

TOURISM WORKS

for SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

LAKE CHARLES/SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA
CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

▶ VISITLAKECHARLES.ORG



TOURISM & THE CREOLE NATURE TRAIL ALL-AMERICAN ROAD

How did the Creole Nature Trail become the top attraction it is today?

This is the story of how the Creole Nature Trail became a “destination unto itself” as opposed to just an everyday road that runs along the breathtaking landscapes of Southwest Louisiana. The Creole Nature Trail (CNT) began as a concept to encourage visitors to get off the interstate. A local sportsman and outdoor writer named Jim Lester is credited with the original idea for the trail. Since 1975, the trail has blossomed into an incredible draw for the area, bringing in an estimated 300,000 people every year with an international audience spanning Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, Germany, France, China, and India. In fact, the Creole Nature Trail app is available in multiple languages, and the trail is a cornerstone attraction for Southwest Louisiana.



1975 – A Trail is Born!

The original Creole Nature Trail Committee was comprised of seven members, including representation from the Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury and the Cameron Parish Police Jury. In 1975, Governor Edwin W. Edwards signed into law House Bill No. 128, creating the Creole Nature Trail.

1993 – The Trail Became a State Scenic Byway

The Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau and members of the Cameron Parish Tourist Commission worked to have the Creole Nature Trail designated as a State Scenic Byway, adding a section of highway to the original trail, stretching from Holly Beach west to the Texas border.



1996 – Home to a National Scenic Byway

Through the diligent efforts of the Creole Nature Trail District and its partners such as the Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Calcasieu and Cameron Police Juries and the National Wildlife Refuges located along the trail, the byway became one of the first 14 National Scenic Byways in the U.S. The trail applied for and received several grants to enhance opportunities for visitors through the FHWA's National Scenic Byway's competitive grant program.



2002 – Creole Nature Trail All-American Road

The Creole Nature Trail was officially designated as an All-American Road. Today, the byway is considered a key player and model byway for the National Scenic Byways Program.



2015 – Creole Nature Trail Adventure Point

The Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau invested in the community to build the Creole Nature Trail Adventure Point in Sulphur. Serving the visiting public as an attraction 7 days a week, the facility is also a satellite office for the bureau. This educational, immersive experience showcases the culture, food, music and outdoor adventures to be had in Southwest Louisiana and along Creole Nature Trail All-American Road, one of only 43 All-American Roads in the United States.

Creole Nature Trail Adventure Point is located at 2740 Ruth Street, south of the Sulphur/Creole Nature Trail, Exit 20 on Interstate 10. Hours of operation are Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Saturday-Sunday 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. For more information, go to www.visitlakecharles.org/AdventurePoint or call 337-502-4358.

DID YOU KNOW? Louisiana Culinary Trails



October 8-9, Louisiana Culinary Trails partners joined the Louisiana Travel Association and *Garden & Gun Magazine* in Nashville, Tennessee for a Louisiana-themed media reception and restaurant night. Eleven chefs from Louisiana destinations showcased local flavors to a crowd of 100 local Nashville media/influencers, plus editors and guests of *Garden & Gun*.



Chef Kevin Thompson & Justin Hodson serve Louisiana's best.

The following evening, Louisiana chefs prepared culinary creations in the kitchens of eleven of Nashville's hottest restaurants for the “Louisiana x Nashville Restaurant Night.” Representing the Seafood Sensation Trail, the CVB worked with **Chef Lyle Broussard** of L'Auberge and **Chef Kevin Thompson** of Golden Nugget to take over two restaurants in the Nashville area, Fin & Pearl and The Southern.

In addition to the Louisiana Culinary Trails, the LC/SWLA CVB works with local restaurants to host culinary writers and tour groups as well as promote the Top 20 Local Favorites restaurant contest. Check out www.VisitLakeCharles.org/SeafoodSensation to view video interviews with Chef Lyle and Chef Kevin.



A team of Louisiana chefs takes over Nashville's hottest restaurants.



Chef Lyle Broussard and Amanda Reeves of the CVB take to the airwaves.

BUILDING A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP IN YOUTH SPORTS

From the Desk of Shelley Johnson, CDME, LCTP, Executive Director



Courtesy of the American Press

As the Youth Sports Capital of Louisiana, Southwest Louisiana has benefited greatly from youth sports being an economic driver from softball, baseball and basketball to swimming and a myriad of other tournaments. The CVB has worked with community leaders to make sure

this is an integral part of the economic fabric and spirit of the community. The Louisiana High School Athletic Association is one example of how multiple tournaments bring bread-and-butter business to the community, increasing awareness of the destination and tourism. The total economic impact for three tournaments alone in the spring of 2018

totalled \$5,818,200. The Southwest Louisiana area hosts multiple events throughout the year with LHSAA as well as USSSA and other national organizations. For these tournaments, working with partners at the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury,

Sulphur Parks & Recreation, Ward 3 Recreation, and municipalities is critical.

Earlier this year, the Louisiana High School Athletic Association (LHSAA) awarded the LHSAA State Championship Swim Meet and The Allstate Sugar Bowl LHSAA Softball State Championships to the Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana area for two additional years. Historically, the area has hosted swim for 12 years and softball for 18.

Building on success, the LC/SWLA recently spearheaded an initiative with the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury, the City of Lake Charles and Ward 3 Recreation to launch an Artificial Turf Installation Project, covering the infield playing areas on 9 fields in Lake Charles, 4 at OD Johnson and 5 at the Power Center. The project is expected to break ground next month with the expectation of playing ball in the spring of 2019.

Baseball and softball tournaments currently taking place in the area have an estimated economic impact of \$20.8 million on Calcasieu Parish. With the increase in the number of turf fields in Southwest Louisiana, sports facilities will be able to remain competitive with other regions for this significant business.

This \$3.25 million-dollar turf project showcases the investment that can be made when community agencies and partners work together with an end-goal in mind.



Shelley Johnson

Shelley Johnson, CDME, LCTP
Executive Director



TOURISM BY THE NUMBERS

Visitor travel expenditures in Calcasieu Parish exceeded **\$732 million** in 2017, ranking 4th in the state of 64 parishes.

3%

Southwest Louisiana employed over **11,000** people in the tourism industry in 2017, an increase of 3%.



RECOGNITION

Lake Charles, LA, is one of 8 communities to be certified as a Louisiana Retirement Area. Criteria include considerations such as climate, demographics, tax structure, recreational areas and events at the state and local levels; local housing availability; public safety and crime index; employment and volunteer opportunities; healthcare and medical services; public transportation; recreational areas; and events.

LAKE CHARLES
SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA
CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

1205 N. Lakeshore Drive, Lake Charles, LA

1-800-456-SWLA | www.visitlakecharles.org

Photos courtesy of LindseyJanies.com & ParkerBrandUp.com.