

# TOURISM WORKS

## for SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

LAKE CHARLES/SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA  
CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

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## SOUTHWEST LA CVB SUPPORTS CALCASIEU RIVER BRIDGE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION



Rendering of a modern technology wide span bridge

The Honorable John Bel Edwards  
Governor, State of Louisiana  
900 North 3rd Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dr. Shawn Wilson  
Secretary, Department of  
Transportation and Development  
PO Box 94245  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9245

RE: Interstate 10 (I-10)  
Calcasieu River Bridge

Gentlemen,

I am writing today to express the support of the Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana CVB board of directors for the I-10 Calcasieu River Bridge Task Force recommendation to replace our bridge at the earliest moment in time.

Upgrading infrastructure to relieve congestion is important for our citizens and our visitors. Replacing an interstate bridge to avoid failure or service interruption is critical. I-10 provides the primary east/west link in the Interstate Highway System across our great nation. Our state's leg of I-10 is the energy corridor of the United States! This bridge is crucial to our state and country, yet it is in critical condition.

Many years have been spent studying how to best replace the bridge, but the bottom line is that the state does not currently have the funding in place to do it and will not have the funds available in the foreseeable future. The Task Force recommendation offers the potential to achieve the goal of

a new bridge with minimum or potentially zero public funds.

There are few, if any, decisions more critical to our state's infrastructure and economic development than those related to the replacement of the I-10 Calcasieu River Bridge. Therefore, it is the desire of the Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana CVB to join you and many other partners in support of this important and critical transportation project. The time to act is now!!

Sincerely yours,



Shelley Johnson, CDME, LCTP  
Executive Director

## LHSAA — SHOOTING HOOPS FOR THE ECONOMY



The 2019 Louisiana High School Athletic Association (LHSAA) Allstate Sugar Bowl Marsh Madness Boys' Basketball State Championship Tournament was recently held at the Burton Coliseum Complex, March 4-9. The attendance for the week topped 33,600. This year was the 6th year in a row that the area has hosted the boys' championship tournament.

The LC/SWLA CVB and the Calcasieu Parish Policy Jury work closely with

LHSAA staff to secure the event and meet the needs of the tournament, as well as strive to exceed expectations of all involved. Area volunteers, including dedicated team hosts who provide the team with all they need to have a comfortable stay in SWLA, are the key to the success of the event.

Over the years, many team hosts have gotten to know the coaches and team members, and they have bonded to the point that they have genuine relationships. As Dirk Ricks, head coach for the Jehovah-Jireh school stated in the American Press story by Warren Arceneaux this year about team host Linda Clayton: "She is truly an amazing person. All of our kids love her. Our fans love her."

In addition to the event being memorable for all involved, it is also an economic driver. The tournament generated an estimated \$950,000 for the local economy, and this event coupled with the LHSAA Fastpitch tournament in April and LHSAA Baseball State Championships in May mean big business through sports for Southwest Louisiana, the Youth Sports Capital of Louisiana.



## MARDI GRAS MEDIA TOUR



Every year, the LC/SWLA CVB invites travel media to experience the cultural events surrounding Mardi Gras in Southwest Louisiana as well as a complete taste of what their readers can expect when planning a trip to Southwest Louisiana. This season, nine travel writers from around the world

were in the area, sharing in Southwest Louisiana's food, music and festivities. In 2018, the free media coverage produced by writers to the area for the year reached \$7.6 million of exposure for Southwest Louisiana, due to public relations efforts of the bureau.

Here is a snapshot of the major recent articles resulting from LC/SWLA CVB pitching story ideas and hosting writers.

**Forbes.com:** Festive Dishes and Drinks to Get in the Spirit of Mardi Gras  
**Philadelphia Sun Newspaper:** Craft a Classic Experience in Southwest Louisiana

**Taste of the South:** 10 Must-Try Meat & Threes

**Southern Cast Iron:** Acadiana Uncovered

**USAToday Network:** America's Favorite Drive: National Scenic Byways

**Houston Chronicle:** Getting to Know the Lake Charles Dining Scene

Read these articles and more at [www.visitlakecharles.org/stories](http://www.visitlakecharles.org/stories)



## NEW & IMPROVED

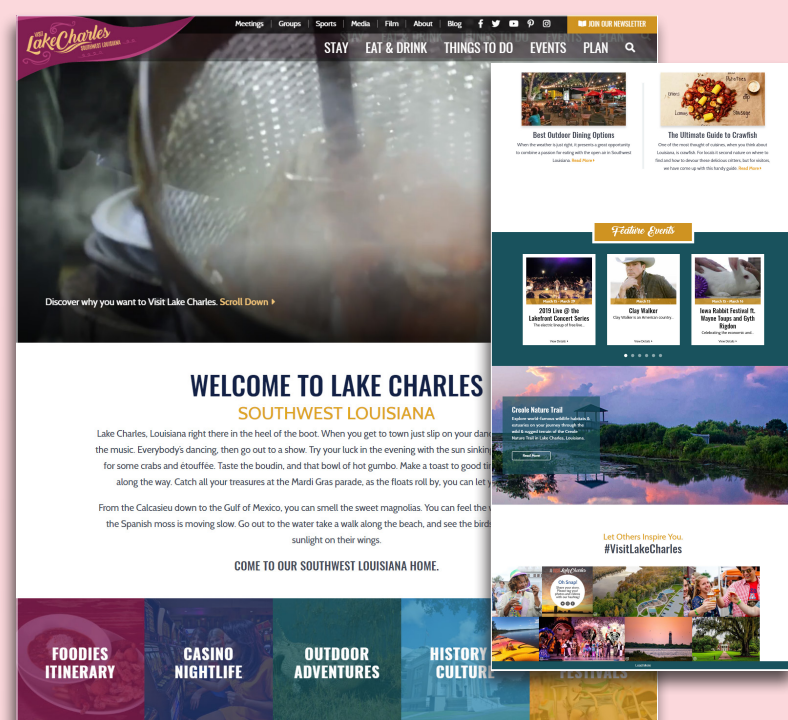
The LC/SWLA CVB recently launched its new website on January 24, prior to Mardi Gras season, a traditionally high traffic time for [VisitLakeCharles.org](http://VisitLakeCharles.org). When travelers across the country were surveyed about their destination selection process, 65.5% stated word-of-mouth from relatives and friends had an impact. Regarding media, 40.6% used online sources, 27.5% indicated social media as a resource, and 21.8% used offline media for inspiration. With those trends in mind for destination selection, having a website that is user-friendly and optimized for search is paramount to be visible and attractive to travelers who are looking for destinations online.

The team worked diligently last year on concepts with the user

experience as the top priority, and the new website design features bold titles, images, videos and strategies to keep visitors engaged. Actual visitors' photos can also be found on the website through their use of #VisitLakeCharles, making the site more interesting for planners.

Early indications are that the website is successfully keeping visitors on the site for longer periods of time, and they are interacting more with the content as the flow of information is easier to navigate.

Check out [VisitLakeCharles.org](http://VisitLakeCharles.org) and all the social channels for inspiration and be sure to invite your friends and family to discover the best of what Southwest Louisiana has to offer.



1205 N. Lakeshore Drive, Lake Charles, LA

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1-800-456-SWLA | [www.visitlakecharles.org](http://www.visitlakecharles.org)  
Photos courtesy of LindseyJanies.com, USA Boxing & Louisiana Travel Assoc.