

# Welcome to Louisiana

Welcome to Louisiana, a place of rich culture and heritage. Louisiana's striking history, along with its Spanish, French, and Cajun heritage, offers you a vast array of sights, sounds, and exciting culture to learn about as you travel through the Pelican State.

Look outside the window...now, keep watching. You may get the chance to see a brown pelican, the bird from which Louisiana gets one of its many nicknames. It is native to Louisiana, and the pelican is even displayed on the state flag. There was a pelican scare in the 1950s, when populations were dropping significantly due to pesticides, poisoning, and tropical storms destroying their nesting sites and reproductive capacity. Since then the state has improved water and habitat quality, successfully restocked pelican populations and made great strides in keeping the native bird alive and well.

Beginning in the 1500s, French and Spanish explorers alike sought control of the land that is outside your window today. In 1682, a French man, Robert Cavalier, named the territory after Louis the Sixteenth of France. Some time later, in 1803, Thomas Jefferson made the famous Louisiana Purchase. This expanded the United States to nearly twice its size. Think about it this way: the Louisiana Purchase was eventually separated into 13 current states from Louisiana all the way up to Montana!

Since the early influence of Spanish, French, and Native Americans, Louisiana's culture has continued to evolve. The term "Cajun" comes from the French Acadians (which, pronounced in French, sounds like "A Cajan"). These French Acadians settled in Louisiana to escape British rule. Since then, the term "Cajun" is used to describe part of Louisiana's culture as well as its famous cuisine. Some delectable dishes that come to mind when you think of Cajun food may be jambalaya, gumbo, or one of many crawfish dishes.

Louisiana has become famous, not only for its Cajun food, but also for its Cajun-influenced entertainment scene. Many unique music styles can be heard here, including jazz, swamp blues, country, zydeco, cajun, rhythm & blues and many more. Louisiana is home to many music festivals and parades—including the world-famous Mardi Gras. People come from

all over to experience this festival of extravagant costumes, jazz-and-blues inspired music, and the tastes of Cajun food. As you travel across this culturally rich state, stop and listen...you're sure to hear the rhythm that teems from the very heart of Louisiana.

## Source(s):

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