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The Northshore: Play and Getaway

St. Tammany Parish, aka Louisiana's Northshore, sprawls along Lake Pontchartrain, a mere 40-minute drive from New Orleans. Cross the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway (the longest bridge over water in the world!) and you'll see why for centuries the Northshore has been where New Orleans comes to play and get away.

Back in the early 19th century, affluent New Orleanians summured in St. Tammany to soak up the sunshine, breathe the fresh air of the "ozone belt," and drink the artesian waters of Abita Springs. Schooners, steamboats, and trains brought visitors to 'l'autre cote du lac' ('the other side of the lake') for a resort lifestyle and to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

Naturally Northshore

Visitors are still traveling to St. Tammany today, lured by the healing and exhilarating nature that still abounds on the Northshore. More than 80,000 acres of wildlife refuge are easily explored by boardwalks, hiking trails, or kayak. Motorized boats take guests on eco-tours of the pristine Honey Island Swamp, where they will likely spot raccoons, alligators, herons, egrets, and more.

Birding enthusiasts love to explore the Northlake Nature Center, the Boy Scout Boardwalk through Big Branch Marsh, and Fontainebleau State Park. They'll likely check numerous species

off their list, including the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (or any of eight other species that live in St. Tammany.)

Deep, Delicious Culinary Scene

Nourish your soul in St. Tammany. Talented Northshore chefs showcase the best local and seasonal ingredients on menus inspired by Louisiana's bounty. Elegant dining rooms, elegant food – and exciting culinary experiences await even the most discerning foodies. The area is also rich with family-run restaurants where soulful, and real, food reflects tradition, heritage, and hearty appetites. Find happiness in spicy boiled crawfish, a mountain of perfectly fried shrimp, or an overstuffed po-boy.

Rest Your Head

The Northshore is home to two waterfront state parks, Fontainebleau in Mandeville (the state's most visited), and Fairview-Riverside in Madisonville. Both offer camping accommodations in idyllic settings with hundred-year-old oaks dripping with Spanish moss. Located along Lake Pontchartrain, Fontainebleau also has a sandy beach and shallow swimming area, as well as over-water cabins with full kitchens available for rent.

For a home away from home, there are many B&Bs in St. Tammany. Three new ones opened in the past year in Old Mandeville, making six accommodations within walking distance of the Lake Pontchartrain seawall and walking paths. Historic downtown Covington also has several, and they're just a short walk away from scores of shops and restaurants. Bayou Haven in Slidell is a new addition on Bayou Liberty, with stunning views and eight elegant guest rooms. They also arrange for sunset and fishing tours and offer hospitality packages. The Abita Springs Hotel just opened in Abita Springs, right next to the Tammany Trace, a 31-mile rails-to-trails hike and bike path that connects five Northshore towns.

There are familiar, comfortable and convenient hotels throughout the Northshore. There's also the elegant Southern Hotel, one of the original hotels frequented by New Orleanians in the early 1900's. It's been newly-restored and is a boutique hotel located in historic downtown Covington. Murals inside its Cypress Bar feature replicas of hand-tinted postcards from back in the day, and historic photographs along the halls welcome guests.