

LOUISIANA'S PLAYGROUND

Fall 2023/Winter 2024

LAKE CHARLES



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Connect with us & share your adventures!



#VisitLakeCharles
#LouisianasPlayground

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VISIT LAKE CHARLES
LOUISIANA'S PLAYGROUND

LOUISIANA'S PLAYGROUND



"YOUR ROAD MAP TO SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA"

Find out more at: VisitLakeCharles.org/podcast



Scan the QR code to
listen to podcast episode 10:
Celebrate Mardi Gras.

CALCASIEU PARISH



LAKE CHARLES SULPHUR WESTLAKE DEQUINCY VINTON IOWA

WHAT'S NEW?

When the cool crisp weather is in the air, there's nothing like a fresh cup of coffee and a good conversation, a stroll along the golf course in the beautiful Southwest Louisiana sun, or a relaxing trip down the bayou. From coffee spots to artistic pursuits and outdoor activities, there are new adventures in store this fall and winter. Take your pick of the sweet 16 new things to do in Louisiana's Playground.

1. Indulge in ice cream, burgers, and decadent desserts at **The Brick House Creamery**.
2. **Shucks** is the place to get your oyster fix.
3. Catch performing arts at **Southlake Theater**.
4. **Coffee:30 Express** for a cup of joe on the go!
5. DIY candles at **Wicks & Wax!**
6. Treat your sweet tooth at **The Buzz Coffee & More**.
7. Take five at the **Mallard Golf Club Clubhouse** and restaurant.
8. **Biking Through the Lake's** new Party Pedal Bikes!
9. Traditional Mexican cuisine with a twist at **Johnny Sánchez, L'Auberge Casino Resort**.
10. Multi-Michelin star chef Gordon Ramsey debuts in LA with **Gordon Ramsey Steak**, Horseshoe Casino.
11. **Pickleball Courts** are all the rage at I-10 North Beach, South Beach Volleyball, Game2Life, Golden Nugget and McMurtry Park!
12. Kayaks by **Bayou Adventure** are now available at Sam Houston Jones State Park!
13. **Blazin' Hot Chicken** brings the heat with 6 spicy levels of finger-licking goodness.
14. Explore **Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge** and its refurbished HQ building.
15. Get your plate lunches, sausage, boudin, and cracklins at **Homsi's #3!**
16. Nothing could be finer than **Goldband Diner** inside the Panorama Music Exchange.



Scan the QR code or go to
VisitLakeCharles.org/new for
highlights of what's new to SWLA!

LOCAL INSIGHTS

AS MUCH *JOY* AS YOU CAN PACK IN.



"The water gives me a sense of relaxation. There are no worries or stressors. Sometimes I just sit back and allow mother nature and our area to welcome people from all over the world to our little corner of Louisiana to see our bayous."



"Lake Charles' talent level is right there at an international level. We have Grammy nominees, Oscar award winners, Tony award winners from this area. Southwest Louisiana is rich in culture, and it's largely because of the outdoor spaces that we have – all of that makes an artist who they are and a performer who they are."



"When you're at a Zydeco dance and you feel the speakers pumping in your chest and you see the hats in the crowd dancing up and down, it's a special feeling that I get to take this cultural music that I grew up with to the world. That's amazing!"



"Luxury can be an indulgence of flavors, a feeling, anything that is outside of the norm of what you would normally do. Once you step into the spa, all of your worries, all of your cares – that all just melts away. There are no luxury resorts in the entire state of Louisiana like you find in Lake Charles."



"It's not unusual to walk down the road and smell crawfish or gumbo. It's on the wind, and you just know you're in Louisiana. Where else is food their love language? You can go anywhere else in the world and eat something, but it's not like being in Southwest Louisiana."



Scan to view videos.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBILITY

for Travelers in Southwest Louisiana

Embark on a journey through Southwest Louisiana to discover some of the hidden gems that inspire wanderlust on wheels. From cultural adventures to soaking in the great outdoors, add some of the highlighted ideas to your itinerary while visiting the Lake Area.



Self-Fish Dreams

Prien Lake Park: This charming park offers wheelchair-accessible paths and picnic areas, making it an excellent spot for a relaxing day outdoors.

Creole Nature Trail Adventure Point: This imaginative interpretive center provides an interactive experience to learn about the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road.

Wildlife Refuges: Enjoy the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge and Pintail Wildlife boardwalk at the Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge.

Lake Charles Boardwalk: Soak in scenic views of Lake Charles from the boardwalk, which has wheelchair-friendly pathways and seating areas.

Sulphur Parks and Recreation: Sulphur has multiple parks with accessible amenities, including North Frasch Park, Heritage Square, and The Grove located next to the Henning Cultural Center featuring local art.

Imperial Calcasieu Museum: Explore rotating exhibits, local art, and a boutique shop with works by local artisans.

1911 Historic City Hall Arts & Cultural Center: Check out vibrant art shows featuring world-famous art, the Black Heritage Gallery, and Gallery by the Lake – not to mention the Charlestown Farmer's Market on Saturdays!

Sam Houston Jones State Park: The newly renovated infrastructure includes fresh boardwalks, and while all new cabins are accessible, cabin #3 features lower countertops, cabinets, and a fold down bench in the shower with a handheld showerhead.

Area Gaming Properties: L'Auberge Casino Resort, Golden Nugget Lake Charles, Horseshoe Lake Charles, and Delta Downs Racetrack Casino & Hotel are where luxury meets comfort.

Self-Fish Dreams: Glide out onto the waters of Southwest Louisiana for a 2-hour cruise or inland fishing trip down Contraband Bayou, Lake Charles, and Prien Lake. This complementary service is available for seniors, disabled, and people who are unable to experience boating and fishing.

CHEERS FROM LAKE CHARLES



Too often, Southwest Louisiana is recognized for its outdoor scenery, foodie culture, luxurious accommodations, and its full calendar of festivals, but this region is a hidden gem for wine and spirits lovers too. Whether you're seeking a low-lit, sophisticated atmosphere after work or a grab-and-go option to wind down at home, these seven spots secured their rightful place on Southwest Louisiana's must-sip list:

SEVEN MUST-SIP LOCATIONS IN SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

1. The Wine Store

Specialty: Global Wine Selection

The Wine Store is a vinous wonderland with a charming and lowkey ambiance, offering an extensive collection of wines. You can sip on everything from velvety Cabernets to crisp Sauvignon Blancs. The knowledgeable staff is always on hand to guide you through their curated selection, making it a must-visit destination for any wine lover in Lake Charles.

2. Bodega Wine Dive

Specialty: Boutique Wines & Craft Cocktails

Bodega Wine Dive is a lively spot offering a curated selection of boutique wines and inventive craft cocktails. This restaurant's ambiance exists to unwind your worries and revel in serenity. With its low-lit and eclectic interior design, Bodega is a favorite happy hour spot among locals and visitors alike. But don't leave without an order of truffle popcorn.

3. Bayou Rum Distillery & Event Center

Specialty Spirits: Handcrafted Rum, Distillery Tours & Tastings

At Bayou Rum Distillery, you can discover the essence of Southwest Louisiana's unique history with just one sip. From pirate affiliations and fields of sugar cane to the unique add-in flavors, this location will likely convert a rum fan into a rum fanatic. You can explore the rustic-chic tasting room or reserve their event space for a special event.

4. Smoke & Barrel:

A Celebration of Bourbon, BBQ & Whiskey

Specialty: Fall Culinary Tasting Event

Smoke & Barrel has been a magnet for culinary festivalgoers since 2018, luring them to the Calcasieu Parish Courthouse lawn in downtown Lake Charles to taste various bourbon and whiskey samples, alongside traditional and unorthodox barbecue flavors. You can experience unlimited food and liquor, as well as live music in a fun atmosphere. To get a taste of the finest aged whiskeys and bourbons from around the world, secure your tickets at smokeandbarrel.org. The event is scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 2.



**LOUISIANA
FOOD & WINE
FESTIVAL**
SEPT. 14-17

5. The Cellar at Crave

Specialty: Gift Shop & Wine Bar

The Cellar at Crave is an upscale haven, offering elegance and stillness alongside an impressive selection of wines, whiskey, bourbon, and champagne. Indulge in charcuterie boards, cheese pairings, and tasting events, all in the dimly lit ambiance that encourages relaxed sipping. This location, with attentive service, is an essential destination on our Must-Sip List, whether you seek a solo sip in secret or want to share something delightful with loved ones.

6. Lake Street Liquor

Specialty: Rare & Locally Sourced Spirits

Lake Street Liquor is a local woman-owned liquor store known for its lively atmosphere. Standing out from traditional liquor stores, it supports the area's culinary creators and start-up vendors, hosting tasting events and pairing classes. Browse sought-after bourbons and artisanal gins, making it a prime location to discover unique gems in Southwest Louisiana's must-sip scene.

7. Bayou Boards by Gabrielle

Specialty: Intricate Charcuterie Boards

Bayou Boards by Gabrielle is a hidden gem near downtown Lake Charles, perfect for wine enthusiasts who value aesthetics. Enjoy carefully crafted boards with diverse cheeses, meats, nuts, fruit, jams, and more. Experience unexpected flavors, personalized bites, and themed catering services. Whether it's a light lunch or a nutritious to-go snack with wine, Bayou Boards has you covered.

LOUISIANA FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL EVENT SCHEDULE

LouisianaFoodAndWineFestival.com

Celebrating authentic tastes of the state's authentic Cajun and Creole cuisine, the inaugural Louisiana Food & Wine Festival takes place Sept. 14-17. Tickets are all-inclusive for food and beverage tastings, including a souvenir glass for unlimited beverage tastings from hundreds of wines, beers, and spirits, and live music from Louisiana's best party band - the Flamethrowers.

Thursday, Sept. 14 - Celebrity Chefs
Wine Dinner

Friday, Sept. 15 - Louisiana Inspired Master
Classes & Fire on the Lake Dinner

Saturday, Sept. 16 - Grand Tasting

Sunday, Sept. 17 - Jazz Brunch

Get tickets at
LouisianaFoodAndWineFestival.com.



CRYING EAGLE BREWING COMPANY

“
What we do here is more than food, beer, and parties. In many ways, we represent what the community is all about.
”

When people first walk into Crying Eagle, owner Eric Avery, can usually tell if it's their first time to visit. He loves the look on their face when they first encounter the cultural spirit of the brewery and the innovative creativity that is infused into the experience.

“What we do here is more than food, beer, and parties. In many ways, we represent what the community is all about,” said Avery.

Crying Eagle has evolved over the years to reflect what the community wants. They converted from a production and distribution driven brewery to a microbrewery, which allowed people who enjoy wine and cocktails and take part in the Crying Eagle experience even if they weren't beer drinkers.

In addition to beverages, The Bistro has a wide variety of upscale pub food and delicious recipes. The most popular products are the Crying Eagle Burger, the What the Fig Pizza, and the Louisiana Lager beer.

The popular Sunday Brunch features a Bloody Mary Bar where you can assemble your own concoction along with enjoying mimosa flights, live music and delicious traditional brunch food from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

“I always say that I run Crying Eagle like the show

Game of Thrones – always keeping things fresh, exciting, and on the forefront of innovation,” said Avery. “If you come to Crying Eagle 10 separate times, you are likely to have 10 different experiences depending on the events, menu items, or new products.”

As far as the beer goes, the goal is to be creative and sophisticated with a tremendous focus on technique. Some of the styles they produce can be as outrageous as peanut butter or Skittles candy infused beers to traditional Lagers, IPA's and sophisticated beers like Bourbon Barrel-Aged Stouts.

The entire business is a family affair with a sense of engagement from everyone in the Avery family. In fact, Eric's mother, Fran, works in the Bistro nearly every day. She enjoys the camaraderie and relationships that she has built supporting the family business.

This fall, Crying Eagle will begin construction on the lakefront location. The McNeese location of Crying Eagle will always be a place for big concerts, parties, and events, but Crying Eagle Lakefront will have a completely different overall experience. There will be smaller singer/songwriter groups for entertainment, seating with servers for 750, and a host/hostess will greet guests.

SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA BOUDIN TRAIL

You know you're in Louisiana if you can get boudin on just about every corner. Locally owned markets that double as diners with plate lunches are popular places for a quick, hearty meal or a bite on-the-go. You can also get award-winning boudin at several local grocery stores. If you are not familiar with boudin, it's like a sausage, but it's stuffed with varying amounts of pork meat, liver, rice, onions, parsley and dry seasonings like salt, red pepper, black pepper and garlic powder. It's pronounced "boo-den," or each piece of boudin is also called a "link."

Several of the boudin stops on the Southwest Louisiana Boudin Trail have been in families for generations. Take B&O Grocery for example in Sulphur - it's three generations strong with Jeff Benoit at the helm.

Near the eastern side of the Creole Nature Trail, Homs's #3 just opened in a former location of another meat market shop. It's an ideal place to get boudin before heading on the trail and experiencing wildlife at the Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge or exploring Gulf beaches.

Boudin is the perfect finger food and protein packed snack for breakfast, lunch, dinner, or anytime in between!

“

Forty years ago, my grandfather and grandmother open B&O Kitchen and Grocery. They put our family recipes full of the spices and flavors we grew up with for the public to enjoy also. Boudin, sausage and cracklins have been in our family for many generations. As a third generation owner following in my father's and grandfather's footsteps of B&O's, I am proud to carry on my family tradition and recipes today. I love sharing our story and watching people enjoying our family Cajun food and culture.”

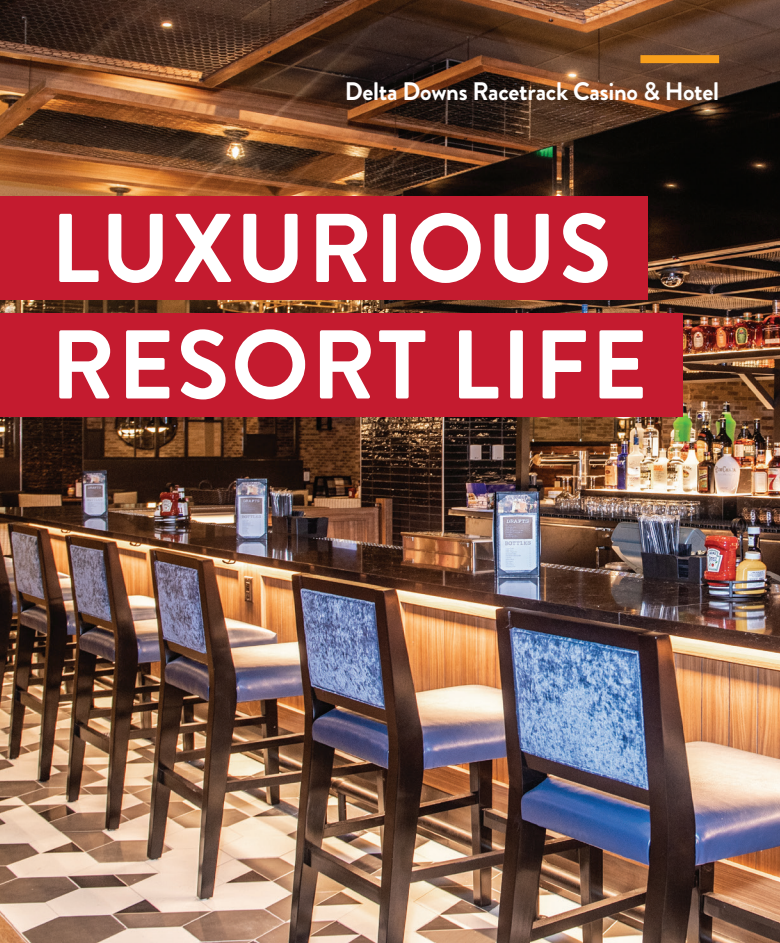
- Jeff Benoit, Owner of B&O's Grocery

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Scan the QR code or go to
VisitLakeCharles.org/boudin
for a list of boudin stops!

LUXURIOUS RESORT LIFE



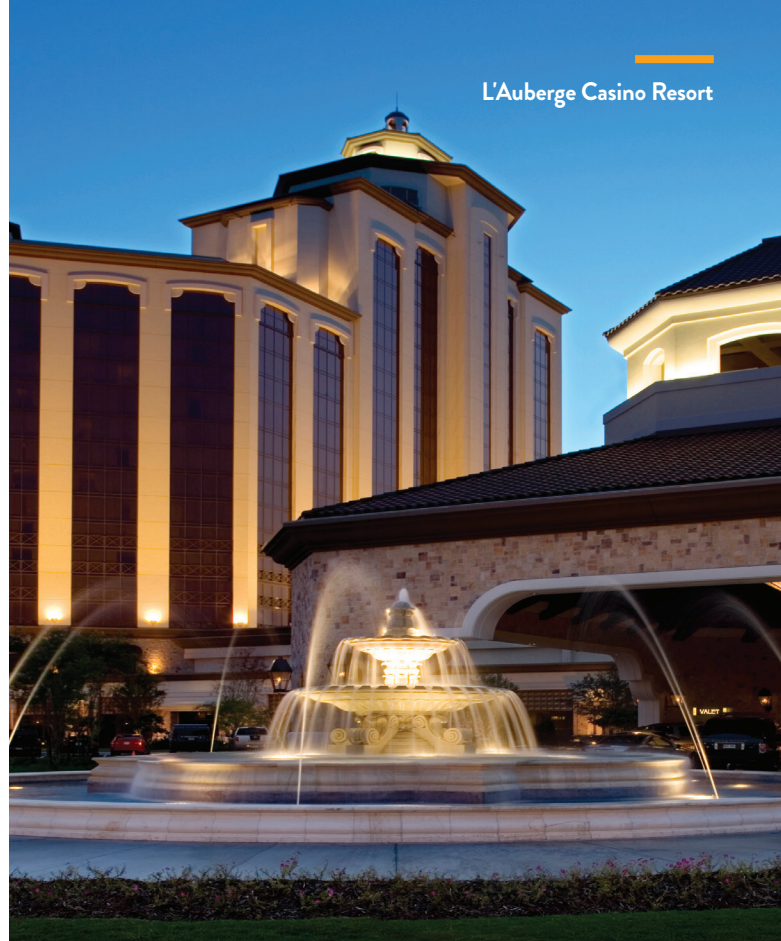
DELTA DOWNS RACETRACK CASINO & HOTEL

When the weather turns to a brisk, cool, temperature, it's finally Thoroughbred Racing Season at Delta Downs starting in October through the fall and winter seasons with the thundering sounds of horses racing weekly Wednesdays – Saturdays. For a sweeping view of the track, the panoramic windows at Rosewater Grill & Tavern will ensure that you won't miss a thing while savoring wine, cocktails, and delicious steaks and Louisiana favorites. For football season, Tin Lizard is your home for gamedays with sports betting promotions. Delta is also promoting The Suite Life for events happening at NRG Stadium in Houston, with passes being given to lucky patrons for most of the biggest events coming to the venue. In addition to racing and dining, Delta Downs has a slot selection with weekly updates.

GOLDEN NUGGET LAKE CHARLES

Golden Nugget goes beyond gaming, boasting a wide range of amenities and activities to cater to diverse interests. Its exquisite restaurants offer a delectable culinary journey, showcasing a variety of cuisines. From fine dining steakhouses to casual eateries, guests can indulge in a gastronomic adventure like no other. This fall and winter, for those seeking relaxation and tranquility, the resort's luxurious spa and salon provide an oasis of serenity. Pampering treatments, massages, and beauty services offer the perfect escape from the fast-paced excitement of the casino floor. From high energy dancing in Blue Martini to music in Rush Lounge or top entertainment in the event center, there's always a diverse line up. Golden Nugget also just added pickleball courts, and sports fans will love DraftKings Sportsbook which is the largest sportsbook in Louisiana.

“If you are looking for a first-rate casino getaway, you will hit the jackpot when you book your next stay in Southwest Louisiana.”



HORSESHOE CASINO & HOTEL

Situated in the heart of Southwest Louisiana, Horseshoe Casino boasts a stunning waterfront view of the cityscape of Lake Charles, and it offers a vast array of gaming options to suit every player's preference. Beyond the casino floor and the state-of-the-art Caesars Sportsbook, the Horseshoe Casino features a host of entertainment and dining options with the award-winning Brew Brothers. Located on the casino floor, Brew Brothers is the ideal place to refuel for lunch or dinner. Classic pub favorites from the expertly curated menu are sure to hit the spot while you take in the game. To satisfy your pizza craving, Slice Pizzeria & Pasta is fresh, hot, and made to order, and the Horseshoe also includes 7 Seven Noodle Bar. The all-new sophisticated Four Suites Bar is the perfect way to immerse yourself in all the luxuries of this gorgeous modern bar, complete with handcrafted cocktails and the latest bar top video poker. This fall, the Gordon Ramsay Steak will be the first of its kind in Louisiana.

L'AUBERGE CASINO RESORT

Tucked away on the other side of L'Auberge's rolling golf greens, the entry way is grand with an elegant water fountain and valet parking ready to whisk you away into an unforgettable stay. Warm up at the L Bar with a creative cocktail or enjoy the glow of the fireplace at Ember for appetizers and drinks or exquisite dinner options. Pure bliss is waiting in the spa, offering relaxing massage therapy, body treatments and salon services. You can choose from a variety of other restaurants including Asia, Barstool Sportsbook, Drago's, and Daiquiris & Dogs. Johnny Sánchez is the newest addition to dining selections.

Embodying the warmth of traditional Mexican cooking, this restaurant bridges traditional Mexican food with a cutting-edge, modern approach to dining.



Scan the QR code or go to
[VisitLakeCharles.org/casinos](https://www.visitlakecharles.org/casinos)
 to learn more about area resorts.

THE ADVENTURES NEVER END!

As you approach the bright, orange building with an asymmetrical design, it is clear that Lake Area Adventures has bold and creative experiences in store! The goal is to create multifaceted fun for families, and there is nothing quite like this in the entire state. Not only can everyone enjoy a 10,000 square foot airpark, rock climbing wall, swimming pool, ropes course, and gaming for all ages – including one of only 70 Omni VR Arenas in the country, but options for the outdoor adventurer are also in abundance. We're talking - kayak and pontoon rentals, boat tours and many other fun activities along the beaches of Southwest Louisiana.

Also on site, The Terrace Restaurant is a charming (and delicious) surprise to most who haven't visited the facility. The outdoor side entrance leads to an expansive patio area with colorful seating and outdoor lights. The Terrace features award-winning dishes with local flavors and elevated



cuisine by Executive Chef Amanda Cusey. There is music always playing, cold drinks flowing, creative dishes, homemade ice cream with eccentric flavors, and the first Lake Area Adventures boat is a funky add-on for outdoor seating with indoor seating available for those who want to be inside the family fun center. At The Terrace, Chef Amanda Cusey uses her international training to masterfully blend her Italian flair with local flavors and fresh herbs, creating a one-of-a-kind elevated casual experience for restaurant guests.

“The only limit on Chef Amanda’s special dishes is her imagination, and we haven’t seen those limits yet. She uses locally sourced fresh ingredients to create magic,” said Heather Hidalgo, director of marketing and business development.

Waterways are such an integral part of diving into the destination. Lake Area Adventures creates customized

experiences for what explorers want to see and do. Examples range from guiding kayakers for customized 20-mile tours or setting up a picnic on a remote beach and bringing a couple on a boat ride to the beach for a romantic date.

“We want people to experience the beauty of Southwest Louisiana in the way that best suits them,” said Tim Robles, general manager.

Future plans include a permanent lakefront watercraft location. Presently, Lake Area Adventures has a temporary rental location where beach goers can rent kayaks. With lakefront development well underway near downtown Lake Charles, the prospect of a pier will open up a world of new opportunities.

For more information on adventures to be had in Southwest Louisiana, go to LakeAreaAdventures.com.



**CHEF
AMANDA
CUSEY**

“

The only limit on Chef Amanda’s special dishes is her imagination, and we haven’t seen those limits yet. She uses locally sourced fresh ingredients to create magic.

”



FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Soulful sounds, colorful lights from the Ferris wheel, cotton candy, and the excitement of dancing the night away. The calendar is action-packed with a variety of fun along with culinary delights and savory sips from wine to bourbon and local brews. This is just a sampling of what's in store. For holiday events, check out p. 20, or Mardi Gras festivities on p. 22, and scan the QR code for a full calendar including exhibits and nightlife. In addition, check out home games at McNeese State University's Cowboy Stadium on Sept. 7 and 30, Oct. 21 and 28, and Nov. 11.



Sept. 1

The Frontmen
Golden Nugget Lake Charles

Sept. 3

Labor Day Weekend,
All White Party
Lake Charles Civic Center

Sept. 9

Lainey Wilson
Golden Nugget Lake Charles

Sept. 14-17

Louisiana Food &
Wine Festival
Various Locations

Sept. 16

Keith Frank & the
Soileau Zydeco Band
Crying Eagle Brewing
Company

Sept. 29

The Righteous Brothers
Golden Nugget Lake Charles

Sept. 30

Almosta Ranch Fall Festival
Almosta Ranch, Sulphur

Oct. 5

Legacy Reunion:
Earth, Wind, and Fire
Rosa Hart Theatre,
Lake Charles Civic Center

Oct. 5-8

Cal-Cam Fair
West Cal Arena, Sulphur

Oct. 7

Patti LaBelle
Golden Nugget Lake Charles

Oct. 14

Chuck Fest
Downtown Lake Charles

Oct. 15

Marcia Ball Concert
Rosa Hart Theatre

Oct. 21

Stars & Stripes in the Park
Classic Car Show
Heritage Square, Sulphur

Oct. 26

Tasting on the Terrace
L'Auberge Casino Resort

Oct. 26

Disney on Ice:
Find Your Hero
Lake Charles Civic Center

Oct. 28

Downtown Candy Crawl
Downtown Lake Charles

Nov. 4

Living History
Cemetery Tour
Various Cemeteries

Nov. 4

Night Ranger
Delta Downs Racetrack
Casino & Hotel, Vinton

Nov. 11

Veteran's Day
Avenue of Flags
Orange Grove Graceland
Cemetery

Nov. 11

Kids Create Family Arts Fest
Downtown Lake Charles

Dec. 2

Smoke & Barrel:
A Celebration of Fine
Bourbon, BBQ, & Whiskey
Calcasieu Parish
Courthouse Lawn



Scan the QR code or go to
[VisitLakeCharles.org/events](https://www.visitlakecharles.org/events)
for a full list of events in
the Lake Charles area.



Past, Present & Preservation: Experience the Black Creole Heritage of Lake Charles First-Hand



The essence of Southwest Louisiana's culture is steeped in timeless traditions and artistic expressions. The Black and Creole community in Lake Charles enriches the region's artistic history, passing down their blended lineage through vibrant art, soulful melodies, and mouthwatering Creole cuisine. From high-energy Mardi Gras parades to dedicated districts, every moment is a celebration of joy and pride. Embrace the past and present as you savor the region's unique offerings, preserving their extraordinary stories for generations to come. This is how you can experience Lake Charles' Black and Creole heritage firsthand:

Black Heritage Festival of Louisiana

For nearly 40 years, the Black Heritage Festival of Louisiana is a multi-day celebration of traditions that enlighten, encourage and educate the Black and Creole community through festive events and arts like pageants, soul food cook-offs, awards ceremonies, and more. The next festival is scheduled for March 7-10, 2024.

Black Heritage Gallery

Located inside the 1911 Historic City Hall & District in downtown Lake Charles, the Black Heritage Gallery is where you can explore rotating exhibits with diverse art forms curated by Black artists. Preserving the heritage of Black Creole communities is a labor of love for historians and local organizations.

Guillory's Famous Foods

The Guillory family's Famous Foods in Lake Charles is a culinary gem, offering Creole favorites like barbecue, popcorn balls, boudin, and their specialty: soft and spicy cracklin. Rooted in culture, faith, and family, this cherished generational establishment holds a special place in the hearts of locals.

Leonard's Food Quarters

Leonard's Food Quarters has been a foodie fixture in Lake Charles for three generations and more than 30 years. Their menu consists of Louisiana must-haves and Southern staples, including po'boys, étouffée, smothered meats, fried fish, and old-school breakfast items. Leonard's captures the essence of the region's authentic heritage through its delectable flavors.

Nellie Lutcher's Musical Legacy & Cultural District

Nellie Lutcher, a trailblazing jazz and R&B singer from Lake Charles, possessed a soulful voice that broke barriers during segregation. Her impactful contributions led to the recognition of a cultural district in 2016, and new developments are set to showcase her vibrant legacy with Nellie Lutcher Memorial Park opening this fall.

Krewe of Omega Mardi Gras

Founded by influential Black and Creole community leaders, Lake Charles' iconic Krewe of Omega Mardi Gras Parade has been a long-standing celebration in predominantly Black and Creole neighborhoods for over half a century. This event is traditionally held on the Saturday before Fat Tuesday.

A Creole Commitment & Contribution to Preserve Lake Charles' Rich History of Zydeco Music & It's Evolution



“

“I have made it my goal to modernize Zydeco so that it may proliferate for future generations. By using popular music concepts in my music, it keeps our music fresh and evergreen. I’m a life student of Creole heritage, and a significant part of that is sharing my lineage through the accordion.”

- Sean Ardoin

”

Sean Ardoin

Southwest Louisiana's authentic culture is a system of blended roots that are held together through Cajun and Creole traditions like food, music, parties and strong family ties. You can hear a deep dose of Zydeco melodies somewhere in-between it all. Zydeco music is often mistaken for Cajun music because they share a prominent instrument, the accordion. But the distinct and infused sounds of Zydeco music derive from accordions, washboards, rocking rhythms, drums and bass, all the soulful rhythms of Black Creole folk.

This style of music has significant ties to the Black Creole American communities of Southwest Louisiana. The genre's humble beginnings proves that Amédé Ardoin was Louisiana's first Black Creole accordion artist to record. From there, the Lake Charles legacy of Zydeco gets deeper by the decade, starting with Amédé:

(1898 – 1942) AMÉDÉ ARDOIN

- First Louisiana Creole accordion artist to record.
- Considered the "Father of Modern Cajun and Creole Music."
- His accordion and vocal melodies are the standard songbook for Cajun and Zydeco music.

(1898 – PRESENT) THE ARDOIN FAMILY

- Amédé's younger cousin, Bois Sec Ardoin, was one of the best-known practitioners of the state's rural Creole sound for six decades.
- Lawrence "Black" Ardoin, as well as Sean and Chris Ardoin been part of this rich, musical legacy.
- Sean Ardoin, a fourth generation Creole accordionist, founded the Kreole Hall of Fame and achieved a lifelong career in music with four Grammy nominations.

(1925 - 1987) CLIFTON CHENIER

- Chenier is still considered the "King of Zydeco" to many, although he's admitted to Amédé Ardoin's influences on his music.
- Chenier recorded his first record at Lake Charles radio station, KAOK-AM, which was later picked up by a major record company in Los Angeles.
- His records included "Boppin the Rock" and "Ai 'Tite Fille" (Hey Little Girl). Some were played at Ball's Auditorium, which was a stop along the Chitlin' Circuit.

(1929) QUEEN IDA

- Born to a musical family of Creole rice farmers in Lake Charles, her first language was Creole.
- In 1979, Queen Ida, Ida Lewis Guillory, was nominated for a Bay Area Music Award.

- She continued recording and touring through the '80s. In 1988, Queen Ida toured Japan, becoming the first Zydeco artist to do so. She toured Africa the following year for the State Department, and in 1990, went to Australia and New Zealand.
- Queen Ida has appeared in one feature film, "Rumblefish," and a documentary about Louisiana music, J'ai Ête au Bal.
- She has also performed on television shows ranging from Austin City Limits to Saturday Night Live. Queen Ida won a Grammy award in 1982.
- She was honored with a National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship award in 2009.

(1930 - 2001) WILSON ANTHONY "BOOZOO" CHAVIS

- Chavis was a prolific writer of Zydeco songs. Many of his songs have become standards of the modern Zydeco repertoire.
- Boozoo was crowned "The King of Zydeco" in New Orleans in the 1990s. His son, Charles, was a member of his band at the time.
- For many years, the family would host a Boozoo Labor Day Zydeco Festival in Lake Charles.

(1938-1998) ROCKIN' SIDNEY SIMIEN

- Simien released "My Toot Toot" in 1985, which is one of the most successful Zydeco hits of all-time, which awarded him a Grammy.
- He purchased KAOK-AM Radio station, and several of his songs have become Zydeco staples, covered regularly by other bands.



"Zydeco is the gumbo of music. If you're not familiar with genre, I would describe it as a mixture of French and African influences of our culture. Over the years, I've heard touches of funk, soul, R&B, country, and rock and roll. It's a fusion of sounds, just like our culture. You can't put Zydeco music in a box. You can't even put it on paper. It's something that you have experience yourself to really understand it."
- Rusty Metoyer



(PRESENT DAY) LAKE CHARLES ZYDECO BANDS

- Sean Ardoin
- Chris Ardoin
- Rusty Metoyer & The Zydeco Krush
- Brandon Ledet & the Creole Touch
- Zydepokes featuring Kaleb Leday, created by McNeese State University
- Mason Trail and Zydeco Rhythm
- Deuce Jacko

The history and timeline of Zydeco music in Lake Charles, LA, have woven a colorful tapestry of sound and culture. From its humble beginnings to its national acclaim, Zydeco's legacy lives on through the passionate musicians and enthusiastic audiences who continue to groove to its infectious rhythms.



BRANDON
LEDET



Scan the QR code to listen to the Louisiana's Playground podcast interview with Brandon Ledet.

HAUNTED HISTORY OF LAKE CHARLES

Myths, Mysteries, and Other Eerie Adventures

Where there is history, there are hauntings. In Southwest Louisiana, the line between everyday reality and supernatural auras blurs after sunset. It's a region filled with haunted tales and unsolved mysteries, but it all adds to Lake Charles' dynamic history. Delve into the unexplained experiences that await the intrepid during the Halloween season or visit the area for seemingly sinister sites that are offered year-round. With a focus on facts, we've uncovered the fascinating stories behind the myths and mysteries that have lingered in the lands of Lake Charles and the minds of its inquisitive inhabitants. This piece of haunted history explores the depths of the city's enigmatic past with an analytical eye.



HAUNTED SITES

THE WOMAN IN WHITE RESTING ALONG THE LAKEFRONT PROMENADE

Locations: Rosa Hart Theatre, Lake Charles Civic Center & Shell Beach Drive

Spiritual Presence: "The Woman in White"

Mystery: "The Woman in White" appears at weddings, art shows, and more events held at the locations along the lakefront and Shell Beach Drive. A spectral lady in white, possibly a jilted bride, roams the area. Late-night walkers encounter ghostly figures, leaving them with a sense of sorrow and curiosity.

Myth: In the early 1900s, a sorrowful woman lost her lover, a Gerstner pilot, during World War I, and she committed suicide by jumping off a pier and drowning herself in Lake Charles.

"THE GATEKEEPER" PROWLING BIG WOODS CEMETERY

Address: 3925 Big Woods Cemetery Road in Vinton

Spiritual Presence: "The Gatekeeper"

Mystery: Dark shadow in loose form of a man near the main cemetery gate. Visitors have reported being chased away from the property by a vintage truck and return to their cars to find failed car engines.

Myth: This cemetery has a long history of burials since the early 1800's, and over the years, the Antioch Cemetery was added to the property. Oral legends from locals assume that the paranormal spirits do not want more burials on the lands, hence the gatekeeping.

CALCASIEU COURTHOUSE IS HOME TO THE HAUNTINGS OF TONI JO HENRY

Address: 1000 Ryan Street in Downtown Lake Charles

Spiritual Presence: Toni Jo Henry

Mystery: Locals have experienced unexplainable locked doors and misplaced items, as well as screams, footsteps, scents of her perfume and burning hair.

Myth: Toni Jo Henry and her husband, Claude "Cowboy" Henry, were hitchhiking after Toni Jo helped him escape prison. While on the run, the couple was picked up by Joseph P. Calloway and later tortured and murdered him. This led to Toni Jo's execution at the Calcasieu Courthouse on Nov. 28, 1942, where the haunting of Toni Jo Henry considered one of Lake Charles' most popular, most accurate ghost stories. She was the only woman in Louisiana to be electrocuted by chair, and there are public records available that support this myth.

HALLOWEEN ADVENTURES

THE LOST HOLLOWES

Address: 3401 Derek Drive in Lake Charles

Dates: Fridays & Saturdays, Sept. 29 - Oct. 28 + Oct. 31

Thrill-seekers, you're in for a trembling treat at The Lost Hollowes. This haunted house tests your courage and sanity, as you navigate through chilling scenes and face sinister creatures lurking in the shadows. This is not your typical haunted house, as their longest trail can take up to 45 minutes to complete. TheLostHollowes.com

LIVING HISTORY CEMETERY TOUR

Address: Various Cemeteries in Lake Charles

Date: Nov. 4

If you're a history buff or a cosplay enthusiast, take a guided tour through time and terror on the Living History Cemetery Tour. You'll trek through historic graveyards on this walkable journey, listening to the captivating tales of the past. It's been said that restless spirits still roam the grounds, making for an eerie and enlightening evening on foot.

SPIRIT GUIDES OF LAKE CHARLES

YouTube Channel: @SpiritGuidesLC

Website: SpiritGuidesLC.com

Channel your inner ghostbuster with Spirit Guides of Lake Charles, where you'll watch a team of investigators embark on a journey to discover paranormal activity in some of Lake Charles' leisure locations, like Panorama Music House and Shell Beach Drive. This YouTube series is a spine-chilling experience wrapped in historic haunts and virtual frights. Spirit Guides of Lake Charles will kick off season three of their show with a launch party on Friday, Oct. 13 and the first episode airs on Saturday, Oct. 21. New episodes will be released every two weeks until the season ends.

Happy Hauntings, Yall!



HOLIDAY EVENTS & SHOPPING

Snow, fireworks, holiday cheer, performing arts, and shopping! Spending the holidays in Southwest Louisiana is the perfect way to put a bright, red bow on the year. Performing arts like the traditional Nutcracker ballet or musical performances warm the heart, and festivals like Christmas Under the Oaks, where it “snows” every year, or Lake Charles’ Light Up the Lake Festival with fireworks glittering over the lake, are area traditions. These events bring communities together to celebrate the most wonderful time of the year with artisans, live music, and festive activities.



Scan the QR code or go to
VisitLakeCharles.org/events/christmas
for a full list of holiday events
in the Lake Charles area.



Holiday Events

Nov. 17-19

Mistletoe & Moss
Shopping Event
Lake Charles Civic Center

Nov. 25

Light Up the Lake
Christmas Festival
Lake Charles Civic Center
Arcade Amphitheater

Nov. 25

Holiday Art Market
Location TBD

Nov. 30

Holiday House Preview Party
Brimstone Museum Complex,
Sulphur

Dec. 1-2

Christmas Under the Oaks
Brimstone Museum Complex,
Sulphur

Dec. 1-2

Bro. Bubba's Back Porch
Christmas Comedy &
Dinner Show
West Cal Event Center,
Sulphur

Dec. 7-9

The Nutcracker
Lake Charles Civic Center

Dec. 8

Louisiana Choral Foundation
Masterworks Chorale
Christmas Concert
First United Methodist Church,
Lake Charles

Dec. 9-10

Christmas in Choupique
Barn at Bayou Oaks, Sulphur

Dec. 10

Louisiana Choral Foundation
Masterworks Chorale
Christmas Concert
Immaculate Conception
Church, Sulphur

Dec. 11

Dr. Francis G. Bulber Youth
Orchestra Christmas Concert
Tritico Theater, Lake Charles

Dec. 17

The Colors of Christmas
Trinity Baptist Church,
Lake Charles

Holiday Shopping

Jump into the Christmas spirit with shopping adventures in Louisiana's Playground! Several boutiques and locally-owned businesses have what you need to impress your loved one whether they are into antiques, fashion, art, spices, or brews and spirits!

Downtown Shopping:

- Mia's Downtown
- Olive & Indigo
- Candice Alexander Art Studio
- Bux Cajun Market
- Panorama Music Exchange
- Recent Relics
- Iron Shop Provisions
- Bespoke Hat Shop

Midtown Boutiques:

- Imperial Calcasieu Museum, Art Boutique
- Cruella's
- Not Just Christmas
- Mimosas's

Sulphur Boutiques:

- Etie's A Children's Shoppe
- Polished Peasant
- Lydia & Lavender
- Flock of Five Art Emporium

Spices, Brews & Spirits:

- Leonard's Food Quarters
- Acadian Coffee Roaster
- Bayou Rum Distillery
- Crying Eagle Brewing
- Yellowfin Vodka

Mardi Gras in Southwest Louisiana

**Lake Charles is the Place to
be on Mardi Gras Weekend!
Feb. 9-13**

Mardi Gras weekend is a vibrant celebration that captures the essence of the region's rich cultural heritage. The festivities in Lake Charles offer an unforgettable experience, attracting visitors from far and wide to join in the revelry. As the floats wind their way through the streets of Lake Charles, the air is filled with excitement and anticipation, and the crowds enthusiastically cheer on the participants. The first parade kicks off on Friday, Feb. 9 with the Merchants' Parade, and the parades roll through Fat Tuesday!

Mardi Gras is known for its elaborate masks and costumes, and in Lake Charles, the revelers go all out in their attire. People can witness a spectacle of Mardi Gras colors of purple, green, and gold, feathers, sequins, and beads adorning the streets as people participate in the spirit of the event. From elegant masquerade masks to whimsical and outrageous outfits, the creativity and diversity of costumes add to the allure of Mardi Gras in Lake Charles. The best place to see elaborate costumes is at the Royal Gala, on Feb. 12, and this is the only place in Louisiana where you can see royalty from all krewes in one place.

Mardi Gras in Lake Charles, Louisiana, is an electrifying celebration of Cajun and Creole cultures and heritage. With its enchanting parades, lively music, vibrant costumes, and warm hospitality, the city welcomes visitors to revel in the essence of this festive occasion. Whether you are a first-time visitor or a seasoned attendee, the Mardi Gras in Lake Charles promises an unforgettable experience filled with fun, camaraderie, and the distinctive flavors of the Southwest Louisiana Carnival.

Another highlight of Mardi Gras in Lake Charles is the king cake, a traditional dessert with deep-rooted symbolism. Adorned with purple, green, and gold sugar, these cakes hide a small plastic baby inside, representing luck and prosperity. Many restaurants and bars throughout Southwest Louisiana have king cake inspired specialty cocktails, dishes, and desserts throughout the season!





Schedule of Events

Saturday, Jan. 6

Twelfth Night

Friday, Feb. 9

Merchants' Parade

Saturday, Feb. 10

Krewe of Omega Parade

Krewe of Barkus Parade

Gumbo Cookoff

Sunday, Feb. 11

Children's Day Activities

Mardi Gras Children's Parade

Monday, Feb. 12

Royal Gala

Fat Tuesday, Feb. 13

Mardi Gras Block Party

Mardi Gras In the ZONE

Motor Gras Parade

Jeeps on Parade

Second Line Stroll

Krewes of Imperial Calcasieu Parade



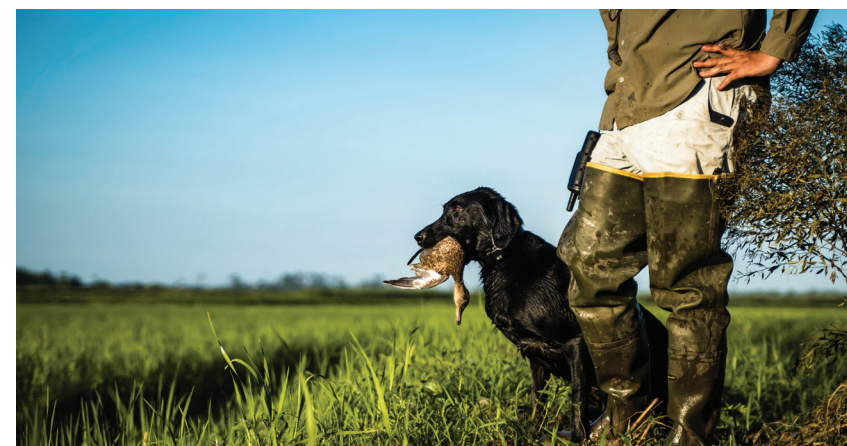
Scan the QR code or go to
SWLAMardiGras.com for more
festivities and parade routes.

Explore Natural Wonders Along the Creole Nature Trail





Grosse Savanne Lodge



The feeling of reconnecting with nature is calming and cleansing to the soul. The smell of the flowers, the sight of the variegated colors of the petals, the feeling of the wind blowing through the tall grass or the sounds of the waves crashing along the shore of Gulf beaches – these are the memories that are imprinted on anyone who takes the time to truly appreciate the natural wonders found along the Creole Nature Trail.

With its diverse array of wildlife, picturesque landscapes, and cultural treasures, the Creole Nature Trail offers a remarkable adventure for anyone seeking an authentic connection with nature. Whether it's birdwatching at sunrise, exploring vast marshlands, or enjoying the warmth of Louisiana hospitality, the Creole Nature Trail is a must-visit destination for nature lovers and those looking to be inspired by the beauty and wonder of the great outdoors.

The trail winds through a mosaic of marshlands, prairies, and coastal shores, providing a sanctuary for an abundance of wildlife and plant species. The area's diverse habitats make it an excellent destination for nature enthusiasts, birdwatchers, and outdoor adventurers alike. Visitors can immerse themselves in the captivating landscape and encounter wildlife such as alligators, migratory birds, turtles, and a myriad of other fascinating creatures.

For an overview of the trail, stop in and visit with knowledgeable adventure guides at Creole Nature Trail Adventure Point!

Attractions Along the Way:

- Intracoastal Park
- Blue Horizon Seafood
- Brown's Grocery in Hackberry
- Blue Goose Trail
- Wetland Walkway
- Holly Beach
- Anchor's Up Grill
- Rutherford Beach
- Pintail Wildlife Drive
- Cameron Prairie NWR Visitors Center
- Chesson's Grocery
- Fishing and Hunting Guides



CHUCK EATS RESTAURANT WEEK

**SAVE THE DATE
JANUARY 19-28, 2024**

Chuck Eats Restaurant Week, January 19-28, 2024, will feature 10 days of food specials served at local restaurants across Southwest Louisiana. This region is known for its iconic Cajun and Creole food scene and fresh seafood year-round, but Chucks Eats Restaurant Week will give food lovers a chance to dine on a dime and save! It's the hungry holiday you've been waiting for.



Scan the QR code or go to
ChuckEats.org for more
information.

Stay & Play

in Louisiana's Playground

A wide variety of places to stay is at your fingertips in Southwest Louisiana. There are upscale, recently remodeled accommodations as well as affordable places to overnight throughout the area in addition to more nontraditional selections. Luxurious casino resorts, plush with amenities, music, dining, and fireside chats, offer an

assortment of room options to fit your style. Or, stay connected to nature and under-the-stars at Sam Houston Jones State Park with Tentrr for glamping or rent a new cabin with all the creature comforts of home. Vacation rentals are also prevalent with an array of choices, or if you're traveling through with an RV, we have you covered there too!

Hotels • Vacation Rentals • Casino Resorts • RV Parks • Cabins • Camping



Prien Lake Park



Scan the QR code or go to
VisitLakeCharles.org/stay
to check out places to stay in
Southwest Louisiana.



VISIT **LAKE CHARLES**

LOUISIANA'S PLAYGROUND



#VisitLakeCharles #LouisianasPlayground

VisitLakeCharles.org