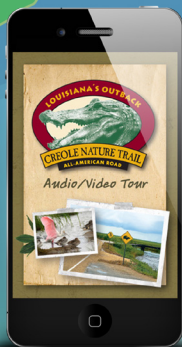


JUST SOUTH OF INTERSTATE 10  
*lies one of America's*  
LAST GREAT WILDERNESSES



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.



**LAKE CHARLES**  
SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA  
CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

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



# EXPERIENCE *guide*





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## 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](http://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.

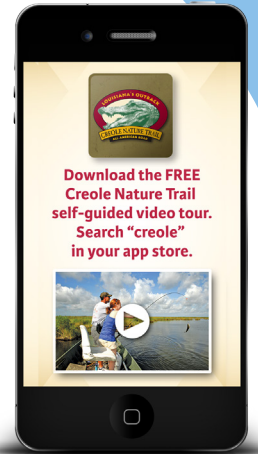


CREOLE NATURE TRAIL ADVENTURE POINT



2

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



3

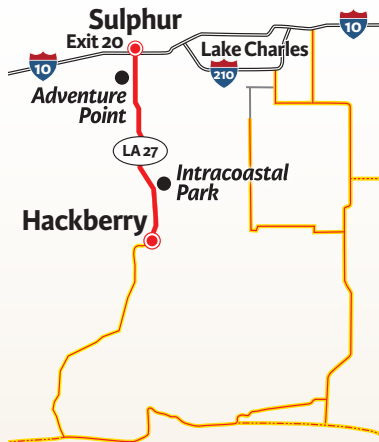


» For information on where to overnight, festivals, events, dining and other activities near the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road, visit [www.VisitLakeCharles.org](http://www.VisitLakeCharles.org).

» Share your trail adventures by tagging your photos with #VisitLakeCharles.   

## SULPHUR TO HACKBERRY

17.1 miles



Between Sulphur and Hackberry, Louisiana's Outback is somewhat industrial before giving way to cattle and other agriculture. Just before reaching Hackberry, you'll cross over the Intracoastal Waterway. (The Intracoastal Waterway stretches from Brownsville, Texas to New Jersey.) A center

for commercial crabbing, fishing and shrimping, and more recently, liquefied natural gas, the town of Hackberry is home to some of the first oil wells drilled in Louisiana.

SULPHUR:



HACKBERRY:



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



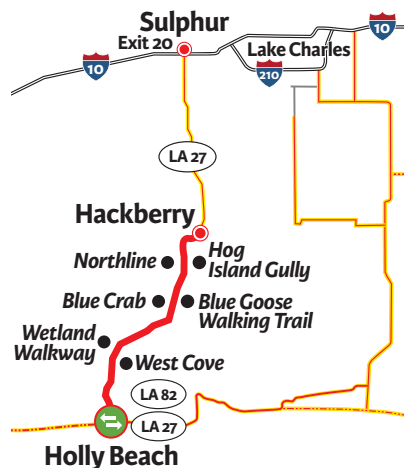
LOUISIANA BLUE CRAB

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT



## 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:



BLUE GOOSE TRAIL & 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



SUMMER  
TANAGER

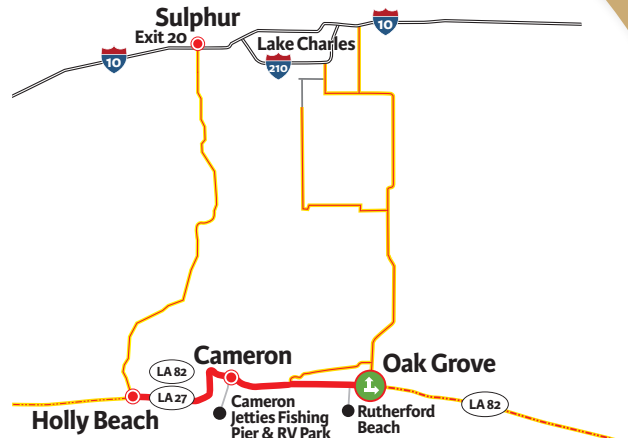


GULF BEACHES

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. Take Davis Road to the Cameron Jetty Pier where you can see the huge boulders along the ship channel that keep the silt from building up, and where outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy a pavilion, playground and RV hook-ups or do some saltwater fishing from the pier.

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:     

CAMERON JETTY PIER:  

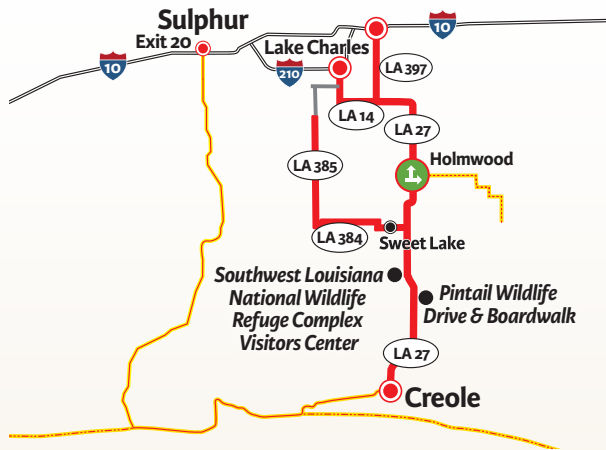
RUTHERFORD BEACH:  

 **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.



PINTAIL WILDLIFE DRIVE & CAMERON PRAIRIE VISITOR CENTER: 

NORTH OF CAMERON PRAIRIE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE:   



TRICOLORED HERON



PURPLE IRIS

8

1-800-456-7952

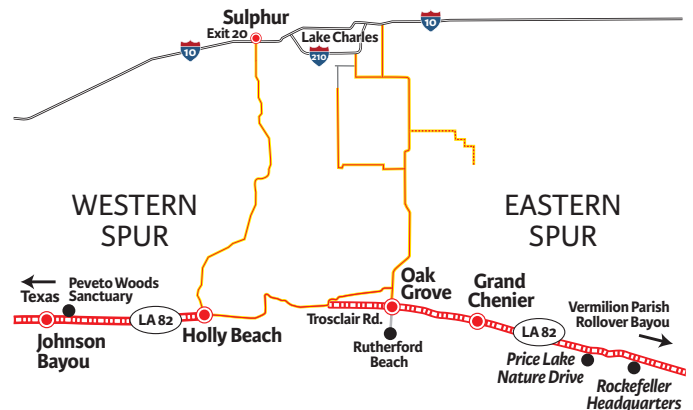
## WESTERN SPUR:

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.

JOHNSON BAYOU:   



## 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.

GRAND CHENIER:   

ROCKEFELLER WILDLIFE REFUGE:   

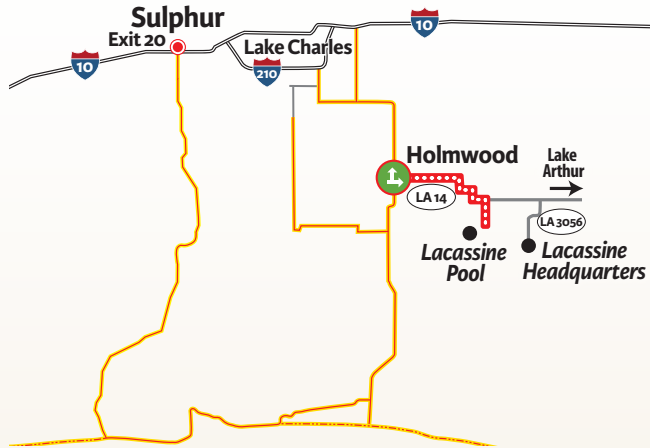
9

CreoleNatureTrail.org



## 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

10

1-800-456-7952

## AMERICAN ALLIGATORS

Along the marshland roads of the Creole Nature Trail, you may well 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.**



11

CreoleNatureTrail.org





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



PURPLE  
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](http://www.VisitLakeCharles.org/Shells).



## CRABBING

From May through September, catching Louisiana blue crabs is great fun along the Creole Nature Trail. All that's needed to crab is some 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.





## 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.



MALLARD DUCKS

## 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/GetOutdoors](http://www.VisitLakeCharles.org/GetOutdoors).



WATERFOWL HUNTING



GREATER WHITE FRONTED GEESSE (SPECKLE BELLY)



WATERFOWL







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 in the USA. 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 good 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!



**Creole Nature Trail**  
 All-American Road

**Western & Eastern Spurs**

**Alternate Spur**

★ **Recreation Area**

🍪 **Beach/Shelling**

🔭 **Scenic Overlook**

⚓ **Boat Launch**

🌸 **Point of Interest**