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Louisiana's River Parishes  
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## Things to Do in Louisiana's River Parishes

### Attend a Food Festival and Savor Regional Cuisine

From gumbo and jambalaya cuisine to andouille and alligator, the Louisiana River Parishes offer regional cuisine like you've never tasted. One of the best ways to **savor local flavors is to attend a regional food festival** where friendly people, live music, and signature dishes are always in full supply.

The [Andouille Festival](#) in LaPlace is a **three-day event celebrating nearly three centuries of this specialty smoked sausage**, pioneered by German immigrants. The [Alligator Festival](#) in Luling is a chance to **see the state's signature reptile, and to taste it in delectable Cajun dishes**. And at the [Louisiana Catfish Festival](#) in the community of Des Allemands, you can sink your teeth into **plates of fresh local catfish fried to perfection**.

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### Spot an Alligator on an Outdoor Adventure

Stunning local swamps and bayous make Louisiana River Parishes one of the country's best regions for **exploring nature and wildlife by boat**. Hop aboard a [Cajun Pride Swamp Tour](#) or a [Swamp Adventures Airboat Tour](#) to see **breathtaking views, indigenous flora and fauna, and plenty of alligators** as they splash, bask in the sun, and lurk just under the water's surface.

Attracting more than 400,000 visitors annually, the [Bonnet Carre Spillway](#) is a magical place to **spot native birds, test your luck at fishing, and camp for the night**. Cyclists love the Mississippi River Levee Trail, which stretches 25 miles upriver and starts in New Orleans at the Levee Top Trail.

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## Light the Way for Pere Noel

The Louisiana River Parishes is home to **one of the country's most fascinating Christmas traditions**, the [lighting of bonfires along the levee](#). Local groups build intricate wood structures—some in the shape of pyramids and others mimicking local critters—which reach 30 feet high!

During festival days in December, **the bonfires are ignited** as families, friends, and visitors watch in delight. **The festival also includes live music and food**. While the bonfire tradition may be rooted in an ancient harvest celebration, local legend has it that bonfires light the way for Santa, known here as Pere Noel.

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## Hear the Stories that Shaped Local History

Visitors get to know the **Louisiana River Parish's multi-faceted history** by touring sites like the [1811 Kid Ory House](#), a museum housed in a former plantation which today documents two major historic events in the area. The 1811 Slave Revolt, while unsuccessful, was the largest slave insurrection in U.S. history; and the life of jazz pioneer Edward "Kid" Ory, who was born on the site in 1886.

Peer further into the area's **rich African American heritage** at the [Historic Riverlands Museum](#), home to the Historic Riverlands Church Tour, the Soul River Music Tour, and a host site of the 1811 Slave Revolt Reenactment.

At the grassroots [Garyville Timbermill Museum](#), **soak in the history of this former lumber town**, which today is the largest city on the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

Don't miss [Destrehan Plantation](#), which features a variety of historic perspectives, including **a tour dedicated to many different marginalized people called "Unheard Voices of the German Coast."**

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## Day Trip in the Big Easy

Pair the bucolic charm of the Louisiana River Parishes with a **day trip to the Big Easy** and famed sites like the [New Orleans Museum of Art](#), the [National World War II Museum](#), the French Quarter, Jackson Square, and four miles of **boutique shopping and fine dining** along Magazine Street.

You can even **board a steamship on the New Orleans riverfront and cruise upriver** to [Oak Alley Plantation](#), known for its attention to documenting the experience of slaves. A riverboat ride is a great way to see the Mighty Mississippi up close and personal.