

# Sabine River

Flowing for 555 miles, the Sabine River serves as the border between Texas and Louisiana. The Sabine River begins in Northeast Texas as three river branches, where the Cowleech Fork, the Caddo Fork, and South Fork, come together. Flowing past the cities of Gladwater and Longview, Texas, the Sabine River runs all the way to Shreveport, LA. It then continues to flow south where it establishes 2/3 of the border. The Sabine River helps form part of the Toledo Bend Reservoir as it travels through wetlands and bayou country. It eventually joins the Neches River and empties into Sabine Lake and into the Gulf of Mexico.

An old saying describes the Sabine River as the division line between the Old South and the New Southwest. As you cross the border between Texas and Louisiana, think of stepping from one world to another. The river flows with the history of many cultures that link the past to the present. There is evidence that the river was inhabited as far as 12,000 years ago! Around the 8th Century, the Caddo Indians established communities along the Sabine's banks. Their villages included mounds as high as 1 story buildings! Imagine how many loads of dirt it took to build those mounds. Long after the Caddos, the river was settled in by the French and Spanish traders in the late 1700s. It was a Spanish man, Domingo Ramon, who deemed the river, "Rio de Sabinas." Sabinas is the Spanish word for cypress, in reference to the extensive growth of Bald cypress trees along the river.

One of the most famous features of the Sabine River is its use by the pirate, Jean Lafitte. In the early 1800s the river was heavily used for shipping...and pirating. Lafitte is noted for selling smuggled goods collected by his brothers, as well as selling slaves. It is rumored that at the death of Jean Lafitte his treasure had been split up into many hiding places with one large

cache rumored to be buried along the Sabine River, 3 miles east of the Old Spanish Trail in a grove of gum trees. Think of the possibilities if part of Jean Lafitte's treasure was ever found!

The Sabine was also an important factor in the Civil War. The Union soldiers avoided the area because of an outbreak of yellow fever. Therefore, the Confederates used the river to ship many goods, like cotton, up into Texas. Today, the river serves as recreational habitat for fishing and boating. However, the development of oil refineries and chemical plants has degraded the water-quality and current efforts are going on to restore the river. Careful conservation will restore the Sabine River's historical, cultural, and aesthetic values for generations to come.

## Source(s):

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