

Lafayette, Louisiana

Lafayette Louisiana is a culture-rich metropolis with a population of around 110,000 located in the southwestern corner of Louisiana. With a rich blend of French heritage combined with Spanish, American, Indian and African influences, the city represents a colorful combination of diverse lifestyles that create an excellent tourist destination. Lafayette lies 15 miles west of the Atchafalaya Basin and 35 miles north of the Gulf of Mexico surrounded by swamps, marshes, and bayous along with a geographical clash of prairies and forests.

The history of Lafayette dates back to the 1700s where the Attakapas Indians were the original inhabitants of the area. The historical event of the 18th century which had the greatest cultural impact on Lafayette was the migration of the Acadians from French Canada. Approximately 18,000 French-speaking Catholic inhabitants settled Acadie (now Nova Scotia) in 1605 and lived there under French rule until 1713 when the region came under English control. Many Acadians refused to pledge allegiance to the British crown and the Church of England, so in 1755 English Governor Charles Lawrence ordered the expulsion of Acadians known as "Le Grand Derangement." They would eventually make their way into Louisiana and settle in the area known now as Lafayette in the 1780's.

The city was officially founded as Vermilionville in 1821 by a French-speaking Acadian named Jean Mouton. In 1884, it was renamed for General Lafayette, a French military hero who fought with, and significantly aided, the American Army during the American Revolutionary war.

The geography and landscape of the area play a vital role in the culture of Lafayette. The rich fertile soil and low lying wetlands are ideal for growing rice, hot peppers and okra - staples of Cajun style cooking. The abundance of rice fields provide an excellent environment to grow crawfish or "mudbugs" as the native residents call them, and which are found in the majority of local restaurants in the springtime.

Until the early 1900's agriculture was the main source of income for the area and the cotton industry reigned supreme until the infestation of the boll weevil. This virtually destroyed the cotton crops in the southeastern portions of the United States, and sugarcane became the new cash crop of the area. In the 1960s the oil industry began to take off and caused a rapid growth in the city's population.

Lafayette is a unique place, having one of the very first airports in the state of Louisiana, built in 1930. So fly in, take the train, or come back any way you can to enjoy Lafayette's rich Acadian culture and history.

Source(s):

<http://www.lafayettetravel.com/culture/history/>

http://www.lftairport.com/airport_history.htm/

Hoffman, Eva J. "A Guidebook to Amtrak's Sunset Limited." Flashing Yellow Guidebooks, Golden, CO, 2009.

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