

EXPERIENCE

guide



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Before Your Journey.....	2-3
Trail Route	
Sulphur to Hackberry	4
Hackberry to Holly Beach	5
Holly Beach to Cameron & Oak Grove	7
Creole to Lake Charles	8
Eastern & Western Spurs	9
Lacassine Spur	10
American Alligators.....	11
Birding	12-13
Beaches & Shelling.....	14
Crabbing.....	14
Fishing	15
Hunting & Licensing	16-17
Louisiana Seafood	18-19

WELCOME TO LAKE CHARLES/ SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

Experiencing the beauty of nature has never been easier with the Creole Nature Trail nestled between two main entry gateways, one in Sulphur (western gateway) and another in Lake Charles (eastern gateway) right off Interstate 10.

The entire area boasts Cajun/Creole food, music, festivals and casino resorts complete with spa, golf and entertainment. So, you can enjoy nature during the day and relax at night - in style. For places to stay, eat, shop and explore while in town, log onto www.visitlakecharles.org.



LACASSINE NATIONAL
WILDLIFE REFUGE

IMAGINE A PLACE where prairie melts into marsh, where the Gulf of Mexico laps against sandy beaches, where rare cheniers are shaped by salty winds. Where birds and butterflies flock in the thousands, lured by the promise of much needed rest and plentiful food.

This is the Creole Nature Trail, one of only 43 scenic byways designated as an All-American Road in the USA, which winds through a rugged area known as *Louisiana's Outback*. It is an amazing blend of people and nature, and a rare opportunity to view abundant wildlife completely in their natural habitat, without enclosures.



GREAT EGRET AND
SNOWY EGRET

As you drive the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road, the prairies and marshes of *Louisiana's Outback* may appear peaceful and tranquil, but don't be fooled. These lands and waters—both salt and fresh—are teeming with life and activity. There are 28 species of mammals, more than 400 different birds, 35 amphibians and reptiles, 132 species of fish and thousands of migrating butterflies in the spring and fall.

The Creole Nature Trail is also home to people whose lives are linked closely to this place that is part land, part water. As distinct as the land that they love, they depend on its bounty—and celebrate with a *joie de vivre*, or joy of life, that is like none other.



BEFORE YOUR JOURNEY

In advance of traveling the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road, it's best to fill up on gas and grab some beverages or even a picnic lunch for the road. Also, remember phone chargers, camera batteries, sunscreen and insect repellent.

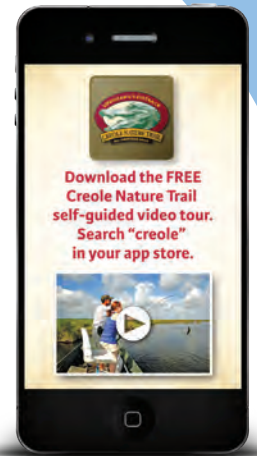
Kick off your outdoor excursion at **Creole Nature Trail Adventure Point**, 2740 Ruth St., just south of Exit 20 in Sulphur (at the western gateway to the trail) to familiarize yourself with the trail and Southwest Louisiana. At Adventure Point, imaginative hands-on displays invite you to take a peek at wildlife found in bayous and marshes, smell the mouthwatering aromas of Cajun/Creole cooking and “play along” with a Cajun and Zydeco band. Knowledgeable adventure guides are also on hand at this free attraction to assist with any questions you may have.



CREOLE
NATURE TRAIL
ADVENTURE POINT



The most popular entrances to the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road are off Interstate 10 — in Sulphur (Exit 20) and just east of Lake Charles at La 397 (Exit 36). Whichever entrance you choose, be sure to download the free “creole” personal tour app in advance to get the full *Louisiana's Outback* experience! Available in six languages, once downloaded, the app uses your device's GPS to indicate when you should push “play” to view audio/video content as you travel the trail.



The app will also point out some locations of public restrooms along the way, but they are limited. Most importantly, assign each person in the vehicle to a window. On the Creole Nature Trail, everyone is a lookout!

Timing: The most frequently travelled portion of the trail is the main loop from Sulphur to the Gulf of Mexico and back up to Lake Charles which takes about four to six hours, depending on stops and taking in the sights. Three spurs off the main trail (see page 9) offer additional exploration if time allows.

IDENTIFY INTERESTS ALONG THE WAY WITH THESE SYMBOLS.



Buy or
Catch
Shrimp

Fishing
or
Charter
Fishing

Gas

Food/
Drink

Beach/
Shelling

Crabbing

Restrooms

Route
Choice

NEOTROPIC
CORMORANT

2

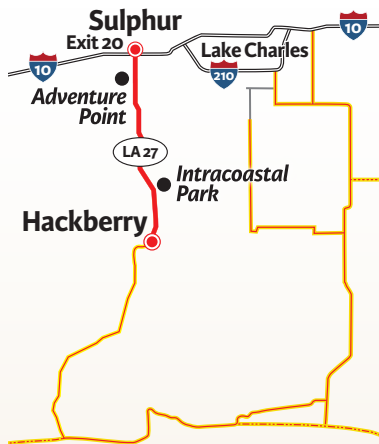
3

For information on where to stay overnight, festivals, events, dining and other activities near the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road, visit www.VisitLakeCharles.org.

Share your trail adventures by tagging your photos with #VisitLakeCharles. [f](#) [t](#) [i](#)

SULPHUR TO HACKBERRY

17.1 miles



Between Sulphur and Hackberry, Louisiana's Outback is somewhat industrial as solid land slowly slides to marshland. Just before reaching Hackberry, you'll cross over the Intracoastal Waterway. (The Intracoastal Waterway stretches from Brownsville, Texas to New Jersey.) The massive tanks and pipelines you see just past the bridge are part of the

area's LNG (liquefied natural gas) industry. LNG is a clear, odorless, nontoxic liquid that is formed when natural gas is super-cooled to minus 260 degrees Fahrenheit. This process shrinks the volume dramatically making the resource easier and more economical for transport over long distances.

Hackberry is a center for commercial crabbing, fishing and shrimping. It is also home to some of the first oil wells drilled in Louisiana.

SULPHUR:   

HACKBERRY:     

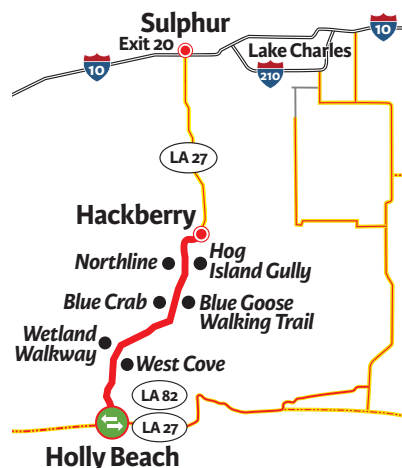
LOUISIANA
BLUE CRAB

CAMERON
LNG

HACKBERRY IS HOME
TO ONE OF THE U.S.
GOVERNMENT'S FOUR
STRATEGIC PETROLEUM
RESERVE SITES.

HACKBERRY TO HOLLY BEACH

19.4 miles



Traveling south, you'll come to the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). As you drive through Sabine NWR, you'll see signage for several recreational areas where you can stop to fish or crab, visit with the locals and perhaps catch sight of alligators. At the Blue Goose Trail, the scenic overlook enables you to look out over the

marshland and see wintering snow geese and many other seasonal migratory birds. There is also a one-mile paved walkway leading you to the edge of Calcasieu Lake.

Continuing south, you'll reach Wetland Walkway, a 1.5 mile handicap-accessible walking path right into the heart of the marsh, complete with a two-story observation tower for panoramic views!

Heading south again, you'll discover Holly Beach—part of 26 miles of accessible Gulf beaches – great for shelling, surf fishing or a blanket picnic.

**SABINE NATIONAL WILDLIFE
REFUGE RECREATION AREAS:**  

WETLAND WALKWAY: 

HOLLY BEACH:  



Route Choice: stay on main loop and head east to Cameron or take the optional western spur towards the Texas border (page 9).



FRESHWATER
FISHING



GULF BEACHES

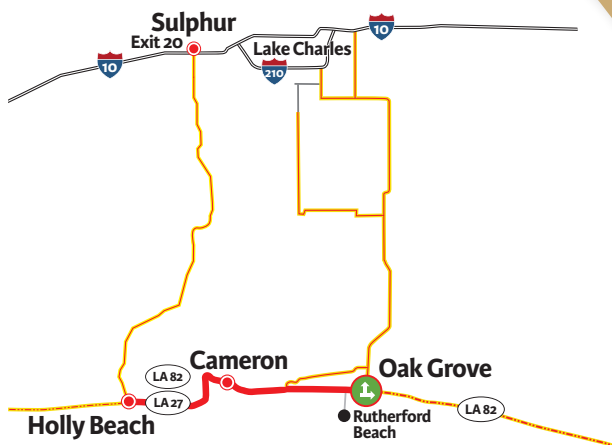


SUMMER
TANAGER



GULF COAST SUNSET

HOLLY BEACH (east) TO CAMERON (10.6 miles) AND OAK GROVE (14 miles from Cameron)



Continuing east from Holly Beach, you will begin to sense the magnitude of Louisiana's oil deposits. The vehicle ferry to Cameron crosses the Calcasieu Ship Channel, which connects the Intracoastal Waterway to the Gulf. Massive freighters, oil tankers, and jack-up rigs seem to dwarf the shrimp boats and recreational vessels as they glide side-by-side along the waterway. Be on the lookout for porpoises and pelicans while on the ferry.

Back on land in the community of Cameron, there are a few walk-up restaurants and convenience stores available.

The next stop heading east is Rutherford Beach where you can enjoy sand, surf fishing, shelling or a soothing, lazy day in the sun. Just east of Rutherford Beach, you'll come to Oak Grove, a small area named for its magnificent live oak trees.

CAMERON:     

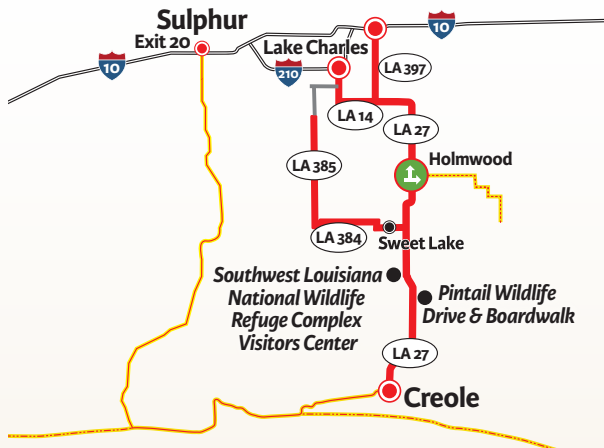
RUTHERFORD BEACH:  



Route Choice: stay on main loop and head north to Creole or take the optional eastern spur to Rockefeller Refuge (page 9).

CREOLE (north) TO LAKE CHARLES

36.6 miles



Just north of Oak Grove, you'll reach the community of Creole. Between Creole and the Conway LeBleu Memorial Bridge back across the Intracoastal Waterway, you'll pass through acres of pristine marshlands. Next stop is Pintail Wildlife Drive, a three-mile driving loop with a half-mile boardwalk on Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge. Then, you'll come to the Visitor Center at Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge with interactive exhibits and two overwater boardwalks where you can spot wildlife.

Continuing north, you can choose to follow LA 27 to LA 14 N. into Lake Charles or, in less than three miles, take LA 384. The 384/385 loop runs through two farming communities and provides access to Calcasieu Lake before returning to Lake Charles.



TRICOLORED HERON

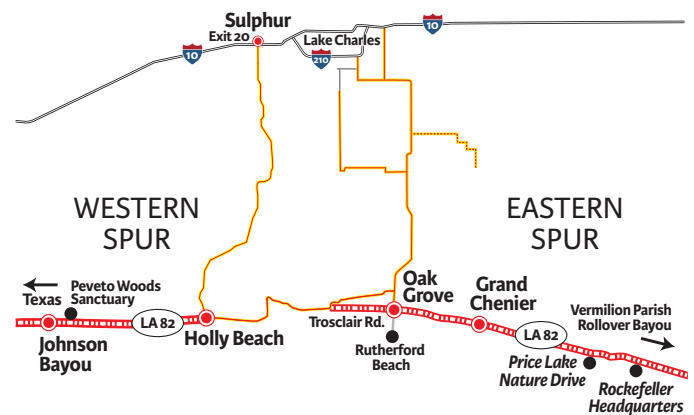
PURPLE IRIS

WESTERN SPUR:

Holly Beach to Texas Border

26.8 miles

The western spur of the trail is for diehard adventure lovers. Stop and shell or enjoy a blanket picnic on five beach areas. For true birders, Peveto Woods Sanctuary is a must-stop. The sanctuary is open year-round for self-guided excursions. LA 82 cuts a path straight to the Lone Star State passing through Johnson Bayou. Just before the Texas border, it is sometimes possible to view the Sabine Pass Lighthouse from LA 82. A working lighthouse for almost 100 years, it survived Civil War battles and many hurricanes before being extinguished in 1952.



EASTERN SPUR:

Oak Grove (east) to Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge

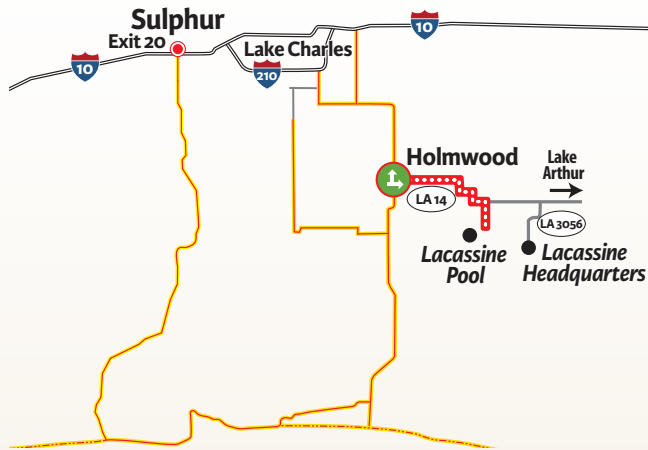
31.1 miles

Heading east from Oak Grove, you'll discover another Louisiana's Outback community: Grand Chenier. And just a little farther—Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge which has the highest alligator nesting density of any place in the USA. Price Lake Nature Drive, open from March to December, is an excellent place to fish and crab. Three miles east of the Rockefeller Refuge Headquarters, you'll find great bank fishing and crabbing at East End Locks boat launch.



LACASSINE SPUR:

Holmwood (east) to the Lacassine “Pool,” 18.2 miles



Another optional jaunt is the Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge. This freshwater marsh refuge is best known for the 16,000 acre Lacassine Impoundment referred to as “The Pool.” One of the few roseate spoonbill nesting rookeries in Louisiana is found here, and there are excellent bank and boat fishing opportunities (boat motors are restricted to 40 horsepower or less) as well as great wildlife viewing and birding spots along the 3-mile wildlife drive around the pool. The Pool is open annually March 15 - October 15.

LACASSINE POOL:



Route Choice: stay on main loop and head north to Lake Charles or take the optional eastern spur to the Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge.

LACASSINE
POOL



GREAT EGRET

AMERICAN ALLIGATORS

Along the marshland roads of the Creole Nature Trail, you may see American alligators, especially on warm, sunny days. Ranging up to 14 feet long, alligators can often be seen lounging on land or drifting along in a canal.



**PLEASE
NEVER FEED
WILDLIFE!**

Alligators may seem slow and ungainly, but they can actually run upwards of 10 mph for short periods. For your own safety, always keep your distance and never feed, tease, prod, or otherwise provoke an alligator! These are wild animals with crushing jaws and powerful tails that can be extremely dangerous. They should always be treated with caution.

Ever wondered how big an alligator is? Estimate the distance from the tip of his snout to between his eyes – now change that number from inches to feet. So, if you see about 6 inches of gator from snout to eyes, chances are you're looking at a 6 foot gator!

**MORE THAN 15,000
ALLIGATORS LIVE IN THE
WETLANDS ALONG THE
CREOLE NATURE TRAIL.**



10

1-800-456-7952

CreoleNatureTrail.org

11



RUBY-THROATED
HUMMINGBIRD
(FEMALE)

BIRDING

It is estimated that as many as half of all land birds that breed in eastern North America pass through Louisiana twice each year. In a typical year, more than 400 different species can be spotted in Southwest Louisiana!



GREAT BLUE
HERON

Whether you wish to see neotropical songbirds fluttering in the trees during the spring and fall, shorebirds refueling in the tidal flats and salt marshes, fields made white by massive flocks of wintering snow geese or butterflies in the late fall to early summer, the Creole Nature Trail is a perfect destination for nature lovers. Birds can be seen year round; however, fall, winter and spring are the best seasons for birding in this area.



AMERICAN
BITTERN



DICKCISSEL



IBIS AND
GALLINULE



HOODED
WARBLER



AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS
AND AMERICAN AVOCETS



BLACK-NECKED
STILT

BEACHES & SHELLING

The 26 miles of natural beaches along the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road are undeveloped and easily accessible providing a wide variety of activities including shelling. Deposits from the Mississippi River's southeast tidal flows most often include a variety of shells such as whelks, cockles, angelwings, olives, wentletraps, coquinas, lettered olive and more. The best opportunities for shelling are at low tide. Check out our Shelling Guide at www.VisitLakeCharles.org/Shells.



SEA SHELLS



CRABBING

CRABBING

From May through September, catching Louisiana blue crabs is great fun along the Creole Nature Trail. All that's needed to crab is thick cotton string; turkey or chicken necks, cut fish or chunks of meat; a dip net for scooping; and a pail to hold the crabs. Drop your string into the water tied to a piece of meat. Have a dip net handy to scoop once the crab has attached to the meat, and then, slowly pull it up. Throw the crab into a bucket, and you are well on your way to a delicious meal. Stay alert because alligators also like bait.

FISHING

The fishing opportunities in *Louisiana's Outback* are almost too numerous to list. It is the activity that is the most accessible to most people. Your choice is between freshwater fishing or saltwater fishing. Then

you must decide if you want to fish from a boat or the shore. Surf fishing is excellent along the beaches and there are plenty of waterways along the Creole Nature Trail perfect for wetting a line. Professional charter guides are also available. Popular catches are speckled trout, redfish, red snapper, black drum and king mackerel.



SPECKLED TROUT



SURF FISHING



CASTNETTING FOR SHRIMP



RED DRUM (REDFISH)

HUNTING

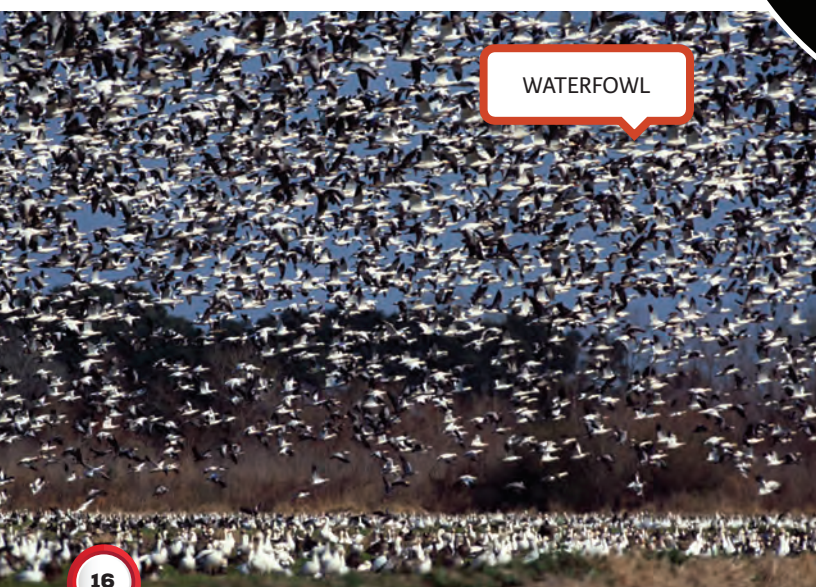
Since the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road resides in the middle of the Central and Mississippi Flyways, millions of waterfowl fly through during the fall and winter months. What makes the area unique is the variety of birds including snow, blue, speckle belly and Canada geese, as well as mallard, pintail and teal ducks, and the number of available hunting areas. In fact, the trail is considered the “grand slam” for hunters, as the region is home to many species of duck. Alligator hunting is also available each September.



LICENSING

Everyone over the age of 16 must possess a valid license to hunt or fish in Louisiana. A license is not required to crab recreationally using the method noted in the crabbing section. Catch limits apply.

For all things hunting and fishing in Southwest Louisiana, including professional hunting guides and camps, charter guides, boat launches and licensing information and costs, please visit www.VisitLakeCharles.org/hunt.



WATERFOWL



MALLARD DUCKS



WATERFOWL
HUNTING



GREATER WHITE
FRONTED GESE
(SPECKLEBELLY)



SEAFOOD GUMBO



FRIED SEAFOOD PLATTER



SHRIMP & GRITS



BOILED SHRIMP

LOUISIANA SEAFOOD

Nearly 1/3 of the seafood consumed in the United States comes from Louisiana as the state is the number one provider of shrimp, oysters, crab, crawfish and alligator.

Louisiana harvests more than 100 million pounds of shrimp annually. That's because our nutrient-rich estuaries are the perfect environments for both brown and white shrimp breeding.

Although blue crabs are often associated with Delaware or Maryland, if you've eaten crab on the East Coast, chances are it's actually from Louisiana. Blue crab is one of the more abundant and tasty macroinvertebrates in Louisiana's coastal waters and plays a crucial role in the estuarine food web.



FRIED SHRIMP POBOY



GRILLED FISH



BOILED CRABS



BOILED CRAWFISH



WETLAND WALKWAY



GULF COAST BEACH



ROSEATE SPOONBILLS



GULF FRITILLARY

TO ACCESS THE CREOLE NATURE TRAIL FROM INTERSTATE-10, YOU MAY TAKE EITHER **EXIT 20** IN SULPHUR OR **EXIT 36** EAST OF LAKE CHARLES.

MILEAGE

MAIN TRAIL LOOP

Sulphur south to Holly Beach	37 miles
Holly Beach east to Oak Grove	25 miles
Oak Grove north to Lake Charles	39 miles

TRAIL SPURS

Holly Beach west to the Texas Border	27 miles
Oak Grove east to Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge	31 miles
Holmwood east to Lacassine NWR "Pool"	19 miles



Please respect the natural beauty of the land. Carry out any trash with you and dispose of it properly. Thank you for keeping Louisiana's Outback clean!

VISITOR CENTER
(337) 436-9588

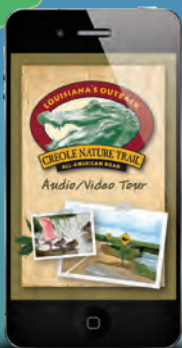
CAMERON PARISH

CALCASIEU PARISH

GULF OF MEXICO



JUST SOUTH OF INTERSTATE 10
lies one of America's
LAST GREAT WILDERNESSES



Don't forget to download the free
**CREOLE NATURE TRAIL
VIDEO TOUR APP!**

Download the free app from your
app store...just search "Creole."
Available in English, French,
Spanish, German, Japanese
and Mandarin Chinese.

VISIT LAKE CHARLES

For more information, contact the Lake Charles/
Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau.

1205 N. Lakeshore Dr., Lake Charles, LA 70601

1-800-456-SWLA • VisitLakeCharles.org



WWW.CREOLENATURETRAIL.ORG