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CATCH MARDI GRAS FEVER | EAT LIKE A LOCAL | TOUR THE SWAMP



Explore

THE NORTHSORE



Fall/Winter 2018-'19

24

LOVELY, DARK AND DEEP

Located on the eastern edge of St. Tammany Parish, on the Mississippi/Louisiana border, the Honey Island Swamp is a beautiful place of lore and history and wildlife. Boar, deer, gators and birds extend a Louisiana welcome to the tour boats plying murky waters to explore the swamp's many mysteries. The swamp probably isn't what you think. It's more. It's surprising. And it's at risk.



PHOTO: KEVIN GARRETT

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Festivals, street parties, antiques fairs, concerts on the lakefront ... There's always a reason to celebrate on the Northshore.

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ABOUT THE COVER

Northshore native, fiddler and singer Amanda Shaw turns up the joy at Pontchartrain Vineyards' Jazz'n the Vines, just one of the many concerts, festivals and feasts here on the Northshore.

PHOTO BY KEVIN GARRETT
KEVINGARRETT.COM

FROM THE EDITOR

Grace, spice, beauty & joie



You know the story: Pretty girl goes to a party feeling good about herself but finds the prom queen holding court and everyone's attention. Hey, she wants to shout, look at me. I'm over here!

We know the feeling. It isn't easy getting noticed when you're shining in the shadow of a big personality like New Orleans, across the lake and just a 45-minute drive away. But increasingly tourists are discovering St. Tammany Parish, known to locals as the Northshore, a scenic area long considered a getaway by city residents. We're not flashy, but we definitely have charms of our own.

For starters, there are 80,000 acres of wilderness preserve, natural beauty easily explored thanks to outfitters leading kayak tours and renting gear, and tour operators taking visitors deep into the pristine Honey Island Swamp. (Learn all about the swamp and its denizens in stories starting on page 24.) Charter boats get fishermen out on the water and the Tammany Trace is the perfect pedal, winding 31 miles through eclectic towns and towering green spaces.

The Northshore culinary scene is a draw in itself. Yes, there are mom-and-pop joints with soulful gumbo, spicy boiled crawfish and po-boys the size of a Honda Fit. But you'll also find chefs with creative takes on contemporary South-

ern and coastal fare and carefully curated wine lists. There are around 30 restaurants just within Covington's walkable historic district. And beer lovers can get their thrill at the source, touring and tasting their way through Abita Brewery and others.

The Northshore is a microcosm of all things Louisiana. You'll find the characteristic joie de vivre here, as we dance, feast and fest our way through the year. Mardi Gras is celebrated on the Northshore, albeit a slightly more family friendly version than that found across the lake. Music is in the air. There's art, and romance, and mystery, and adventure. Great shopping, a wide range of accommodations from quaint B&Bs to value-friendly chain properties to boutique hotels, and memory-making attractions.

We love a good party on the Northshore. And we really love visitors, especially the ones that have dallied in the past with New Orleans and are wondering what else is out there.

Hey, look at us. We're over here! And we can't wait to show you a good time.

Renée Kientz

A handwritten signature of Renée Kientz in black ink.

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Follow us on Facebook at
[ExploreLouisianaNorthshore](https://www.facebook.com/ExploreLouisianaNorthshore)
and on Instagram @lanorthshore

Zen Crook
plays piano at the
Southern Hotel.





JOIN THE PARTY

There's always something fun happening on the Northshore, from festivals and street parties to crawfish cook-offs and Mardi Gras. Take your vitamins, put on your dancing shoes and join us.

The Northshore planner

Head to LOUISIANANORTHSHORE.COM/EVENTS to find out more



OCT. 5-7

St. Tammany Parish Fair
Rides, critters and carnival food!



OCT. 6-7

Camellia City Smooth Jazz Fest
Jazzy good time in Slidell



OCT. 13-14

Wooden Boat Festival
River fun in Madisonville



OCT. 20

Abita Springs Opry
Louisiana roots music



OCT. 27-28

Slidell Antiques Street Fair
Hunt treasure in Olde Towne



NOV. 10-11

Three Rivers Art Festival
Juried outdoor art in Covington



FEB. 16

Bayou Gardens Open House
Tours, workshops in Lacombe



MARCH 17

St. Patrick's Day Parade
Go Irish in downtown Covington



MARCH 30

Whole Town Garage Sale
Scavenge Abita for bargains

Spending the holidays in St. Tammany Parish?

The month of December is a great time to visit the Northshore with the kids. There are Christmas pageants, holiday parades and tree lightings, caroling and Santa sightings everywhere. Check out **LouisianaNorthshore.com** for details on events like Merry Madisonville; the Winter on the Water boat parade, Sips of the Season stroll and A Christmas Past Festival, all in Mandeville; Cajun Christmas at Big Branch; and Covington's Holiday Home Tour. Multi-weekend events Holiday of Lights and Christmas Under the Stars, held in Mandeville and Slidell respectively, are memory-makers for the little ones.



Wade into Three Rivers

Annual juried outdoor arts festival lines the streets of historic downtown Covington each fall

Downtown Covington is home to galleries representing some of the South's best artists. So it's no surprise that the town's annual Three Rivers Art Festival is a juried event showcasing worthy works by artists from almost 30 states.

For one weekend each November (it's Nov. 10-11 in 2018), the outdoor arts fest takes over five city blocks of the historic downtown's Columbia Street. More than 50,000 visitors enjoy the art-filled stroll, perusing works in every medium, from

ceramics and photography to fiber art, woodworking, metal work, sculpture, paintings, jewelry and more.

There's no admission charge and parking is free throughout the district. There's a Children's Discovery Area and a demonstration tent where you can watch artists make pottery or blow glass. And, this being Louisiana, of course there's music and food. Downtown galleries and restaurants are open, too, making Three Rivers a great place to enjoy a Fall weekend. 🦋



Don't miss...

SLIDELL ANTIQUES STREET FAIRS: Shops beckon year-round in Slidell's Olde Towne District but the treasure hunt spills into the surrounding area for one weekend each fall and spring with antiques street fairs selling everything vintage, cool and collectible. Food and music. Free parking, no admission charge. Just lots of temptation. OCT. 27-28, 2018 AND MARCH 30-31, 2019, SLIDELL

OCTOBER IS BEER MONTH HERE: Three fun beer events are brewing for your drinking pleasure. Oxtoberfest Beerfest happens Oct. 6 at Covington's Trailhead while on Oct. 13, Slidell hosts the Northshore on Tap Home Brew & Craft Beer Experience. And Oct. 20, it's Biketoberfest, a group ride on the Tammany Trace stopping at four different breweries.

KEEPING IT JAZZY: Regional and national recording artists are showcased in the Camellia City Smooth Jazz Festival, a celebration of smooth jazz and good vibes. Held at Slidell's Northshore Harbor Center, the indoor two-day festival from Jin Jeans Productions is in its second year. See the lineup at CamCityJazzFest.com OCT. 6-7, SLIDELL



Fest puts 'fun' in Tchefuncte

Vintage wooden boats, food and a crazy contest make Madisonville event a blast on the river

Situated on the banks of the Tchefuncte (pron. Cha-FUNK-ta) River, the little town of Madisonville knows how to have fun on the water. Its biggest event each year is the Madisonville Wooden Boat Festival, a weekend that's fun and enlightening (and fattening, thanks to the food vendors). The 2018 fest happens Oct. 13-14.

Sponsored by the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Maritime Museum, the festival fea-

tures scores of vintage watercraft from across the Gulf South, as well as demonstrations, live music, the aforementioned food booths and an arts area. The highlight just may be the Quick 'n' Dirty Boat Building competition, which challenges participants to pick a theme and then build a boat from provided materials in 14 hours. The boats then must prove their seaworthiness – but often don't, to hilarious result. 🦀



Sell blocks

PREPARE TO PICK YOUR WAY THROUGH charming little Abita Springs when it hosts its annual Whole Town Garage Sale March 30, 2019. Held the last Saturday of each March, the sale features scores of vendors set up in the field across from Town Hall as well as hundreds of individual garage sales happening simultaneously in the adjacent old Abita neighborhoods. Get there early for the best pricing and best picking. Hours are 7 a.m.-3 p.m. Food vendors help you keep up your energy.

Don't miss...

BEFORE AND AFTER SUMMER'S HEAT abates, Northshore towns celebrate with street parties, art walks and free outdoor concerts. Check LOUISIANANORTHSHORE.COM/EVENTS for details, but here are a few happenings to watch for:

CAREY STREET CRAWL

Local art, shopping, music and more in Olde Towne Slidell. Nov. 2.

FALL FOR ART

Covington's downtown is the setting for an evening of music, art, and culinary events. Oct. 13.

SUNSET AT THE LANDING CONCERT

Live music at the foot of Columbia Street in Covington. Oct. 19, 2018 and March 15, 2019.

COLUMBIA STREET BLOCK PARTY

Halloween-themed party Oct 26 in downtown Covington with classic cars and live music. Next one: March 29, 2019

MANDEVILLE LIVE!

Bring lawn chairs for free outdoor concerts at Mandeville's Trailhead Amphitheater. Oct. 6 and 13, and Fridays in March and April 2019.





Get that Mardi Gras buzz

Parades roll, march and float in towns all across the Northshore during the festive Carnival season

There are a few misunderstandings surrounding Mardi Gras festivities in Louisiana.

For instance, Mardi Gras is only one day. It means Fat Tuesday in French and falls every year on the Tuesday before the start of Lent. So what is the rest of the parade season, which lasts about three weeks, called? Carnival. As in, “It’s Carnival time! Throw me some beads!”

Another misunderstanding: Mardi Gras is not about flashing, streaking or drinking alcoholic beverages to the point of oblivion. Most parades, especially on the Northshore, are G-rated, family oriented and more about cheering on marching bands and showing off all the beads you caught.

Carnival season kicks off on Jan. 6 (the Christian holiday of Epiphany, also known as Twelfth Night) and continues until Fat Tuesday, which in 2019 falls on March 5. The St. John Fools of Misrule marching

krewe, complete with flambeaux (torchbearers) and costumed cavorters, gets Northshore Carnival off to a raucous start Jan. 5 as they parade through the streets of downtown Covington.

After that, Carnival momentum builds with weekends of parades by krewes with names like Perseus, Poseidon, Selene, Eve, Dionysus and Titans rolling across the Northshore. Abita Springs’ always-zany Krewe of Push Mow is especially popular for its humor and themes like “What’s that smell?” and “Terrible New TV Channels.”

There are boat parades, dog parades, day parades and night parades, all culminating on Mardi Gras Day when most Northshore communities celebrate in some way. The biggest celebration is Carnival in Covington which begins with two parades followed by a street party at the Covington Trailhead. 🦋

For a schedule of Northshore Carnival parades, visit LouisianaNorthshore.com/MardiGras

Pups on parade

ALTHOUGH THE CARNIVAL SEASON officially ends with Fat Tuesday, the Northshore can’t quite let it go until the Mystic Krewe of Mardi Paws takes to the Mandeville lakefront (on March 10, 2019). Costumed pooches parade with their humans in one of the most popular processions in St. Tammany Parish. Always fun and colorful, the parade also raises funds for area animal agencies supported by the Ian Somerhalder Foundation. The handsome actor Somerhalder, a Northshore native, has joined the parade in past years and his possible appearance accounts for some of the excitement among the gathered crowds.



All hail the king cake

The sweetest symbol of Mardi Gras lands on tables everywhere, thanks to local bakeries who work nonstop . . . and ship!

If Mardi Gras has a smell it's got to be the seductive cinnamon-y aroma of fresh-baked king cake. Their arrival in area groceries, bakeries, at parties and in classrooms, marks the beginning of Carnival season and celebration of a long-standing tradition that puts the treat at the center of every gathering big and small for about six weeks a year.

Two of the best king cakes on the Northshore come from different branches of the same family tree, using the original Randazzo family recipe created back in 1965. Randazzo's Camellia City Bakery in Slidell and Nonna Randazzo's Bakery in Covington and Mandeville bake tens of thousands of king cakes each season, selling to locals who walk in to their bakeries and to aficionados all over the country.

The basic king cake is an oval, braided cinnamon-y sweet bread, topped with icing and traditionally, sprinkles of purple, green and gold, the Mardi Gras colors. Over the years, variations have come to include praline icing, fruit and cream cheese fillings. One thing that's unchanged: expect to find a plastic or bisque baby hidden in the cake. Tradition holds that the per-

son who gets the baby brings a king cake to the next party.

If you're in the area during Carnival season, stop into Camellia City or Nonna's for a king cake to go. Or get one shipped to you. Both bakeries offer shipping and the chance to experience a little bit of Mardi Gras wherever you are. 🦋

RANDAZZO'S CAMELLIA CITY BAKERY
KINGCAKES.COM

NONNA RANDAZZO'S BAKERY
NONNASKINGCAKES.COM



Sequin show

YOU CAN CHECK OUT ARTIFACTS FROM Slidell's Carnival celebrations through the years at the Slidell Mardi Gras Museum in Olde Towne. Located at 2020 First St., the museum houses costumes, scepters, goblets, throws and scrapbooks from Mardi Gras past. The collection is on the second floor of the Slidell Museum, formerly the Town Hall and Old Jail, built in 1907. Free admission.





Visions of Grayhawk

Musician/teacher/historian Grayhawk Perkins reflects facets of Louisiana history and his Native American culture

Big hat, big cigar, big personality. Conversation with Grayhawk Perkins is a little like chasing butterflies down a series of rabbit holes. No straight lines, but the journey is intriguing. The man reveals details of his life in random layers. Ask a question about his music and learn about his travels around the world as a young ship engineer, or his daughter's shock at walking into the Smithsonian as a teenager and seeing a banner photo of her dad in a kayak.



One of the most interesting men you'll ever meet, Perkins is a multi-talented multi-tasker, a teacher, historian, musician, actor and tribal storyteller. Born in New Orleans and of Choctaw and Houma Nation descent, he makes his home in Mandeville with wife Robin and often can be found, when he's not teaching or traveling, on the porch at Covington's English Tea Room,

drinking tea and chatting with strangers who seem drawn to him.

Maybe it's the twinkle in his eyes or natural stage presence, but people want to hear what Perkins has to say and has to sing. He makes music with the Grayhawk Band, performing a blend of blues, rock and funk, and with the Crescent Citizens, playing regular Saturday gigs at New Orleans' House of Blues. His 2014 CD, "Thirteen Moons," was a passion project in which he wrote and performed songs in the Mobilian language. (The CD is out of print, but see videos of Perkins singing on YouTube.)

Perkins shares his Native American history and heritage in local cultural programs, art and storytelling sessions, and classrooms. A frequent speaker and performer in Louisiana and beyond, he was invited to give a series of tours and performances in France.

When you're on the Northshore, check local events calendars for appearances. Maybe pick up Perkins' latest album, *Grayhawk and Friends Live at the U.S. Mint*, recorded in New Orleans and due out in late 2018. Or, if you're in Covington, swing by the English Tea Room on East Rutland Street. Perkins will be the guy in the hat drinking the Daddy Grayhawk blend under a plaque marking the Daddy Grayhawk table. 🦋



FIVE SPOTS

PLAYMAKERS, INC.

This non-profit amateur theater stages six productions each year.
19106 PLAYMAKERS ROAD,
COVINGTON

30 BY NINETY

Known for shows that challenge and entertain.
880 LAFAYETTE, MANDEVILLE

SLIDELL LITTLE THEATER

This 200-seat community theater presents six productions a year, plus summer youth theater.
2024 NELLIE DRIVE, SLIDELL

CAFÉ LUKE DINNER THEATRE

Dinner theater's held inside Slidell's historic Grande Manor.
153 ROBERT ST., SLIDELL

CUTTING EDGE

Cleverly named theater stages original shows and off-Broadway hits inside Attractions Salon.
747 ROBERT BLVD., SLIDELL

The heart of art

St. Tammany Art Association at the center of Northshore's vibrant visual arts scene

The St. Tammany Art Association has been a part of the Northshore's visual arts scene for 60 years. Housed in a 19th-century structure, STAA features two galleries in which to showcase the area's art scene, one for visiting exhibits, the other for members' works. The STAA is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to showcase emerging and established artists.

The STAA is the hub of Covington's visual arts scene, a scene which includes numerous respected galleries in the historic district within blocks of the STAA build-

ing. Six times a year, the STAA also hosts the Covington Art Market in the space dubbed Art Alley just outside its walls. Juried works are offered for sale in the festive scene held on first Saturdays in Spring and Fall (Oct., Nov., Dec., March, April, May). In addition, it's often at the center of interest for visitors strolling Columbia Street during the town's Fall for Art and Spring for Art events and other street parties.

At the STAA through Jan. 27, 2019: "After the Wetlands," by artist John Valentino. 320 N. COLUMBIA, COVINGTON 🐜



Dance on down to the Dew Drop

World's oldest rural jazz hall still drawing musicians and enthusiastic audiences to Mandeville

The tiny Dew Drop Jazz Hall may not look like much from the street but the old cypress structure looms large for aficionados looking to understand the history of jazz. Musicians from New Orleans and from around the world still come to play on its rustic stage and to pay homage to what is believed to be the world's oldest rural jazz hall.

Its doors first opened in what is now Old Mandeville in 1895 by a group of civic-minded African-American residents as a venue for raising funds for needy individuals. Located in the 400 block of Lamarque, blocks from the lakefront, the Dew Drop looks much as it did more than a century ago when musicians playing a new

type of music called jazz took steamboats across the lake from New Orleans to play at the hall. Among them were early greats Buddy Petit and Kid Ory; later a young Louis Armstrong (whose family lived nearby) played there.

The Friends of the Dew Drop organization presents fall and spring concert series there. The audience arrives early for prized seating on benches inside the little building, while others set up lawn chairs outside under large oaks and enjoy the music spilling out old windows with shutters opened wide. Purchase a glass of wine or an Abita Beer from a table out front, or a dinner plate from one of the church ladies at First Free Mission Baptist next door. 🦋



Check out Max Cusimano's video of a live performance at the Dew Drop at louisiananorthshore.com/dewdrop

Art on Front

A FRIENDLY, APPROACHABLE SPACE in which to browse good local art, the Marketplace at 1808 Front Street is a multi-artist gallery with original works in various media. Artists often are on hand at the gallery to talk about their works or offer demonstrations.

Among the exhibitors are Adam Sam-bola, Pottery Studio KLH, Mardi Gras MisChief Gallery, Bead Society of Slidell and others.

The gallery is on the ground floor of Slidell's East Chamber of Commerce building. It's a fun place to shop for art, pick up information or, on Saturdays, buy local produce from the Camellia City Farmers Market held in the parking lot.

1808 FRONT ST, SLIDELL



Dance Cajun

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE CAJUN TO "pass a good time" on the dance floor when the Northshore Cajun Dancers convene for one evening each month at Abita Springs' Town Hall. Everyone's welcome to join in. Don't know how to Cajun dance but want to learn? Free lessons are given from 7-7:30 p.m. Live music from the likes of Bruce Daigrepoint, Jay Cormier, Coupique and Lee Benoit commences at 8 p.m. (\$10 cover charge). It's a classically Cajun evening of *joie d'vivre*, food and drink, with all ages and skill levels two-stepping across the floor.

NORTHSHORE INDULGE

TAKE A BITE

Life's a feast on the Northshore, where the culinary perspective has been shaped by the area's diverse cultures as well as the bounty of the bayou. Feed your soul on poboys and gumbo at mom-and-pops or ethereal Gulf-inspired fare from talented chefs. St. Tammany's food scene is deep and delicious and there's a seat at the table, and a great meal waiting for you.

Annadele's savory
smoked shrimp
cheesecake.

PHOTO: CHERYL GERBER

Hambone's playful boudin appetizer is a menu fave.



Hambone has it going on

Chef Luke Hidalgo takes casual comfort food seriously in his cute little cottage eatery in old Mandeville

The words “quaint” and “contemporary” may seem incongruous but they’re a perfectly matched set at a charming little restaurant in old Mandeville. In the spring of 2018, Hambone took over a former tea room housed in a sweet little cottage on Girod Street. Open for breakfast and lunch only, Hambone’s a study in natural light, blonde woods and cheerful hues.

The deft touch goes beyond décor. Chef Luke Hidalgo’s fresh flavors elevate daytime eats with a menu that’s not large but full of little surprises and artful comfort foods. Addicting deviled eggs with crisp country ham, poboys like the fried pork chop sandwich with garlic collards, char-pickled onions and pepper jelly, or the pickled shrimp with shaved fennel and avocado are on hand. There’s house-made pastrami on the killer Remy sandwich. Daily specials sound simple — smothered chicken, pot roast, fried chicken and biscuits — but whup Maw-

Maw’s versions by a country mile.

Hambone is chef Luke’s first restaurant but he’s no newcomer to the business. Nor is wife Marci, who co-owns Hambone and works side by side. The pair met about six years ago at New Orleans’ noted Commander’s Palace where Luke was a sous chef and Marci a server. Luke had also worked at another culinary institution, Galatoire’s, and Marci at the respected Coquette. They know what’s good. And what’s important, too.

Now a family with a young son, the two restaurant pros set out to create a special place for other families in Mandeville, one with a large enclosed play area for the kids and laid-back yet sophisticated food for their parents.

Hambone’s also become a favorite for Sunday brunch, a pop of sunshine in the little cottage just blocks from the Mandeville lakefront. HAMBONE, 544 GIROD ST., MANDEVILLE 🦋



Love on the half-shell

Fried golden, charbroiled or cold, salty and raw, the world is your oyster at area restaurants

Oysters holds an exalted place in Louisiana's culinary kingdom, especially during the Fall and Winter when the bivalves are fattest, sweet and briny. Home cooks make oyster dressing for the holiday table, a tradition that begins in many households with a sack of oysters and hours of shucking (and slurping them down raw).

Louisiana loves its oysters, and is proud of them, too. Back in the '30s, New Orleans mayor Robert Maestri took Franklin D. Roosevelt to dinner and famously asked FDR, "How ya like dem ersters?" We like ersters a lot, and a lot of ways.

Fried is a given. Golden, crispy, delicious. Stuffed into po-boys, tossed atop Caesar salads.

Charbroiled is a close second. Oysters on the half-shell are doused in butter, garlic and Parmesan and broiled til delicious and bubbly.

Raw. Cold and salty, shucked right in front of you. (Louisiana

is the number one producer of oysters in the U.S., shucking about 12 million pounds a year.)

Simmered in oyster and artichoke soup. Chef Keith Frentz showcases them on his menu at LOLA in Mandeville as an appetizer to die for: flash-fried oysters napped in pepper jelly, with crispy pork belly and pickled okra. And in Mandeville, at Hambone, chef Luke Hidalgo serves up Oysters Marci, named for his wife and featuring caramelized fennel, crisp bacon, mushrooms, Herbsaint and pecan smoke. 🦀



HOW TO DRINK YOUR OYSTER

Say hey to the shooter; it's how we get a little alcohol with our oyster.

Find them at oyster bars like Acme Oyster in Covington or make one yourself at home.

It's easy: Place one freshly shucked oyster into a shot glass.

Add one chilled ounce of bloody mary mix and one ounce of vodka.

Squeeze of lemon, dash of hot sauce.

Slurp. Repeat.



Where to find:

RAW

Acme Oyster House,
Don's Seafood and Buster's

FRIED

Mandeville Seafood,
Crabby Shack, Peck's

CHARBROILED

K.Gee's, NOLA Southern
Grill, the Chimes

OYSTER AND ARTICHOKE SOUP

Fatty's Seafood, Speckled T's

You can find Hambone's recipe for Oysters Marci online at LouisianaNorthshore.com/recipes/OystersMarci

Bon appétit, bon temps

The Northshore's diverse and deep restaurant scene feeds your hunger for authentic culinary experiences

Jeffrey and Amy
Hansell

OXLOT 9

428 E. BOSTON, COVINGTON

Chef Jeffrey Hansell's lovely dining space in downtown Covington's Southern Hotel is a great showcase for the Gulf-inspired contemporary Southern food. Killer fried frog legs in hot sauce butter. Venison meat pies. Heritage pork chops. Hansell's creativity and his deft touch with seafood and with meat make his ever-changing menu a culinary adventure.



TREY YUEN

600 N. CAUSEWAY, MANDEVILLE

The restaurant in the red-roofed pagoda is a landmark in Mandeville. The Wong family's menu is the place to explore Szechuan, Cantonese, Hunan and Hong Kong-style flavors in Louisiana-inspired specialties like tong cho trout, crawfish in a spicy lobster sauce and Szechuan spicy alligator.



MORTON'S SEAFOOD

707 WATER ST., MADISONVILLE

The flashing 'Hot Boiled Seafood' sign beckons but there's more to Morton's than the spicy boiled crabs and crawfish or the location on the banks of the Tchefuncte River. Marinated crab claws, chargrilled oysters, poboys, gumbo ... it's all here for your Louisiana eating pleasure.

DAKOTA

629 N. HIGHWAY 190, COVINGTON

Chef Kim Kringlie still helms this grand dame of fine dining in Covington. Kringlie's signature crabmeat and Brie soup earns new fans daily and his take on contemporary Louisiana flavors produce stunners like crispy softshell crab stuffed with shrimp and crawfish, served on pecan rice, and honey-glazed duck confit.



DEL PORTO RISTORANTE

501 E. BOSTON, COVINGTON

Included in New Orleans food critic's list of Top 10 restaurants in the New Orleans area, Del Porto is a local favorite for its emphasis on seasonal and locally sourced ingredients and contemporary Italian fare. Husband-wife chef team David and Torre Solazzo are three-time semifinalists for the James Beard Foundation's Best Chef South award. One bite of their stellar crudo and you'll know why.



LEONARDO'S

2625 FLORIDA ST., MANDEVILLE

A newcomer, this little trattoria and pizzeria in a strip center location has wowed locals with the flavors of Sicily from Italian-born chef/owner Leonardo Giarraputo. Among the standouts: lasagna Bolognese, spaghetti aglio e olio, the burrata appetizer and pizza, too. Filet mignon flatbread? Give it a try.

LOLA

517 N. NEW HAMPSHIRE, COVINGTON

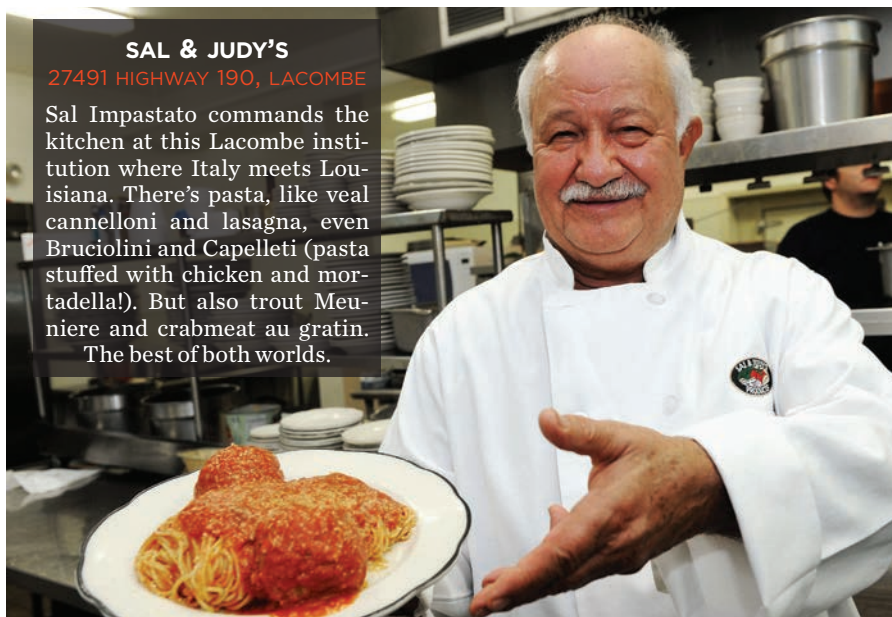
Husband-wife chef team Keith and Nealy Frentz operate this darling dining room in Covington's old train depot. The pair met when both were chefs at world-famous Brennan's in New Orleans. House-made everything pleases LOLA's lunch crowds with blue plate specials, great salads and desserts. Dinner is more upscale but fresh, smart and creative.



SAL & JUDY'S

27491 HIGHWAY 190, LACOMBE

Sal Impastato commands the kitchen at this Lacombe institution where Italy meets Louisiana. There's pasta, like veal cannelloni and lasagna, even Bruciolini and Capelletti (pasta stuffed with chicken and mortadella!). But also trout Meunier and crabmeat au gratin. The best of both worlds.



PALMETTOS ON THE BAYOU

1901 BAYOU LANE, SLIDELL

The name describes the place, a large Acadian cabin on the banks of historic Bayou Bonfouca, lush with palmettos and iconic Louisiana greenery enjoyed from the decks. Enjoy gumbo, shrimp and grits, crawfish beignets, trout almondine, balsamic duck and on Sundays, live jazz.



GALLAGHER'S GRILL & COURTYARD

509 S. TYLER, COVINGTON

Longtime local favorite chef Pat Gallagher knows his way around a steak. You may never have a better filet served in sizzling butter. Expect divine crab cakes and a deft touch with Louisiana seafood like pompino and redfish, as well as Colorado rack of lamb, veal rib chop and chargrilled quail.

You'll eat our words

Having trouble understanding the menu?
Here's a Louisiana lexicon to interpret for you

One glance at a menu and you know you're in Louisiana even if you aren't familiar with the dishes. Here's a brief primer to help you decipher local menus.

ANDOUILLE: This flavorful, spicy sausage is a favorite in chicken and sausage gumbo. (Pron. AHN-doo-ee)

BOUDIN: Another sausage. Though there's boudin in France, the Louisiana version is a regional specialty made with pork, rice and seasonings. It's often found in restaurants in the form of fried boudin balls.

DRESSED: If you order your pobo dressed, it means you want it "all the way," which means you want it with lettuce, tomato and pickle.

GUMBO: You've heard this term, probably tasted this Louisiana dish. Though it's popped up on menus across the U.S., you're not likely to eat the real thing outside of south Louisiana unless it was cooked for you by a transplanted native. A dark, flavorful soup, real gumbo takes a long time to cook and requires a little voodoo to do properly. Most gumbos are variations on two themes: seafood or chicken and sausage. Served with rice, it can be light brown or dark as swamp water.

MUFFULETTA: This traditional sandwich takes its name from the crusty round Ital-

ian bread it's made with. Stuffed inside are several layers of ham, Genoa sausage, Provolone cheese and chopped olive salad. Eaten warm or cold, the giant sandwich is a delicious handful and usually serves two or more people.

PANEED: Meaning coated in bread crumbs or dredged in flour and pan-fried gently in butter, as in paneed veal, chicken, frog legs or oysters. (Pron. PAN-aid)

POBOY: A long sandwich on crusty French bread, a poboy really isn't the same as a submarine or a hoagie. It can be ordered with a variety of fillings. Among the favorites are fried oysters or shrimp (or both), and long-simmered roast beef slathered in gravy.

PRALINES: A simple candy that's nevertheless hard to make well. Most pralines are made with sugar, butter, vanilla (or other flavoring like rum) and nuts. (Pron. PRAW-leen)

RED BEANS AND RICE: You'll often see this as a Monday special at restaurants harking back to the days when south Louisiana women traditionally did the wash on Mondays and needed something slow and easy to ignore on the stove. Red beans are kidney beans and here they're slow-cooked with seasoning meat till almost creamy, then served with white rice. 🌶️



Happy meals

PREPARE TO YIELD TO TEMPTATION. It's okay. Really. The Covington Farmers Market staged each Saturday morning is a panoply of pleasures, from beautiful locally grown produce like sweet satsumas, Creole tomatoes and heirloom figs, to artisan breads, Louisiana specialties like stuffed artichokes and Delta tamales.

Meet Nick Usner, an organic farmer who supplies gorgeous produce like perfect little squashes, hand-foraged chanterelle mushrooms and just-picked okra. Linger over the table at Bear Creek Road where stunning baked goods challenge your will power. There are raw foods, fresh collards, Kombuchas, yard eggs, line-caught catfish, jams and jellies, goat cheese, herbs and seasonal items like mirlitons (chayote squash).

Don't eat before you go. You can nosh your way through the cultures that shaped old Louisiana and new. Try Greek skordalia, Italian cuccidata, Salvadoran pupusas and Middle Eastern hummus while listening to live music floating from the gazebo. Check out Mauthe's creole cream cheese, an almost lost food that earned the Slow Food Movement's first "Ark of Taste" award.

The market is held from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. Get there early for the best selection of fresh-picked produce.
609 N. COLUMBIA, COVINGTON

FOR DETAILS ON OTHER NORTHSORE FARMERS AND COMMUNITY MARKETS, VISIT LOUISIANANORTHSORE.COM

Pillows of pleasure

BEIGNETS. THE WORD LOOKS LIKE "BIG NETS" BUT IS

pronounced "BEN-yay." BEN-yay! That's how you feel when you bite down on these pillowy bilowy little square puffs of fried dough with a heavy dusting of powdered sugar. The beignet is more than a dessert around here; it's a tradition, an afternoon snack and a late-night treat. Only the foolish try to make them at home. Café du Monde, with two locations on the Northshore, has been making them since 1862. Kids like to dunk 'em in chocolate milk; parents go for the delicious café au lait, strong coffee with hot milk.

Hint: Don't wear black when you go and do grab a few extra napkins. You're going to need them. 70437 LA 21, COVINGTON; 1814 N. CAUSEWAY APPROACH, MANDEVILLE





Southside Café

FIVE SPOTS

K. GEE'S

Louisiana food, live music on Fridays. Great fried catfish!
2534 FLORIDA ST., MANDEVILLE

MANDEVILLE SEAFOOD

Restaurant and seafood market, too.
2020 HIGHWAY 29, MANDEVILLE

CRABBY SHACK

Poboys, classics and boiled seafood in season.
305 LA 21, MADISONVILLE

PHIL'S MARINA CAFÉ

Seafood platters, poboys and a water view.
1194 HARBOR DRIVE, SLIDELL

BEAR'S

Not much to look at, but oh, those poboys.
Open lunch only.
128 W. 21ST, COVINGTON

Where to eat like a local

Places like Slidell's Southside Café serve soulful, satisfying Louisiana comfort food

Opened in 1991 by Sharon and Dan DeBlanc and rebuilt after Hurricane Katrina pushed three feet of water into the restaurant, the colorful Southside Café is one of those places locals love to hang out. Bright and busy, it serves up Louisiana comfort food, cold beer and, despite the "Shut Up and Eat" sign, good cheer.

The giant menu is a challenge but it's a good problem to have. There are fried seafood platters and poboys with names like The Peacemaker (fried oysters, fried eggs, bacon and cheese) and the Big Mo Jamma (ham, turkey, roast beef and melted Swiss covered with roast beef gravy). New Orleans' style muffalettas, the classic round loaf stuffed with ham, mortadella, salami and Provolone with chopped olive salad. Burgers, steaks and oysters from the grill. And then there's

that Irish Channel gumbo. Named for a New Orleans neighborhood, the dish features a potato salad levee dividing seafood gumbo from chicken and sausage gumbo in a single bowl. (Potato salad with gumbo is something you'll see only in south Louisiana, our home kitchens or in family-run restaurants like this.)

Southside keeps it lively with multiple TVs and Happy Hour from 3 p.m. till close on Wednesdays and all day Sunday. Tables are set with more than one kind of hot sauce, there's always a buzz of conversation and Marine Corps memorabilia is prominent in the décor. Dan DeBlanc, a former Marine helicopter pilot, keeps the welcome sign out for everyone but especially the military community and veterans. 3154 PONTCHARTRAIN DRIVE, SLIDELL 🦩



Get your beer here

Take a tour, belly up for a tasting
at Abita and other Northshore breweries

What started in 1986 as a tiny little operation in a little pub in Abita Springs has grown into the country's 14th largest craft brewery — and one of the Northshore's most popular tourist attractions. Abita beer now is found in all 50 states and beyond, expanding its fan base and attracting visitors from across the planet.

Imbibers come by car and by tour bus (and sometimes by bike, arriving via the nearby Tammany Trace bike path) to Abita Brewery to taste favorites like Purple Haze and Turbodog at the source.

Self-guided tours are free; guided tours with tastings are \$5. The visitor center and gift shop are open seven days a week and the welcoming taproom makes

it easy for anyone to belly up and taste what master brewers, Artesian water and three decades of experience can produce.

The Northshore is well represented on the Louisiana Brewery Trail with two additional breweries here. Covington Brewhouse in a historic old structure in the shadow of Covington's water tower, produces German-style beers and offers free tours on Saturday and a tasting room Thursday-Sunday. Nearby in Mandeville, Chafunkta Brewing Company is turning out beer with names like Kingfish Ale and Old 504 (porter). Check with the brewery for tours and tastings. Or stop by Old Rail Brewing Company or the Barley Oak, two fun Mandeville brew pubs to sample everyone's wares in one spot. 🦋

Pop the cork at two new spots

NORTHSHORE OENOPHILES HAD SOMETHING to clink about when not one, but two new wine bars opened on the Northshore in the spring of 2018. The Wine Garden, housed in an historic space in Slidell's Olde Towne, quickly became a fave gathering spot, thanks to its patio, large selection of wines by the glass and by the bottle, and great-with-wine small plates, pressed sandwiches and charcuterie. Live music most nights and brunch on Sunday.

In Covington, 20 minutes or so west, grape nuts can indulge at Barrel Wine, a friendly space with small plates and charcuterie, art wall, live music on Tuesdays and Saturdays, and, oh, yes, some fab wine selections. Wine flights and guest chef events kick up the fun.

WINE GARDEN: 300 ROBERT ST., SLIDELL
BARREL WINE: 69305 LA 21, COVINGTON



Great grapes

Experience some of Pontchartrain Vineyards' award-winning wines in its classic tasting room adjacent to acres of vines. For \$5 per person, sample a flight of wines made right there, including zinfandel, cab/syrah and blanc du bois. Founded in 1991, PV produces about 2,500 cases of wine a year on its 34 acres and is also known for its popular Jazz'n the Vines music series held each fall and spring. 80158 LA 1082, BUSH



PHOTO KEVIN GARRETT

ADVENTURE

EXPERIENCES

Get in touch with your inner adventurer on the Northshore where you can take a photo safari, go fishing, hiking, biking and paddling year-round.

Rent gear or take a tour but do get out and play.



Enjoy our great outdoors

From sunset paddles to pushing pedals, there are many ways to get out and commune with nature

Not for nothing is St. Tammany Parish called the Northshore. Its towns and green spaces sprawl across the northern arch of Lake Pontchartrain. There are more than 80,000 acres of wilderness preserve, much of it explorable via trails, the Tammany Trace bike path and the many bayous and rivers that dissect the landscape.



Paddlers will love it here. You can bring your own gear but you don't have to. Kayaks, canoes and paddleboards are available for rent at several locations (see the adjacent list), and there are tour operators happy to take you out for a day on the water. Or an evening. Two operators — Canoe and Trail and Bayou Adventure — both offer sunset paddles down Cane Bayou to the lake just in time to catch the glorious pink, purple and gold sunsets we have come to expect here but never tire of seeing.

Fish from your kayak, from the shore or even from a charter boat, out for bull reds and monster trout on the waters of Lake Borgne and Rigolets Pass. Or just enjoy the scenery, which changes with the seasons, each with its own special beauty. 🦄

FIVE SPOTS

CANOE AND TRAIL ADVENTURES

Eco-friendly canoe and kayak tours on Cane Bayou. Twilight and group tours.

CANOEANDTRAIL.COM

BAYOU ADVENTURE

Guided eco, sunset and fishing tours on Cane Bayou and Big Branch Marsh. Bait, tackle and rentals, too.

BAYOUADVENTURE.COM

BAYOU PADDLE COMPANY

Guided paddleboard tours on the Bogue Falaya River.

INSIDE SPOKESMAN BICYCLE SHOP, COVINGTON

MASSEY'S PROFESSIONAL OUTFITTERS

Fishing, canoe and kayak trips on Cane Bayou and Bogue Chitto River.

MASSEYSOUTFITTERS.COM

THE BAIT SHOP ON FRONT STREET

Kayak rentals for exploring Bayou Bonfouca or the Honey Island Swamp. Bait and tackle, too. 1604 FRONT ST., SLIDELL



Do feed the animals

Take a roll through Folsom's Global Wildlife Center, home to more than 4,000 exotic critters

Excitement builds as you approach the visitor center, driving past decidedly not native creatures: zebras and Father David deer, kangaroos, giraffes and elands. You know you are entering a special place.

Global Wildlife Center is the largest free-roaming wildlife preserve in the U.S., home to more than 4,000 exotic and endangered animals living on 900 scenic acres. Visitors have two options to explore Global. Many, especially families with young children, choose the tours given in large motorized wagons, providing on-high views and opportunity to toss feed to animals approaching the wagon.

The private Pinzgauer tours are a great choice for families and animal lovers who want a unique and up-close encounter. Seating up to 8 people, the 4x4 vehicles put guests eye level with Global's inhabitants who often follow or surround the vehicle. Stroke a giraffe's neck as she leans over your shoulder. Amazingly beautiful up close, the giraffes are persistent — they want that corn! — but gentle. Touch the massive, wooly head of an American bison, or the horn of Watusi cattle, as it feeds from your hand. Deer, llamas and zebras come up close for a snack, too.

Safari tours are given several times daily; Pinzgauer tours require reservations. Both make unforgettable memories for all. GLOBAL WILDLIFE CENTER, 26389 HIGHWAY 40, FOLSOM 🦋



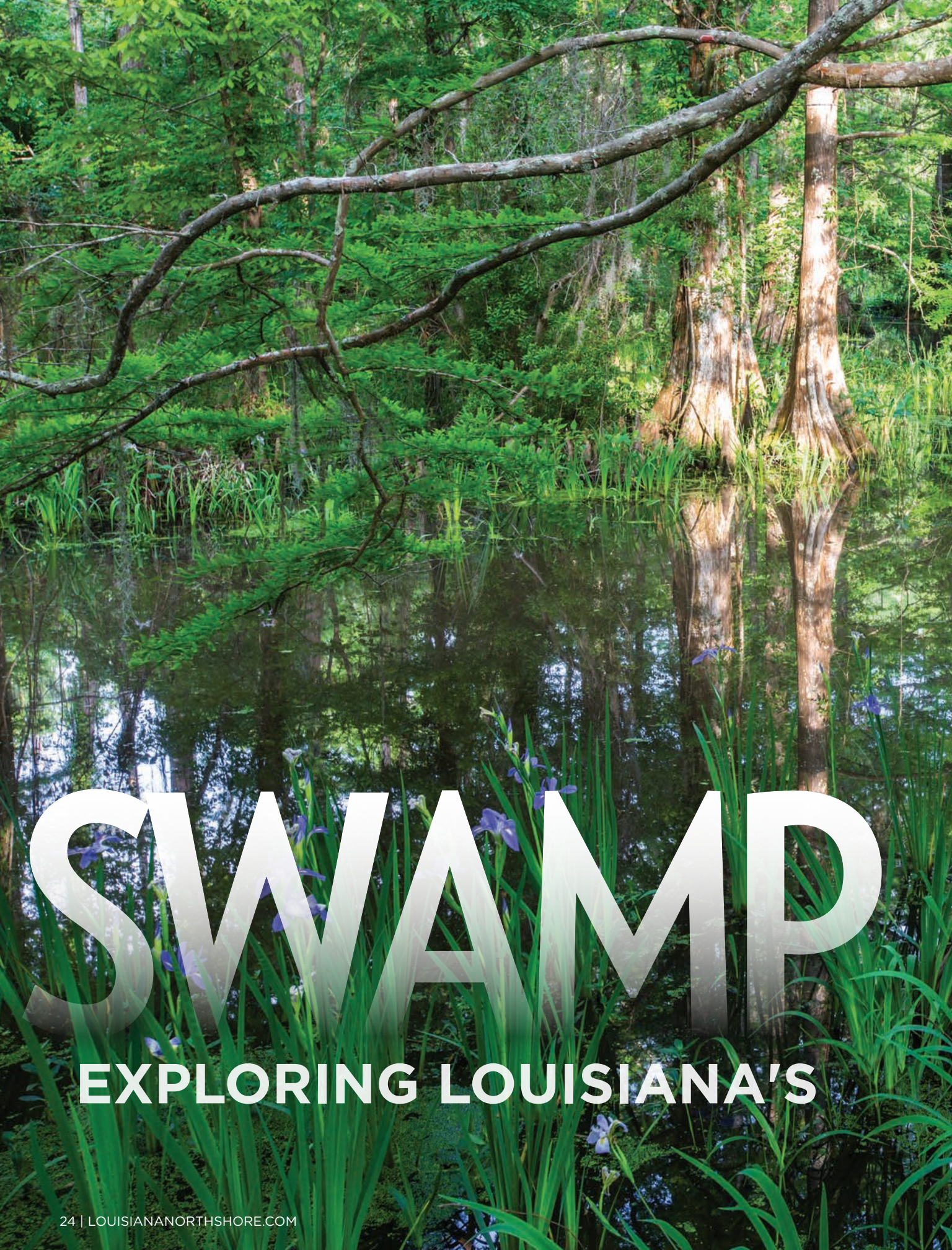
Don't miss...

NORTHLAKE NATURE CENTER: Though foliage isn't as thick in the cooler months as it is in spring, this lovely 400-acre preserve on the banks of Castine Bayou is worth a look year-round. There are about 7 miles of trails, a boardwalk overlooking a beaver lodge and giant magnolias. 23135 HWY 190, MANDEVILLE

HORSEBACK RIDING: Explore the Northshore on horseback at Splendor Farms, a B&B in Bush, LA, that offers trail riding to non-guests as well. Or hit the trail at Folsom's Sunflower Farm and Ranch. Instruction is available. SPLENDOR FARMS, 27329 MILL CREEK RD., BUSH
SUNFLOWER FARM, 84080 CEMETERY RD., FOLSOM

FISHING: Fishing is another year-round activity on the Northshore. Check out Sunset Point's pier in Mandeville (free and open 24 hours a day), or grab a pole and head for Lacombe's Lake Road. Fun and quintessential Louisiana.

SUNSET POINT, MASSENA ST., MANDEVILLE
LAKE ROAD, HIGHWAY 434, LACOMBE



SWAMP

EXPLORING LOUISIANA'S



THINGS

LUSH, PRIMEVAL LANDSCAPE

Irises add pops
of color to the
swamp in spring



FORGET THE SWAMPS YOU'VE SEEN IN MOVIES.

You know, the ones with 20-foot gators launching themselves into canoes, hissing black snakes dangling from every moss-hung tree and wild-eyed Cajuns who live off the bayou's bounty. Well, that last stereotype might be true but the other two are pure Hollywood.

What you can expect to find in the Honey Island Swamp, on the northeast edge of St. Tammany Parish, is pristine beauty, lush nature in harmony, and abundant wildlife. There are gators, to be sure. You'll see them sunning themselves on logs or watching warily from the banks (you make them nervous); if they swim out to the boat it will be to score a few marshmallows or a hot dog dangled on a stick by the tour guide to lure them closer.

You probably won't be seeing any snakes, though they're out there. And despite reported sightings that date back centuries, odds are you won't be catching a glimpse of the Honey Island swamp monster, either. (See related story.)

You will see turtles, maybe an eagle overhead, and snowy white egrets patiently stalking a bullfrog dinner. You might see a nutria, prehistoric-looking pileated

woodpeckers, or great blue herons, depending on what time of year you visit. And fat little feral pigs, all muddy and deceptively cute, may greet you from the banks of the bayou. The wildlife you see varies because this isn't a Disney park, after all, and nature has its own reasons and rhythms. Regardless of who or what steps up to greet you, one thing never changes: You will see an absolutely lovely patch of planet Earth, one that's been largely protected from us.

The Honey Island Swamp encompasses almost 70,000 acres, more than half of which is preserved for posterity as part of the Pearl River Wildlife Management Area. The PRWMA is swampy in the south, more hardwood bottomland to the north, home to black bears, boar, cougars, nutria and an abundant year-round and migratory bird population.

TAKE A TOUR

DR. WAGNER'S HONEY ISLAND SWAMP TOUR

41490 CRAWFORD LANDING ROAD,
SLIDELL HONEYISLANDSWAMP.COM

CAJUN ENCOUNTERS

55345 HIGHWAY 90 EAST, SLIDELL
CAJUNENCOUNTERS.COM

PEARL RIVER ECO-TOURS

55050 HIGHWAY 90, SLIDELL
PEARLRIVERECOTOURS.COM

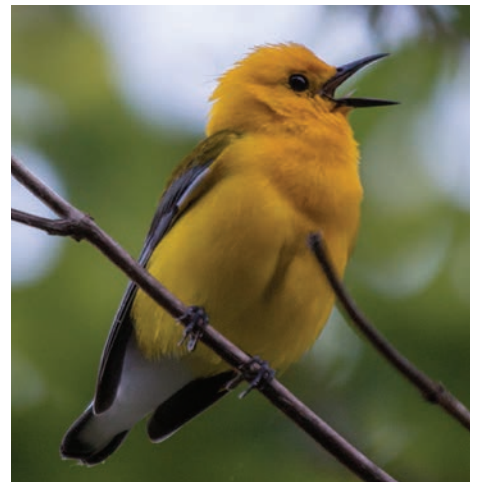


Created by the confluence of the west and east Pearl rivers, the Honey Island Swamp is rich in history, full of mystery and fragile. Unlike many of the nation's other swamps, Honey Island has never been commercially developed. But like many, it is delicate and often jeopardized by human actions. Concerns have been growing recently about a proposed flood control project upriver in Mississippi that some say would adversely affect the fragile balance in the Honey Island Swamp.

Tour operators like Cajun Encounters' Jeff Rogers, Paul Trahan of Honey Island Swamp Tours and Neil Benson of Pearl

River Eco-Tours say the project would devastate the lower Pearl by choking its water flow. Without the natural increased flow each spring brings, the swamp's ecosystem would not flourish, and may be not even survive. If you ask them, the operators and their captains will speak passionately about what could be lost, but mostly they let the area's natural beauty do the talking for them. They hope that anyone experiencing this special place would want to see it preserved.

And so, each day, all year long, the tour companies take visitors into the Honey Island Swamp (and yes, bring them out,





Tour boats give you a chance to see swamp's wildlife like the gator here and swamp canary and raccoon, below.



too). Reservations aren't mandatory but much appreciated and may avoid disappointment on your part. Most tours run around two hours in length. What you learn depends on your own powers of observation and on the perspective and personalities of your tour guide, each of whom seem to have a slightly different spin on the swamp.

Some guides grew up there and know its every inlet, twist and turn, what plants are edible, where the biggest gators live, whose mama caught the biggest catfish ever seen 40 years back. Other guides are biologists, entranced into the profession by the area's untouched beauty. One is a well-known stride piano player who gigs in New Orleans' French Quarter at night and helms a tour boat by day. All of them love the swamp and take their jobs as its ambassadors seriously.

Visitors come from all over the country and the world. It isn't uncommon to hear several languages spoken by the tourists who come to Slidell and Pearl River to see the swamp. But the universal language of wonderment is the same; all humans gasp at the sight of a majestic heron flying overhead or a 12-foot alligator sizing them up from a yard away.

Rogers of Cajun Encounters tours says the sights of the swamp are different every time, from day to day, season to season. Visitors in spring will see the most color, as irises and water hyacinths bloom in profusion; summer is prime time to see alligators. In the fall, the cypress trees begin changing from brilliant green to a rust color. And winter has its own beauty, the cypress trees bare, the gators mostly dormant but other wildlife more active and visible.

Most tours take visitors out in motorized boats, holding 15 to 24 passengers. These aren't airboats like the ones seen in Florida and some other Louisiana swamps. Operators offer pickup and return from New Orleans hotels but better to arrive on your own and explore more of the area after the tour has whetted your appetite.

St. Tammany Parish has more than 80,000 acres of wilderness preserve. The Honey Island Swamp, on the parish's eastern edge, is just one course in a menu of state parks, nature trails, national wildlife reserve, scenic rivers and bayous, all easily accessible and waiting for you. 🦋



Cast of monster footprint at Abita Mystery House.

Bigfoot of the swamp

The Honey Island Swamp has natural beauty and, just maybe its own Bigfoot creature. Described as bipedal, over 7 feet tall and weighing 400-500 pounds with matted brown hair and eye-wateringly bad body odor, the Honey Island Swamp Monster was first sighted by two local men in 1963.

Air traffic controller Harlan Ford and his friend Billy Mills were hunting when they came across what they believed to be the monster. Ford would never forget the encounter, going back on subsequent visits to try and catch one more glimpse. His granddaughter, Dana Holyfield, keeps the story alive, displaying plaster casts of the creature's large feet, writing children's books about the critter and selling T-shirts with his likeness. A documentary filmmaker, she made a short film that included 8mm film footage shot by her grandfather. You can check out the video on her website, SWAMPMONSTER.WEEBLY.COM or at LOUISIANANORTHSHORE.COM where there is a snippet in the *GoSwamp* video. Holyfield's monster has been featured on numerous TV shows, including Animal Planet and the Syfy channel's *Swamp Monsters*.

Swamp man

Neil Benson shares
his magical world

To see Neil Benson in action at his Pearl River Eco-Tours is to see a man who's found his proper place in the world. Clad in jeans, or sometimes, overalls, with hair pulled back and a hint of wind- and sunburn on his face, Benson is what ladies might once have called "strapping," with beefy arms and a boyish smile.

You'd never guess, hearing him greet visitors with yessir and hello, dawlin', that he once made his living as a mortgage banker before succumbing to the siren call of his childhood stomping grounds. Benson says he grew up exploring the Honey Island Swamp. He knew its secrets, every bend of the river, hiding holes and sweet spots.

Yes, he left for a while. Went to college. Pursued a career, acted like a grownup. "I wore a suit all the time!" And now he's home, back on the bayou, showing people from all over the world, people who live like he used to live, his swamp.

"To me this is a magical and beautiful place and I truly love what I do," he says. "I am very blessed to be able to share this world with others." 🦋





Insta-gator!

HOME TO MORE THAN 2,000 REPTILES, Insta-Gator Ranch & Hatchery is a fun and educational way to learn more about the alligators that make their homes in Louisiana's wetlands. Tour the ranch, located about 10 minutes from downtown Covington, and see alligators in clear water. Guides recount the gators' story and explain the industry that sprang from the need for preserving the species.

You'll have a chance to see an alligator up close and touch it (he's small and his snout is taped, no worries). Make plans to come back in August when, for a few short weeks, you can hold a gator egg in your hand and watch it hatch.

23440 LOWE DAVIS ROAD, COVINGTON

A little reptilian for you ...

- There are two living species of alligator. The one you'll see in the United States, in southern swamps and wetlands from Texas to North Carolina, is *A. Mississippiensis*. (The other is the Chinese alligator.)
- The American alligator averages about 800 pounds and can be from 10-15 feet long, though the largest ever recorded was found right here in Louisiana. It measured a nightmare-inducing 19.2 feet from snout to tip of tail.
- Alligators can run about 20 miles per hour in short bursts
- Diet consists mostly of fish, turtles, small mammals and birds, though alligators have been known to attack dogs, deer and on rare occasions, humans. The reptiles mostly try to avoid humans, though some deaths do occur each year, mostly in areas where natural habitat has been encroached upon or destroyed.
- The state's alligator population, according to Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries, is around 2 million, the most of any state. After population declines by the mid-20th century, harvest quotas and other protections were put into place. Populations now are at sustainable levels.
- The alligator is the state reptile of Louisiana, designated in 1983.
- Alligators have been harvested since the 1800s for their skins and oil (used for greasing steam engines). The Confederacy used the skins for soldiers' boots and saddles during the Civil War.
- Alligators today represent a \$50 million industry for Louisiana with most parts of the animal being used. Shoes, purses and other items of alligator skin fetch high prices and the meat — tastes like chicken, yes — is increasingly offered in the state's restaurants.
- Mating season is April to May. Alligators begin mating when around 6-feet long. Females build a nest and lay 20-60 eggs, then cover the nest with vegetation and hang out for 65 days or so until the little eggs begin to hatch.



NORTHSHORE EXPLORE

COME ON IN

Explore the Northshore through the eyes of an eccentric and artsy curmudgeon at the Abita Mystery House or by pedaling your way through nature on the beautiful Tammany Trace. Two state parks, nature trails and a national wildlife reserve are just part of the 80,000 acres of green space — and magic — waiting for you.



Art and oddities, oh my

Everything silly and sublime finds a home at John Preble's eclectic Abita Mystery House

Sprung from the twisted brain of Abita impresario/artist John Preble, pictured at left, the Abita Mystery House is a roadside attraction-like emporium of outsider art, Southern wit and the flotsam and jetsam of modern life. Fun for all ages, the Mystery House has hands-on exhibits, mythical creatures like Darrel the Dogigator (half dog, half ... you know),

and what may be the state's best gift shop. Preble's wily self-promotion and spots on shows like *American Pickers* have pulled in visitors from around the world. If you go, bring your sense of humor. And three bucks. Because that's what it costs to get in at the Mystery House, where "everyone is welcome, even your family."

22275 HIGHWAY 36, ABITA SPRINGS 🐜

Don't miss...

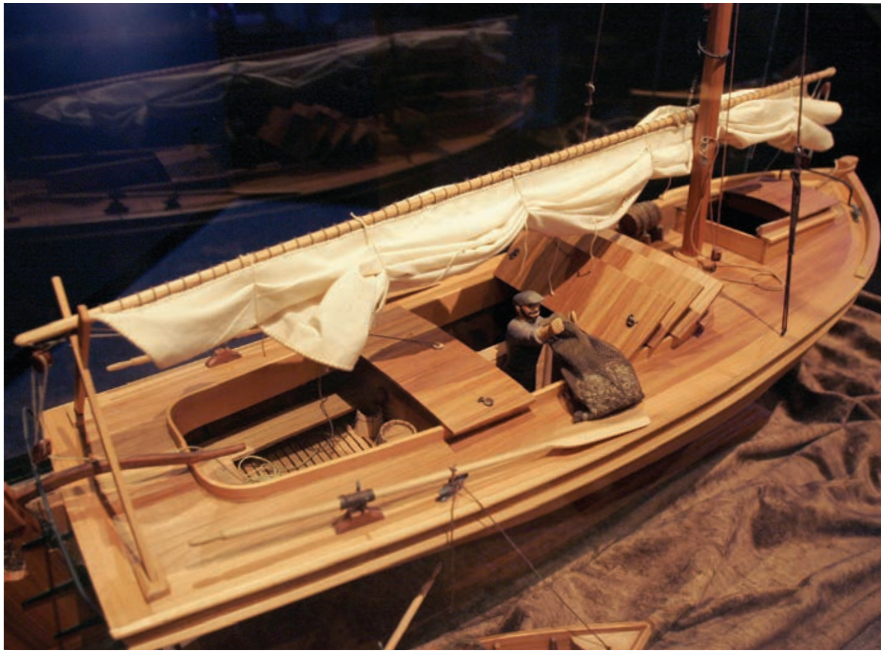
BIG BRANCH MARSH NWR: This huge refuge offers two miles of trails and walkways and is rich in wildlife and recreational activities like bird watching, guided tours, hiking, paddling and fishing. Winter months offer spectacular blooms of old camellias and azaleas in the visitor center's garden. 61389 HIGHWAY 434, LACOMBE

THE NEW WALKER PERCY STATUE: Bogue Falaya Park in downtown Covington is home to a new statue memorializing the late Walker Percy, author of "The Movie Goer" and "Love in the Ruins." Percy lived and wrote in Covington and is buried nearby at St. Joseph's Abbey.

213 PARK DRIVE, COVINGTON



SLIDELL HISTORY MUSEUM: Built in 1907, Slidell's former jail now does double duty as the Mardi Gras museum (upstairs) and a history museum down. Artifacts from Slidell's past fill the old jail's five cells. Shown here: iconic bricks from St. Joe Brick Works, located in nearby Pearl River since 1895. 2020 FIRST ST., SLIDELL



History ahoy

Madisonville's Maritime Museum showcases 19th-century lighthouse, area's rich seagoing past

It's hard not to imagine the nearby Tchefuncte River filled with schooners, war boats and steamers when you visit the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Maritime Museum in picturesque Madisonville. The museum tells the story of the Northshore's seaport roots through well-done exhibits, artifacts (a Civil War submarine!), video and events like boat building classes and the Wooden Boat Festival

held each October (see Pg. 5).

The museum is custodian of the nearby Tchefuncte River lighthouse, built in 1837, still standing but put at risk by storms and shoreline erosion. You can't tour the lighthouse but you can visit the lightkeeper's cottage, moved from the mouth of the Tchefuncte where it long stood next to the lighthouse.

133 MABEL DR., MADISONVILLE 

Don't miss...

TWO STATE PARKS: Find 2,800 acres of green space, a sandy beach, camping sites, trails and cabins at Fontainebleau on the edge of Mandeville. A few minutes away, Madisonville's Fairview Riverside State Park offers camping, the historic Otis House museum, and fishing and boating on the Tchefuncte River.

FONTAINEBLEAU:

62883 HWY 1089, MANDEVILLE

FAIRVIEW RIVERSIDE:

119 FAIRVIEW, MADISONVILLE

BOGUE FALAYA WAYSIDE PARK: This pretty little park in Covington on the Bogue Falaya River's sandy banks, is a favorite of parents with young kids thanks to unique play areas, picnic tables and the peaceful setting. It's also a great put-in point for kayaks and paddleboards (rentals nearby at Brooks' Bike Shop).

213 PARK DRIVE, COVINGTON

CAMP SALMEN NATURE PARK: The 130-acre nature park offers four short trails, all under one mile, for a look at the historic area's flora and fauna. There are pavilions, picnic tables, a boardwalk and a Kids Unlimited playground for children of all abilities. The park is open year-round Wednesdays-Sundays.

35122 PARISH PARKWAY, SLIDELL

The LPB Maritime Museum on the banks of the Tchefuncte River



On the path

It's easy to explore the parish
via the scenic Tammany Trace

The 31-mile-long Tammany Trace winds through green spaces, parks and over bayous, offering all who hike or bike the path a way to surround themselves in the Northshore's natural beauty. Originally a corridor for the Illinois Central Railroad, the Trace now is a paved path, stretching from downtown Covington, through Abita Springs, Mandeville and Lacombe, all the way to Slidell with trailheads along the way.

Some users stroll or pedal leisurely, others power-walk the path. Serious cyclists, in racing jerseys and Lycra shorts with padded buns, whiz through from beginning to end and back. Whether you travel a few blocks or go the distance, the Trace is a special and easy way to experience the Northshore at your own pace.

There are numerous entry spots for the Trace, Louisiana's only rails-to-trails conversion, but the official Trailhead is located on Koop Drive off Highway 59 where a green caboose serves as the info center and ranger office. Bike rentals are available in several towns.

The Tammany Trace is closed to motorized traffic except for the small carts used by park rangers who patrol its length from 7:30 a.m. to dusk daily. 🦋



LOOKING BACK

Northshore residents live among the ghosts of St. Tammany's past. Experience history at places like the Lang House, a tourable Anglo-Creole cottage in Mandeville, or HJ Smith & Sons' 19th-century general store still operating in downtown Covington.



An old grindstone is just one of the artifacts at HJ Smith & Sons.

Check out the general store

HJ Smith & Sons' free museum a revealing stroll through everyday life in 19th-century Covington

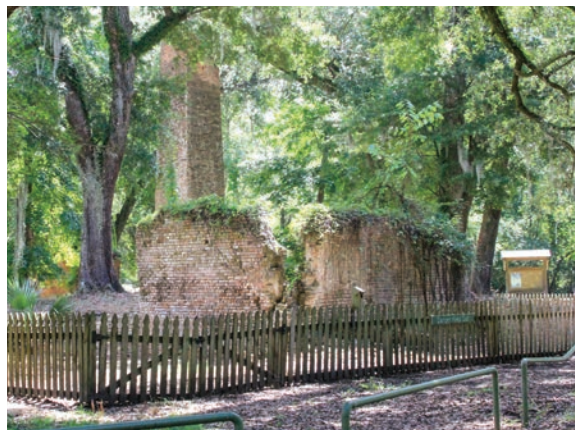
You can't miss the obviously old wooden structure on Covington's Columbia Street, with its wagon out front, vintage swing and Bonanza vibe. Step inside, though, and find a place where worlds collide, old and new, mundane and bizarre. Opened in 1876, the general store is still operated by the Smith family who've stocked it to the rafters with everything from chuckwagon stoves to camo, garden gnomes, gator paw back scratchers and the precise nail needed for a home project.

Floors creak and history hangs in the air, especially when a small ramp leads you into the original general store, preserved by the family in all its mercantile glory as a free museum. It's fun to see the artifacts of Covington's past, a cast iron casket, 20-foot cypress dugout and old-timey cases crammed with detergent-box

china, farm tools and dry goods.

Back up front, before you leave, get yourself a lucky rabbit's foot (or a Dutch oven or some local honey) and be sure to chat with whichever Smith is behind the counter that day.

308 N. COLUMBIA ST., COVINGTON 🐛



Park's past

BERNARD DE MARIGNY DE MANDEVILLE

left his mark on both sides of Lake Pontchartrain. Born in New Orleans in 1785 into a wealthy family, he created an early 19th-century subdivision now famously known in that city as the Marigny. On the lake's northern shore he built a sugar mill and kiln on 4,000 acres he had purchased and named it Fontainebleau. Now a beautiful state park, Fontainebleau is a

short ride to the town of Mandeville, which he named for himself after subdividing the lakefront property into almost 400 lots that he sold to affluent New Orleanians for summer homes. You can still see many 19th-century buildings in the Mandeville of today, which also features shops, restaurants and B&Bs. If you visit nearby Fontainebleau, check out the brick sugar mill ruins and the gorgeous old oaks. 🐛

St. Tammany timeline

Originally home to Choctaw and other tribes, the parish has been shaped by various cultures and events

1600 B.C.

The Choctaw inhabit the northern shore of Lake Pontchartrain, which they called Ok-wa'ta (meaning "wide water").

1699

Explorers Pierre LeMoyne Sieur d'Iberville and Jean Batiste LeMoyne Sieur de Bienville check out the Northshore.

1803

The U.S. acquires 828,000 square miles of territory in the Louisiana Purchase, which does not include St. Tammany Parish.

1810

The Republic of West Florida is formed to revolt against Spanish authority in the area — and lasts 74 days.

1812

Louisiana admitted to the Union in April. West Florida resists but becomes part of the state five months later.

1830

Bernard de Marigny builds sugar plantation (now Fontainebleau State Park), then founds Mandeville a few miles west.

1887

Tourism boom begins in Abita Springs when a doctor declares the area's local springs have restorative qualities.

1956

First span of the 24-mile Pontchartrain Causeway is built, creating the longest continuous bridge over water in the world.



Life at the Lang House

Tour this charming little museum for a glimpse into the early days of Mandeville

Tour the Jean Baptiste Lang House, just blocks from Mandeville's lakefront, and learn that it was built in the early 1850s by a Belgian-born tobaccoist who made his living in New Orleans and his home (post-divorce) in the little Anglo-Creole cottage. Almost

destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, the house was rescued, restored and repurposed by preservationists to provide a unique glimpse into the fascinating history of Old Mandeville. Tours are free, given Wednesday-Saturday.

605 CARROLL ST., MANDEVILLE 🐛

Special spaces

SMALL MUSEUMS OFFER A FOCUSED TAKE on an area's culture and history. On the Northshore, check out the Abita Springs Trailhead Museum, a special space at the heart of town known for history exhibits, art and culture festivals and its location on the Tammany Trace; the GOSH Museum, operated by the Guardians of Slidell History, with new exhibits every four months; and the Madisonville Museum, housed in the town's 1911 courthouse, offering Civil War artifacts, displays about history and Native American culture. Scheduled to

reopen in early 2019; Bayou Lacombe Museum, back after renovations, with historic, cultural and folklife exhibits. 🐛





PHOTO KEVIN GARRETT

NO SPLURGE

Oh sweet!

Shop for joy by the ounce at Mandeville's beguiling Candy Bank

CAUTION: THERE WILL BE SENSORY overload when you enter. You WILL have control issues. Let go and enjoy 'em, babe. This is the Candy Bank, a wonderfully Wonka-esque homage to the sweetness in life. You won't find any oompa loompas here, but you might catch owner Lisa Keiffer putting out her made-right-here fudge (with real butter and real cream). And you for sure will find the candy of your childhood dreams and your grandma's childhood dreams, too. Mary Janes and Sugar Babies, gummi worms and Swedish fish, jewelry made of candy, candy made of everything. Lots of yummy stuff drenched in chocolate, like cashews and cordials and coffee beans and sea salt caramel popcorn.

A charming old bank building in Mandeville's historic district is home to the confectionery, which also serves up ice cream sundries, gazillions of bottled sodas, and a mean cappuccino, too. Load up on sugar here for the energy you'll need to check out the shops on nearby Girard Street, a picturesque little stretch of clothing, gift and antiques shops. There are restaurants, brew pubs, bed and breakfasts and a lovely lakefront all within walking distance of the Candy Bank, beloved by kids of all ages.

201 CARROLL ST, MANDEVILLE 

FIVE SPOTS

DOWNTOWN COVINGTON

The town's historic district is a walkable feast for shopaholics, with quaint streets, cottage boutiques, restaurants, galleries and so much more. Check out Lee Lane, Rutland and Columbia streets for sure.

PREMIER SHOPPING CENTERS, MANDEVILLE

The Gap, Old Navy, Banana Republic and Anne Taylor Loft are among the shops at this large center on Highway 190.

RIVER CHASE SHOPPING CENTER, COVINGTON

Located at I-12 and Highway 21, the center beckons with Best Buy, Marshall's, Target, Lane Bryant and more. (Restaurants and a multiplex movie theater, too.)

PINNACLE NORD DU LAC, COVINGTON

Find Kohl's, Kirkland's and Academy here, as well as specialty shops like Ban Soleil Sunglasses and Bra Genie. Restaurants, lodging and more coming. I-12 at Pinnacle Parkway.

HIGHWAY 21, COVINGTON

This busy stretch has become quite the corridor for shoppers with something new popping up weekly. Simply Southern is one of the faves here, a locals' go-to spot for special handcrafted gift items by Louisiana artists. Monk-made soap, jewelry, housewares, and more.



Ready, set, shop

You can find everything from art and antiques to pet treats and tennis shoes in Slidell

As St. Tammany's largest city, Slidell offers a variety of shopping opportunities, including quaint shops in the Olde Towne historic district and the larger and modern Fremaux Town Center.

Venture off the interstate and visit Olde Towne to check out the shops in the vicinity of First, Erlanger and Carey streets. Barbara's Victorian Closet antique mall anchors a corner and offers something for anyone. Nearby are Aunt Tiques Curiosities, Café Du Bone (for dog treats, of course), the 1808 Marketplace multi-artist gallery and Green Oaks Apothecary for soaps and aromatherapy wants.

If mall shopping's your thing, visit Fremaux Town Center on I-10 at the Fremaux exit for retailers like Dillards, TJ Maxx, Michael's, Kohl's, Best Buy and scores more. 🐛



Pick up Louisiana souvenirs, quality Bayou State housewares and crazy-good jars of Cajun Mayo or better yet, oooh, praline topping at Bayou Country Village. A giant emporium of Louisiana-themed products, toys and food-stuffs, T-shirts and cookbooks. Bayou Country is located right on Interstate 10 at the Oak Harbor exit.

With 80,000 acres of wilderness preserve, the Northshore's a birding paradise.



PHOTOKEVIN GARRETT

Enter to Win A Northshore Getaway

Go to www.LouisianaNorthshore.com/getaway, sign up to receive emails, and you'll automatically be entered to win a trip for two!



THE GETAWAY

Two-night stay at the Southern Hotel
Sunset kayak paddle with Bayou Adventure
Tour with Cajun Encounters
Dinner at LOLA in Covington
Dinner at Oxlot 9 in the Southern Hotel
Breakfast at Liz's Where Y'at Diner
Lunch at Palmettos on the Bayou
Northshore culinary & brewery basket

GO TO LOUISIANANORTHSHORE.COM/THINGS-TO-DO/TOP-TEN FOR MORE VACATION IDEAS.