



INFORMATION



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BIKE TRAIL



CABINS



CAMPING



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PICNIC TABLES



VIEWING AREA



HIKING TRAIL



RESTAURANT



VISITOR CENTER



WATER FOUNTAIN



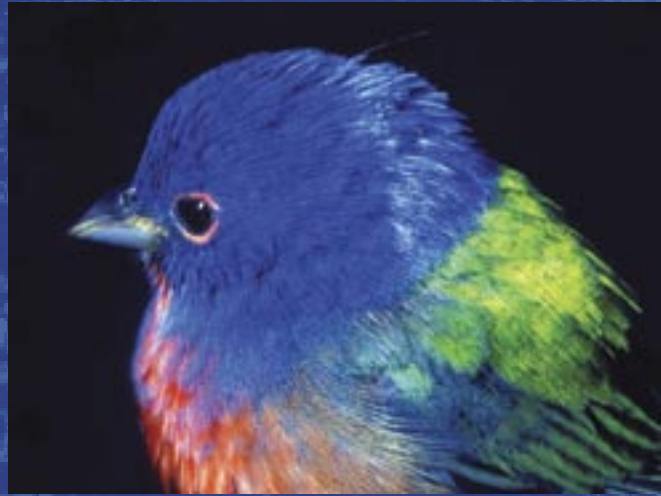
FISHING



SWIMMING



BEACH



# Bayou Birds



*Creole Nature Trail*  
*All-American Road:*  
*Creole Loop*

337-436-9588

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America's  
 Wetland  
 Birding Trail  
 On Louisiana's  
 Great Gulf Coast



Part of The Great American Trails Network

## CREOLE LOOP

The Creole Loop begins in the mixed pine-hardwoods of Sam Houston Jones State Park, just above Lake Charles, LA, and winds southward toward the Gulf of Mexico through a wide array of grassland and forested habitats. Down in the little community of Holmwood, the loop detours for a number of miles through a series of quiet, agricultural roads from which waterfowl, sparrows, and hedgerow-associated birds (Eastern Phoebe, vireos, kinglets, warblers, and Northern Cardinal, to name a few) may be viewed during the winter months. Another interesting birding phenomenon occurs from late July to September when numerous migrating flycatcher species crowd into the prickly ash trees (flycatchers relish the berries!) that line these roadsides for long stretches.

Midway through the loop, the landscape opens into a massive freshwater-brackish marsh complex which can be safely studied and interpreted via the Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge, and still further south at the Rockefeller State Wildlife Refuge. Also of special interest are 1) the up-close and personal looks visitors will get of chenier habitat at Little Chenier and Nunez Woods, and 2) the excellent opportunities for leisurely studies of gulls, terns, and other seabirds at Rutherford Beach and Cameron's East Jetty Fishing Pier and RV Park. Take advantage of the observation tower at the latter site, from which you may view not only seabirds, but also Clapper Rail, Seaside Sparrow, and other finds in the salt marsh directly below the tower.



## Sam Houston Jones State Park

### Site 2-1



**Site access:** Fee, Daily

**GPS coordinates:** N 30.30068; W 93.2555

**Site contact:** Park Fee Station; 888-677-7264

**Website:** [www.LaStateParks.com](http://www.LaStateParks.com)

**Directions:** From the intersection of I 10 and US 171 (Exit 33/ Moss Bluff Exit) in Lake Charles, go north on US 171/ N. Martin Luther King Hwy for 3.8 miles to LA 378. Turn left (west) on LA 378/ Sam Houston Jones Pkwy and follow signs 3.4 miles to the park.

**Description:** Sam Houston Jones State Park contains a mature mix of upland pines and riparian hardwood forest, as well as cypress-tupelo swamps and open river waters. Geologists have determined that the oldest of southwestern Louisiana's shorelines is located here, at the confluence of the Houston River and the West Fork of the Calcasieu River. To view it, follow the designated nature trail to the overlook on the east bank of the Calcasieu River. Directly across the river is its confluence with the Houston River. The clear, sandy-bottomed nature of the Houston River hints at its Pleistocene beach origin. It is said that this site served as Louisiana's coastline between 112,000-130,000 years ago.

While walking the nature trail, or visiting any of the campsites, cabins, picnic areas, or boat ramps associated with the park, watch for resident Anhinga, Red-shouldered Hawk, Barred Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Eastern Bluebird, and even American Crow. As you move southward toward the coast, these species become increasingly difficult to find.

During fall and winter, numerous short and long-distance migrants such as Osprey, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, House Wren, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned kinglets, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and others join the mix.

## Holmwood Mini-Loop

### Site 2-2



**Site Access:** Free, Daily

**GPS Coordinates:** N 30.12623; W 93.08002

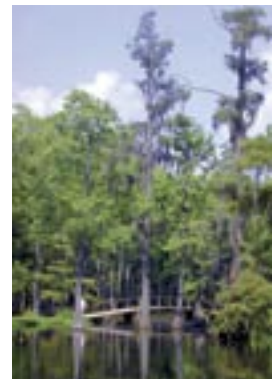
**Site Contact:** Southwest Louisiana/Lake Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau; 800-456-SWLA

**Directions:** From the intersection of I 10 and US 171 (Exit 33/ Moss Bluff Exit) in Lake Charles, go east on I 10 for 2.7 miles to Exit 36/ LA 397. Go south on LA 397 for 5.8 miles to LA 14. Turn left and go east 5.0 miles to the intersection of LA 27E and LA 14. Go left (east) onto LA 14 for 2.9 miles to Fruge Road. Go right (south) on Fruge Road for 4.0 miles to Lionel Derouen Road. Follow Lionel Derouen Road east for 1.8 miles to LA 27E. Here, visitors may opt to go left (south) toward the Cameron Prairie NWR (7.7 miles), or right (north) back 2.9 miles to the intersection of LA 14 and LA 27E.

**Description:** This agriculturally-based "mini-loop" can provide excellent birding opportunities, particularly during the fall, winter, and early spring months when large numbers of ducks, geese, hawks, sparrows, flycatchers, and selected songbirds crowd into the fields and hedgerows. Snow Geese flocks often number into the tens of thousands. Birders equipped with spotting scopes can search for additional goose species such as Greater White-fronted, Canada, and Ross's geese.

During early fall, substantial numbers of flycatchers take advantage of fruiting elderberry and prickly ash trees that line the fences and hedgerows. Look for Eastern Wood-Pewee, Yellow-bellied, Acadian, Least, and Alder Flycatchers, Eastern Kingbird, and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. During fall into winter, watch for western species such as Vermilion and Ash-throated flycatchers, as well as Western Kingbird.

The biggest avian draws to this mini-loop, however, are the small, isolated flocks of Sandhill Cranes, which congregate here from late fall to early spring. These giants can be found in the fields adjacent to either side of LA 82.



Louisiana's coastal wetlands make up the seventh largest delta on earth and are the heart of an intricate ecosystem on the verge of collapse. This valuable landscape is disappearing at a rate of 25 square miles per year, the equivalent to losing over 21,000 football fields.



## Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters



Site 2-3



**Site Access:** Free, Daily

**GPS Coordinates:** N 29.94634; W 93.08441

**Site contact:** Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center; 337-598-2216

**Website:** <http://cameronprairie.fws.gov/>

**Directions:** From the intersection of I 10 and US 171 (Exit 33/ Moss Bluff Exit) in Lake Charles, go east on I 10 for 2.7 miles to Exit 36/ LA 397. Go south on LA 397 for 5.8 miles to LA 14. Turn left and go east 5.0 miles to LA 27E. Continue south on LA 27E for about 11 miles to the facility on the right side of the road.

**Description:** The entryway to this facility features an elevated walkway across a small freshwater marsh. Look for year round residents such as Marsh Wren, Common Yellowthroat, and Red-winged Blackbird darting over the tops of the cattails and rushes. In the water below, watch as Red-eared Sliders entertain guests with their aquatic antics.

Butterflies and dragonflies abound at Cameron Prairie NWR. Species such as Gulf Fritillary and Giant Swallowtail butterflies and Eastern Pondhawk and Roseate Skimmer dragonflies can be found here on any warm day.

During spring and fall migrations, look for Least Bittern, Green Heron, Virginia Rail, Eastern Wood-Pewee, various swallows, and songbirds such as Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Gray Catbird, Summer Tanager, Lincoln's Sparrow, and Orchard Oriole.

From November through March, winter residents such as Belted Kingfisher, Loggerhead Shrike, Sedge Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Yellow-rumped Warbler decorate the facility's utility poles, small trees and shrubs.

Inside the center, restrooms, water, and brochures are available. Also, take the time to view the outstanding biological and cultural exhibits to learn the finer points of human and animal life on the marsh.

## Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge Pintail Drive

Site 2-4



**Site Access:** Free, Daily

**GPS Coordinates:** N 29.94634; W 93.08441

**Site contact:** Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center; 337-598-2216

**Website:** <http://cameronprairie.fws.gov/>

**Directions:** From the intersection of I 10 and US 171 (Exit 33/ Moss Bluff Exit) in Lake Charles, go east on I 10 for 2.7 miles to Exit 36/ LA 397. Go south on LA 397 for 5.8 miles to LA 14. Turn left and go east 5.0 miles to LA 27E. Continue south on LA 27E for about 12.7 miles to the drive entrance on the left side of the road.

**Description:** This 3-mile driving loop traverses canal-side hedgerow-type scrub, prairie, and marsh habitats which hold all manner of bird life from flycatchers, wrens, warblers, sparrows and buntings in the hedgerows, to ducks and geese (late fall/ winter/ early spring only) in the marsh and prairie.

Between late November through early February large concentrations of Snow and Greater White-fronted geese pack into this relatively small site. Look also for less common species such as Ross's and Canada geese. Careful perusing of the hedgerows here during the same season can also produce western flycatchers such as Vermilion and Ash-throated, among others. Drive-up informational kiosks depicting the finer points of waterfowl identification are placed at intervals around the drive.

Butterfly and/ or dragonfly fanciers may also want to include their field guides on this drive. Numerous species of both are abundantly present nearly year round. Beginners should look especially for the larger/ showier butterflies such as the tiger swallowtail and Viceroy (near the hedgerows), and dragonflies such as the Roseate Skimmer, Four-spotted Pennant, and the amber-washed Halloween Pennant.



## Gibbstown Bridge South Boat Launch



Site 2-5



**Site access:** Free, Daily

**GPS coordinates:** N 29.92731; W 93.07854

**Site contact:** Cameron Parish Tourist Commission;  
337-775-5222

**Directions:** From the intersection of I 10 and US 171 (Exit 33/ Moss Bluff Exit) in Lake Charles, go east on I 10 for 2.7 miles to Exit 36/ LA 397. Go south on LA 397 for 5.8 miles to LA 14. Turn left and go east 5.0 miles to LA 27E. Continue south on LA 27E for about 14.0 miles. Cross the Gibbstown Bridge to the drive entrance located at its southern foot.

**Description:** The Gibbstown Bridge Boat Launch area overlooks a massive open pool and hundreds of acres of freshwater marsh. In summer, this site is studded with blooming white water lily and American lotus. Green Heron, Common Moorhen, and Purple Gallinule ply the shallow waters with their young. Look also for Boat-tailed Grackles, Red-winged Blackbirds, and Common Yellowthroats with their young in tow.

During the late fall, winter, and early spring months this site is packed with waterfowl. In winter, the most common residents include Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Mottled Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, and American Coot. Cinnamon Teal, a western U.S. species rarely observed in Louisiana, has also been recorded on a number of occasions here. Other winter birds to look for include Sora, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Greater Yellowlegs, Laughing and Ring-billed gulls, and Forster's, Caspian, and Gull-billed terns. Scan the utility line towers that span the nearby Intracoastal Waterway for Osprey and Peregrine Falcon, both of which hunt the pool in the cooler months.

## Little Chenier Road

Site 2-6



**Site access:** Free, Daily

**GPS coordinates:** N 29.86057; W 93.08790

**Site contact:** Cameron Parish Tourist Commission;  
337-775-5222

**Directions:** From the intersection of I 10 and US 171 (Exit 33/ Moss Bluff Exit) in Lake Charles, go east on I 10 for 2.7 miles to Exit 36/ LA 397. Go south on LA 397 for 5.8 miles to LA 14. Turn left and go east 5.0 miles to LA 27E. Continue south on LA 27E for about 20.2 miles. Turn left (east) onto Little Chenier Road and follow 15.0 miles to its dead-end. Note: This is a residential area. Please do not pull-off/park in residential driveways or along the portions of roadside that border the yards of the residents. Since most of the property along this road is private, please bird from the roadside only.

**Description:** Little Chenier Road is one of the most scenic drives in Louisiana's entire coastal zone, traversing extensive freshwater marshes dotted with prairie and coastal woodland. During migration, various neotropical songbirds occupy the live oak-dominated woodlands on the higher ridges.

The freshwater marshes along Little Chenier Road hold native aquatic plants such as salt marsh-mallow, American lotus, swamp lily, pickerel-weed, duck-potato, and two or more species of iris. During summer, Purple Gallinule and Common Moorhen commonly nest here.

From the late November through mid-February, waterfowl thickly populate these marshes. Look for Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Mottled Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, and Ruddy Duck. Less common species include Canvasback, Redhead, and Greater Scaup, as well as Cinnamon Teal on a rare occasion. These marshes may also be the only locale in Louisiana where the Fulvous Whistling Duck exists almost completely year round.



“Chenier” is a Cajun French term meaning “oak grove,” and is used to signify a peculiar brand of coastal woodland dominated by coast live oak, and situated atop ancient “stranded” Holocene beach ridges located at regular intervals inland of Louisiana's present-day coastline.



## Rockefeller State Wildlife Refuge Nature Drive

Site 2-7



**Site access:** Free, Daily, Permit

**GPS coordinates:** N 29.73269; W 92.83146

**Site contact:** Guthrie Perry, Refuge Manager;

337-491-2593 / Refuge Headquarters; 337-538-2165

**Directions:** From the intersection of I 10 and US 171 (Exit 33/ Moss Bluff Exit) in Lake Charles, go east on I 10 for 2.7 miles to Exit 36/ LA 397. Go south on LA 397 for 5.8 miles to LA 14. Turn left and head east 5.0 miles to LA 27E. Continue south on LA 27E for about 24.0 miles to Creole, LA. Continue south for another 2.0 miles to Oak Grove. Go left (east) on LA 82 for about 14.0 miles to the entrance on the right.

**Description:** The Rockefeller State Wildlife Refuge Nature Drive is a 6.5-mile drive into a rich assemblage of marshlands, pools, and canals teeming with wildlife. The northern third of the driving loop is dominated by a cattail/ roseau cane/ bullrush freshwater marsh. The southern two-thirds traverses a brackish spartina grass marsh.

During spring, summer, and fall American Alligators abound in the main canals bordering the drive. Look also for resident Pied-billed Grebe, Mottled Duck, Common Moorhen, Marsh Wren, and Common Yellowthroat. After 2.5 miles into the drive, park and climb the observation tower to study marsh birds such as Common Moorhen in the shallow pool directly beneath the tower.

During spring and early summer, visit the Refuge Headquarters to inquire about access to the wading bird rookery which hosts numerous wading bird species, including Roseate Spoonbills.

In winter and early spring, the large pools and canals are filled with many species of ducks such as Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, and Blue-winged Teal.

## Nunez Woods

Site 2-8



**Site access:** Free, Daily (Weekdays), Gate key available at Rockefeller State Wildlife Refuge

**GPS coordinates:** N 29.73269; W 92.83146

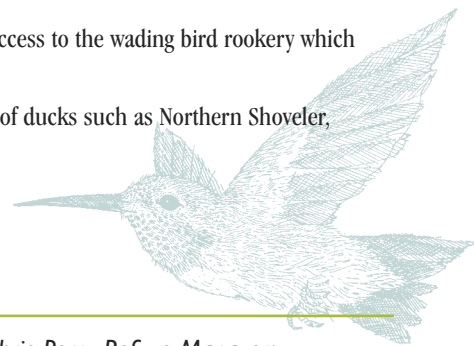
**Site contact:** Guthrie Perry, Refuge Manager;

337-491-2593 / Refuge Headquarters; 337-538-2165

**Directions:** From the intersection of I 10 and US 171 (Exit 33/ Moss Bluff Exit) in Lake Charles, go east on I 10 for 2.7 miles to Exit 36/ LA 397. Go south on LA 397 for 5.8 miles to LA 14. Turn left and go east 5.0 miles to LA 27E. Continue south on LA 27E for about 24.0 miles to Creole, LA. Continue south for another 2.0 miles to Oak Grove, LA. Go left (east) on LA 82 for about 16.0 miles to the entrance on the left.

**Description:** Nunez Woods is an extensive hackberry-dominated forest nestled firmly within the Grand Chenier complex, a massive coastal woodland stretching 30 miles east and west between the communities of Oak Grove and North Island in Cameron Parish. During spring and fall, coastal cheniers play a crucial role in providing temporary shelter and nutrition to migrating neotropical songbirds. Look for migrant flycatchers, vireos, thrushes, warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks, and orioles. In spring, appearances of these birds will be associated with inclement weather, particularly the passage of Canadian cool fronts through the area. Spring migrants will be brightly-colored in their alternate (breeding) plumages.

In the fall, birds tend to trickle into the coastal woodlands over more extended periods of time. Birds at this time will be more somberly dressed in their basic (non-breeding) plumages. In both spring and fall, birds will be especially animated as they chase down insects, berries, seeds and other forage items in efforts to gain the body mass and energy necessary to complete their migratory treks.



## Rutherford Beach

Site 2-9



**Site access:** Free, Daily

**GPS coordinates:** N 29.75828; W 93.12429

**Site contact:** Cameron Parish Tourist Commission;  
337-775-5222

**Directions:** From the intersection of I 10 and US 171 (Exit 33/ Moss Bluff Exit) in Lake Charles, go east on I 10 for 2.7 miles to Exit 36/ LA 397. Go south on LA 397 for 5.8 miles to LA 14. Turn left and go east 5.0 miles to LA 27E. Continue south on LA 27E for about 24 miles to Creole, LA. Continue south for another 2.0 miles to Oak Grove, LA. Turn right (west) on LA 82 for about 1.0 mile; turn left (south) at the sign to Rutherford Beach and follow 2.0 miles to the beach.

**Description:** As you turn off of LA 82 southward toward Rutherford Beach, scan the marshes, pools, and canals for Caspian and Forster's terns as well as Roseate Spoonbill. During winter, these are joined by Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, White Ibis, Virginia Rail, and on occasion Greater Scaup and American Bittern. At least a half-dozen species of ducks are viewable on almost any given winter day.

The nearshore waters and associated beach are often crowded with Laughing, Ring-billed (winter), Herring (spring, fall, winter), and Bonaparte's (winter) gulls. Winter can bring rare seabird species such as California and Lesser Black-backed gulls, as well as Black-legged Kittiwake. During winter and migration periods also look for Pomarine Jaeger.

In addition to Royal Terns, look for the occasional Common (migration; winter), Black (migration; late summer), Sandwich (summer), and Least (summer) terns. The small clumps of "salt-cedar" at the far western end of Rutherford Beach almost always house unusual birds, such as Prairie Warbler, Western Kingbird, and Grasshopper Sparrow.



More than 95% of all marine species living in the Gulf of Mexico spend all or part of their life cycle in Louisiana's wetlands. Louisiana's wetlands are the wintering habitat for millions of waterfowl and migratory birds whose habitat is lost as the wetlands disappear.

## Cultural/Historical Attractions

### DEQUINCY RAILROAD MUSEUM

Visit the DeQuincy Railroad Museum, located at the intersection of two major railroads, to explore an exhibit which hosts a vintage caboose, steam engine, and mechanical watchmakers. Part of the National Register of Historic Places, the museum has sustained its turn-of-the-century beginnings with historical landmarks.

The museum is free, but donations are welcomed.



## Cameron East Jetty Fishing Pier and RV Park

Site 2-10



**Site access:** Free, Daily

**Site contact:** Cameron Parish Tourist

**GPS coordinates:** N 29.75828; W 93.12429

Commission; 337-775-5222

**Directions:** From the intersection of I 10 and US 171 (Exit 33/ Moss Bluff Exit) in Lake Charles, go east on I 10 for 2.7 miles to Exit 36/ LA 397. Go south on LA 397 for 5.8 miles to LA 14. Turn left and go east 5.0 miles to LA 27E. Continue south on LA 27E for about 25.5 miles to Creole, LA. Go right (west) on LA 27E/ 82 for 13.5 miles to East Jetty Road in Cameron. Turn left (south) on East Jetty Road and go about 3 miles to the Park.

**Description:** In addition to birds, this site offers up-close looks at petroleum and fishing industry boats as they glide out of the Calcasieu Ship Channel into the Gulf of Mexico. Look for pods of Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphins escorting the oil boats or tailing the fishing/ shrimping boats as they cull their catches back to port.

This is one of the few sites along the southwestern coast of Louisiana where salt-marsh habitat is easily accessed and inspected. Look for Clapper Rail, Seaside Sparrow and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (fall/ winter only), along with Wilson's and Semipalmated plovers, and Least and Western sandpipers.

The wooden observation tower at the eastern trail/ gate offers panoramic views of the extensive tidal flats routinely used by a diverse group of seabirds, shorebirds, and wading birds. Seabirds such as Brown Pelican, American White Pelican (fall/ winter/ spring), Laughing Gull, Royal Tern, Caspian Tern, Sandwich Tern (spring/ summer/ fall), Black Skimmer, and wading birds like Reddish and Snowy egrets are nearly always present. Shorebirds such as Black-bellied Plover, Sanderling, Ruddy Turnstone, and Willet are common there as well. Look north into more marsh habitat for additional seabirds like Gull-billed Tern and waders such as White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, and Black-crowned Night-Heron.

## Convention and Visitors Bureaus and Chambers of Commerce

Southwest Louisiana/Lake Charles  
Convention & Visitors Bureau  
1205 N. Lakeshore Drive  
Lake Charles, LA 70601  
Phone: 337-436-9588  
Toll Free Consumer: 800-456-SWLA  
Fax: 337-494-SWLA  
[www.visitlakecharles.org](http://www.visitlakecharles.org)

Cameron Parish Tourist Commission  
433 Marshal Street  
Cameron, LA 70631  
Phone: 337-775-5222  
Fax: 337-775-5754  
[www.cameronparish.net](http://www.cameronparish.net)

Southwest Louisiana Chamber of Commerce  
120 West Pujo Street  
PO Box 3110  
Lake Charles, LA 70602-3110  
Phone: 337-433-3632  
Fax: 337-436-3727  
[www.chamberswla.org](http://www.chamberswla.org)

Cameron Parish Chamber of Commerce  
PO Box 1248  
Cameron, LA 70631  
Phone: 318-775-5222  
<http://user.camtel.net/cameron/public/index.html>

## Creole Nature Trail All-American Road

The more than 180-mile Creole Nature Trail was the first National Scenic Byway in the Gulf South, and the only one to be named solely for its natural intrinsic qualities. It has recently been designated as an All-American Road by the Federal Highway Administration, one of only 20 in the United States. Located halfway between New Orleans and Houston off I-10, this distinctive corridor through Louisiana's Outback is a journey through a wild and rugged terrain unique to Louisiana, America, and the world. In this fertile world where land and water merge and diverge, the notorious pirate Jean Lafitte hid treasure, and French explorers traded with the Attakapas Indians and created colonial Louisiana. In this world, Louisiana's Cajun and Creole cultures took root and grew in harmony with abundant life—a life you can share on the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road.