

ITINERARIES



Outdoor Adventures

Louisiana's famed gumbo is a spicy blend, and the Bayou Teche Corridor of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area is the geographical equivalent. Iberia Parish is the heart of the famous bayou, a 135-mile long waterway that meanders through New Iberia, Jeanerette and Loreauville. Life on the bayou has its advantages, from bird watching to kayaking, fishing and even biking and hiking, not to mention the bounty of fresh seafood that comes from Gulf waters. Plan your own adventure and experience the great outdoors in Iberia Parish—by land or water.

DAY ONE - BIRDING

MORNING

Breakfast at 1868 Restaurant

Start the day at Avery Island's on-site Restaurant 1868, a casual, cafeteria-style eatery serving Tabasco-infused Cajun favorites like Boudin and Pepper Jelly Biscuits starting at 9 a.m. Be sure to check out the portraits of the inner workings of the factory, as well as founding family members, that line the walls, or have a cup of coffee on the wraparound porch with a view of the factory and country store.

Jungle Gardens of Avery Island

Take a guided or self-guided birding tour of Jungle Gardens, a 170-acre semi-tropical garden on Avery Island. The son of Tabasco's inventor, Edward Avery "Ned" McIlhenny founded Bird City, a private sanctuary for the once-endangered snowy egret, in the 1920s. This vast, protected rookery now hosts more than 100,000 nesting birds each year. Smart phone users can access a mobile web tour, and a gift shop is also available on-site for souvenirs.

Rip's Rookery at Jefferson Island

Iberia Parish's other easily accessible island is Jefferson, located on a coastal salt dome and flanked by 25 acres of semi-tropical gardens and Lake Peigneur. Jefferson Island and Rip Van Winkle Gardens contain a manmade wetland in Rip's Rookery, where thousands of wading birds like the brightly colored Roseate Spoonbill migrate each spring.

Visitors can also watch a documentary on the 1980 collapse of the salt dome and browse through the gift shop before exploring the gardens.

Jungle Gardens & Bird City are open seven days a week from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; guided tours must be booked in advance. Tours of Rip Van Winkle Gardens and Joseph Jefferson Home begin on the hour from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. seven days a week. Rip's Rookery, located at the intersection of Jefferson Island Road and Rip Van Winkle Road, is always open and free.

Margaret Gay Landry Bearb



Lunch at Café Jefferson A glass enclosed porch overlooking Lake Peigneur, Café Jefferson specializes in seafood dishes, from bisques and gumbos to etouffee and sauce piquante, and also homemade desserts. Lunch is served seven days a week except on major holidays.

AFTERNOON

Spanish Lake or Lake Fausse Pointe State Park

Just outside of New Iberia, Spanish Lake offers boating, fishing and excellent bird watching, with approximately 240 species of birds recorded there. Keep an eye out for herons, woodpeckers, warblers and hawks. Located next to the Atchafalaya Basin, America's largest river swamp, Lake Fausse Pointe State Park is another great spot for birding. Camp or rent a cabin for the night and explore the basin's waterways via flat bottom boats, kayaks and canoes. Three nature trails also provide plenty of bird watching opportunities. Species to look for include herons, egrets and allies, as well as Ospreys and Bald Eagles. (Find a birding checklist at IberiaTravel.com or at the Iberia Parish Welcome Center.)

Spanish Lake is open sunrise to sunset. Lake Fausse Pointe State Park is open Sun.-Thurs. from 6 a.m.-9 p.m. and weekends until 10 p.m.

EVENING

Dinner at Pelicans on the Bayou

Take in a view of the bayou—and maybe a few more birds—while dining outside at the new Pelicans. Menu items include fresh seafood, po'boys and plate lunches, all served on the banks of Bayou Teche Mon. through Sat.

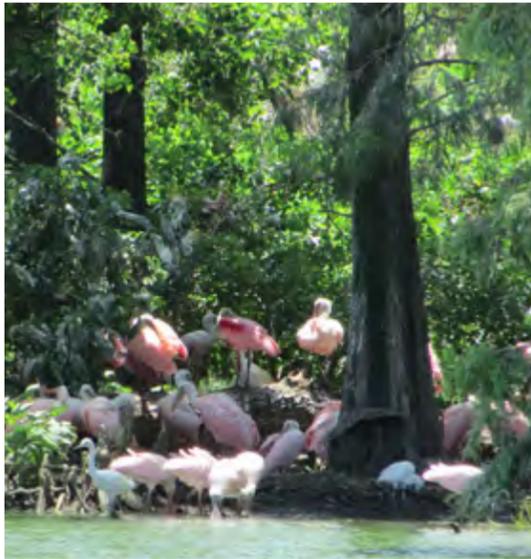


WHERE TO CAMP

To fully immerse yourself outdoors, pitch a tent or book a cabin. Sites are available at the Good Sam approved campgrounds KOC Kampground and Isle of Iberia RV Resort or Lake Fausse Pointe State Park, which even has five canoe campsites. Book a cabin at Lake Fausse Pointe and Cypremort Point state parks or the KOC.

More information at IberiaTravel.com.

Margaret Melancon



DAY TWO - ON THE WATER

MORNING

Breakfast at Cajun Glaze Donuts

Open from 4 a.m.-noon, this local New Iberia breakfast hangout serves glazed, specialty and cake donuts, along with kolaches and biscuits. Pick up a quick breakfast before spending a day on the water.

Cast a Line

Cajun Country's coast is teeming with fishing opportunities for both serious anglers and recreational fishermen. Some favorite fishing holes include the Atchafalaya Basin, Bayou Carlin Cove, Spanish Lake, New Iberia City Park, Lake Fausse Pointe State Park, Cypremort Point State Park, Vermilion Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. Iberia Parish offers several public boat launches and expert charter fishing services. Various community organizations also hold fishing rodeos throughout the year.

AFTERNOON

Kayak the Teche

Launch a kayak from New Iberia City Park or Loreauville's floating dock at 118 Bridge St. Stop to browse art galleries, shops, 21 trilingual markers

or get a snack from a downtown restaurant along the way. Pick up an Atchafalaya Water Heritage Trail map at Iberia Parish Welcome Center. Visit BayouTecheExperience.com or WaterHeritage.Atchafalaya.org to plan your paddle tour.

Take a Dip

Cool off after a paddle at Cypremort Point State Park or Isle of Iberia RV Resort. A gateway to the Gulf of Mexico on Vermilion Bay, Cypremort Point has a public beach with swimming, fishing, birding and boating. Six cabins and three pavilions are also available by reservation. New

Lunch at A Spot For Tea

This full service tea room in the heart of New Iberia's Historic District is the perfect spot to grab a soup, salad, or sandwich along with a selection of locally made cheeses.

Come back on select nights for live entertainment and special events.

Iberia's newest island is Isle of Iberia, an RV resort with a 9,000-square-foot pool, lazy river and splash pad. Order a specialty cocktail like the Cajun Blue Bayou at the swim-up bar or fish the stocked pond.

Cypremort Point State Park is open from 7 a.m.-9 p.m. Sun.-Thurs. and until 10 p.m. on weekends. Isle of Iberia has 185 available RV sites; call 337-256-8681 for hours.

EVENING

Dinner at R&M's Boiling Point or Jane's Seafood

Going straight from water to plate, there's no shortage of local seafood in Iberia Parish. Specializing in boiled, fried and grilled seafood, R&M's Boiling Point on Hwy. 90 is known for its boiled crabs and crawfish, along with seafood po'boys, served seven days a week. Crawfish, crab, oysters and seafood dinners are served, along with Chinese dishes, at Jane's family restaurant Tues. through Sun.

Plan your trip using IberiaTravel.com.

DAY THREE - HIT THE TRAILS

MORNING



Dave's Quality Meats & Plate Lunches

Pick up some homemade boudin (rice and meat stuffed in a sausage casing) and cracklins (fried pork skin) from Dave's in New Iberia, which opens at 7:30 a.m., before hitting the trails.

Bike Iberia

New Iberia's Bike Trail is a 3.2-mile path that starts in Church Alley Park on East Main Street and crosses the Bayou Teche before winding through New Iberia City Park, which has its own network of trails. If history, architecture and literature are more your speed, then bike the Historic District Trail lined with stately homes and notable buildings or James Lee Burke's Iberia Trail with sites featured in his novels. Trilingual markers throughout provide more information on significant landmarks. Want to get out of town? The Historic Jeanerette Trail is a self-guided tour of Sugar City, with the Jeanerette Museum, LeJeune's Bakery and even some plantations along the way. Find these and other trails at IberiaTravel.com or at the Iberia Parish Welcome Center.

AFTERNOON

Lunch at Teche Café

This Loreauville spot is known for its plate lunches, including local favorites from shrimp stew to smothered sausage with rice and gravy, served until 2 p.m. Tues.-Fri. Po'boys, burgers, salads and other specialties are also available, along with Sunday brunch.



Nature Trails

Jungle Gardens on Avery Island and Rip Van Winkle Gardens on Jefferson Island are both scenic destinations for leisurely walking and more vigorous hiking, with native flora, fauna and wildlife to be spotted. From March through April, Main Street in New Iberia is abloom with brightly colored azaleas. Walk the trail and wander through the gardens of Shadows-on-the-Teche. Further out of town, Lake Fausse Pointe State Park has three nature trails, ranging from 3/4 of a mile to 3.3 miles, and a nature center.

EVENING

Dinner at Little River Inn

A family tradition since 1932, Little River Inn serves Cajun seafood, steaks and oysters overlooking the famous Bernard F. Trappey Oak Mon. through Sat. Start your meal with a dozen oysters on the half shell or crab cakes and then move on to Gulf Coast Shrimp Platter or Sautéed Lump Crab Meat (delicious!) before finishing with sweet potato beignets.