

LOUISIANA'S CAJUN BAYOU LAFOURCHE PARISH

From Acadian to Cajun *A Unique Culture Defines This Louisiana Destination*

Lafourche Parish, Louisiana, is affectionately nicknamed “[Louisiana’s Cajun Bayou](#).” But why? “Cajun” is a local take on the word “Acadian,” which describes people who found their way to Louisiana by way of Canada. The unique culture they brought with them after a difficult journey is a big part of what makes the state – especially our region, which is about 45 minutes from New Orleans – so incredibly diverse and fascinating.

In the early 1600s, people came from western France to settle in a region in Canada that was then called “Acadie” but which is now part of present-day New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. They lived independently for nearly 100 years. During the French and Indian War in the mid-1700s, however, the British military suspected that the Acadians were supporters of France ... despite the fact that most Acadians had adopted a neutral stance. As punishment for this presumed treason, British troops imprisoned and deported nearly 11,500 Acadians between 1755 and 1764. It’s estimated that a third of the members of the ethnic group died during this mass deportation, which is called the “Great Expulsion.”

Some Acadians were sent to the American colonies, which at that time were also under British rule, to become indentured servants. Others were sent to the Caribbean or England. Still others ended up back in France, and a good many of that group ultimately returned to North America when the Spanish government recruited French citizens to populate Louisiana, which at that time was a Spanish colony. Louisiana was a far cry from the lush green landscapes of France or Canada, and the Acadians had to figure out how to adapt to an environment that was the antithesis of everything they’d previously known.

Ultimately, though, in Louisiana these displaced and transplanted people didn’t just survive ... they figured out how to thrive. They brought with them their French language, their Catholic morals, and a temperament that equipped them to be incredibly adaptable and resilient. It was in Louisiana that the “Acadians” became “Cajuns,” and they now lay claim to one of the most unique cultures anywhere in the United States. They’re an indelible part of Louisiana’s story.

When you hear the word “Cajun,” you probably think of people who possess a certain *joie de vivre* (translated from French, “joy of living”), a passion for music and dancing, and a collection of the best recipes any chef has ever tried. All that positivity and freedom of expression exists despite the circumstances that brought the Cajuns to Louisiana, and it’s important to preserve and celebrate their culture.

Here are a few places in Louisiana’s Cajun Bayou where visitors can learn more about what it means to be Cajun. This region prides itself in delivering authentic Cajun experiences at every turn, including these:

- **[Louisiana’s Cajun Bayou Visitors Center](#)**: A great place to start a tour of Lafourche Parish is at the visitor center in Raceland. Talk to one of the travel counselors, who help bring the history and traditions of the region to life, then grab your *Guide to the Bayou Life* to start your journey.
- **[Cajun Bayou Food Trail](#)**: Many would argue that the best part of Cajun culture is the food, and the restaurants on this trail hold tight to Cajun traditions. Chefs often use recipes that have been passed down for generations, and everyone has their own take on how to transform local ingredients into memorable dining experiences. Each of those chefs will tell you that there are just two simple ingredients required for every Cajun meal: make it with love and serve it to guests you welcome like your own family.
- **[Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center](#)**: Jean Lafitte National Park encompasses six different locales across the state of Louisiana. This site focuses on Cajun culture, including cuisine, religion, music, crafts and home life. The center is dedicated to preserving Cajun traditions, offering Saturday music jams and regular boat tours of the bayou.
- **[Swamp Tours](#)**: To get a true feel for the subtropical environment that became the new home to the Cajuns in the late 1700s, get out on a swamp tour. Genuine Cajun captains take passengers deep into the swamps of Lafourche Parish, introducing their guests to countless birds and alligators while offering unique insights into the people who call this place home.
- **[Chine’s Cajun Net Shop](#)**: Even if you’re keeping your eyes peeled as you drive into the town of Golden Meadow, you could motor right past this shop. It’s nondescript from the outside, but walk through the door and you’ll be transported into a fascinating new world. You’ll find a small group of men holding huge needles and sewing gigantic nets ... the kind used to pull oysters and shrimp from the waters all around this region. You can ask questions, take pictures and – if you play your cards right – walk away with the gift of a tiny net. It’ll be perfect for your next crawfish boil!

Louisiana’s Cajun Bayou is located just 45 minutes from New Orleans, in the coastal destination of Lafourche Parish. Visitors seeking authentic Cajun experiences are embraced by true Southern hospitality as they sample the outdoor adventures, culture, food, music, and festivals that make any journey up and down Bayou Lafourche truly personal, memorable and distinctive.