre LeMoyne Sieur d'Iberville and Jean Baptiste LeMoyne Sieur de Bienville check out the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain.



1810

The West Florida Revolt attempts to overthrow Spanish authority in the area. The Republic of West Florida is formed – and lasts 74 days.



1830

New Orleans entrepreneur Bernard Marigny de Mandeville builds a sugar mill on the present site of Fontainebleau State Park and soon subdivides property to the west that would become the town of Mandeville.

1803

The United States acquires 828,000 square miles of territory from the French in the Louisiana Purchase. It does not include St. Tammany or any Spanish West Florida parishes.

1812

Louisiana is admitted to the Union in April. West Florida, including St. Tammany Parish, does not become part of the new state until five months later.

1887

A tourism boom begins in Abita Springs when a doctor declares the local springs to have medicinal qualities.

1956

The first span of the Pontchartrain Causeway is built, stretching over the 24-mile-wide lake between Mandeville and the south shore. (A second span is built in 1969.) The Causeway is the longest continuous bridge over water in the world.





Souvenirs and Sweets

Slidell's Bayou Country a must-stop for pralines, Louisiana-themed gifts and oh, that Cajun mayo

Bayou Country, in Slidell, would be worth a stop if only for the pralines. They're made in house, the kitchen turning out legions each day. The fragrance of caramelized sugar and roasted pecans grabs you when you walk in the door and pulls you toward the cases full of creole treats. Original and peanut butter and chocolate and rum. You'll want to pick up a praline or two or 20, you

know, for the people back home.

Don't stop there. Bayou Country is a giant emporium of Louisiana-themed products, housewares, souvenirs, spices and even toys. Shop for gumbo bowls, gator Christmas ornaments and Cajun cookbooks, T-shirts and housewares. Great for gifts: Bayou Country's highly addictive Cajun Crunch popcorn and its spicy Cajun Mayo. 🌶️



Shopping Ops Galore

Covington's walkable district home to scores of boutiques, galleries and antiques shops

Downtown Covington is known as a walkable district of restaurants, galleries and shops, many housed in century-old cottages grouped on and around quaint Lee Lane. Hunt for treasure at spots like History Antiques & Interiors, the quirky On a Whim, and at multi-dealer favorites Cottage Antiques and the Copper Rooster. Find vintage collectibles and housewares, antique furniture, jewelry and shabby chic goodies.

A number of fun and welcoming boutiques satisfy the Must Shop impulse. Turkeyz describes itself as a gift gallery and offers jewelry and decorative items.

CDN Clothing specializes in "clothing, accessories and good vibrations." Last Call: California Drawstrings, in Walker Alley just off Lee Lane, specializes in discounted closeouts and brands such as Banana Blue, FLAX and Janska.

Take a break for coffee and sweets at Coffee Rani, or a spot of tea and a scone at the English Tea Room, both nearby. Break for lunch, maybe a cup of gumbo, at New Orleans Seafood and Spirits, just the place to replenish energy. You'll need it before you move on to Columbia Street, where more shops and galleries await. 🦋

5 SPOTS TO HIT THE SHOPS

GIROD STREET, MANDEVILLE: A number of shops are dotted along Old Mandeville's Girod Street, just blocks from the lakefront, including Mae Antiques; Das Schulerhaus, a gift gallery and year-round Christmas boutique; Just Imagine and Cameo gift boutiques.

RIVER CHASE SHOPPING CENTER, COVINGTON: Located at Interstate 12 and Highway 21. Best Buy, JC Penney, Marshall's, Target, Shoe Carnival, World Market, Belk, Lane Bryant and more.

FREMAUX TOWN CENTER, SLIDELL: This shopping center on Interstate 10 at Fremaux is home to scores of stores, including Dillards, Best Buy, Victoria's Secret, TJ Maxx, Michael's, Kohl's and more.

OLDE TOWNE HISTORIC ANTIQUE DISTRICT, SLIDELL: This walkable district features numerous antiques and gift shops, including Barbara's Victorian Closet antique mall, Aunt Tiques Curiosities, Green Oaks Apothecary offering handmade soaps and aromatherapy, and Café Du Bone Dog Bakery & Boutique. Nearby, check out the MARTketplace multi-artist gallery for handmade art and gift items.

PREMIER SHOPPING CENTRE NO. 1 AND 2, MANDEVILLE: Old Navy, the Gap, Barnes & Noble, Banana Republic, Anne Taylor Loft and Aeropostale are among the shops at this large center on Highway 190.

A heron perched on a cypress tree in the Bogue Chitto National Wildlife Refuge





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