

Vivian



It happened again in 1906. The discovery of oil and gas in northwest Louisiana set the stage for yet another upsurge in the fortunes, and the population, of north Caddo Parish.

Logging in the 1880s and railroads in the 1890s had already altered the appearance of the area by toppling acres of pine forests, laying miles of railroad track, and dotting the railways with fledgling villages and towns.

But as one oil well after another gushed black gold, roughnecks and roustabouts flocked to the area. Tag along families lived in tents and makeshift shanties. Land agents and speculators dreamed of dollars to be made. Merchants opened shops along unpaved streets.

The fortunes of local boomtowns varied. The settlement of Trees, that sprang up on the land of Joe Trees, grew, wilted, and virtually disappeared. Vivian, on the other hand, doubled in population between 1900 and 1910. In 1911 alone, 92 new homes altered the town's footprint. Then, in the 1930s, just as the local economy caught its breath, new oil strikes triggered one more boom in Vivian's economic ups and downs.



The Red River, local lakes, and bayous have been just as important to the well being of northwest Louisiana as underground pools of oil, piney forests, and iron tracks of railroads, and equally interconnected.

On its way to join the Mississippi River, the Red River drains nearly 170,000 acres of land. So, when downed trees and debris created a massive barrier that blocked the flow of all that water, the so-called Great Raft flooded hundreds of acres in northwest Louisiana forcing water into Caddo Lake, Bayou Bodcau, Lake Bistineau, Bayou Dorcheat, and connected bodies of water.

In the quaint town of Plain Dealing most original stores on main street (Palmetto Street) are occupied by businesses today. Ornate Churches of almost every denomination sprang up and are located in the downtown area, as well as several early 1900s old homes. The Plain Dealing Cemetery, located approximately 1 mile north on LA Hwy. 157, was established by the Gilmer Family.

All along the byway red crimson clover is abundant, with several species of wild flowers and flowering trees, such as Dogwood and Crape myrtles.

Sarepta

Welcome to Sarepta, Louisiana, the hometown of country music recording artist Trace Adkins. Adkins was born in Sarepta in 1962 and took up the guitar at an early age. Since then he has become a country music megastar with hit after hit, including Dreamin' Out Loud, (This Ain't) No Thinkin' Thing, The Rest of Mine, Lonely Won't Leave Me Alone, Comin' on Strong, Honky Tonk Badonkadonk, and CMT music video of the year in 2009, Your Gonna Miss This, which was filmed and produced right here in Sarepta the same year.

Just 10 minutes south of Sarepta is the town of Cotton Valley, hometown of the Grammy Award winning Cox Family. The Cox Family was formed in Cotton Valley in 1972 and is best known for their recording, I Am Weary for the movie soundtrack of O Brother, Where Art Thou?. In 1994, after more than 20 years together as a band, the Cox Family won a Grammy Award for their work with Alison Krauss on I Know Who Holds Tomorrow.

Some describe Bayou Dorcheat as the heart of Webster Parish. From north to south it bisects the parish, and played a central role in the history and settlement of the region, and still offers entrée into the natural beauty of the byway.

Homer

As it passes through Claiborne Parish, the byway rolls across gentle hills lined with miles of forest and an occasional small town. It is those towns that add a certain worldly flare to the region.

When parish towns have names like Athens, Homer, and Lisbon, it should come as no surprise that the parish courthouse in Homer is a fine example of Greek Revival architecture and that the region built a reputation for fine schools.

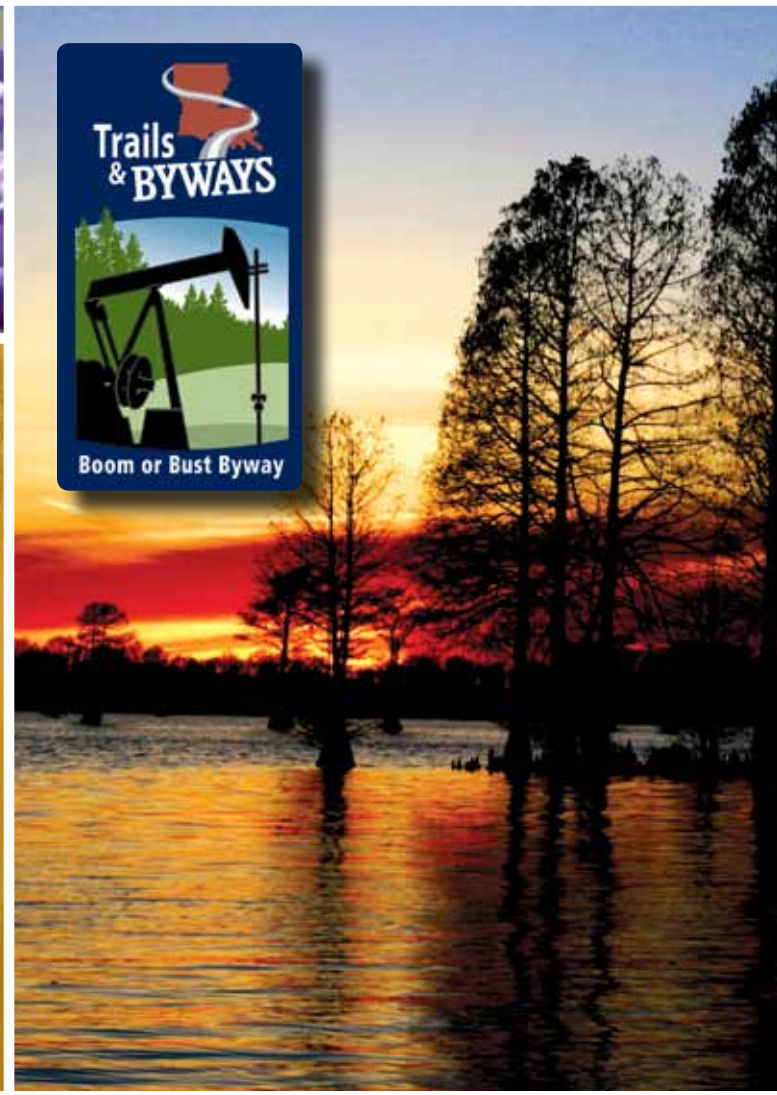
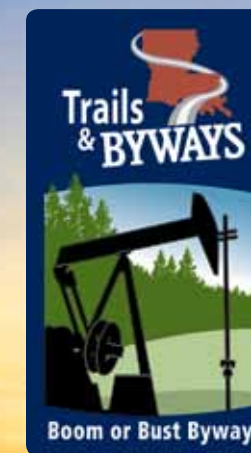
Louisiana State University's Agriculture Center Hill Farm and Research Center continues that tradition of education via the study of modern farming techniques while Lake Claiborne State Park provides access to the natural, recreational bounty of the parish.

In the 20th century, activities that once provided food and essential commodities for self-sufficient pioneers spawned another emerging industry—recreation. Leisurely, outdoor activities redefined how many viewed nature and history and created markets for tourism and recreational equipment.

One visit is not enough to see the full palette of colors offered by trees and flowers along the byway.

Boom or Bust

Byway



Hometown Ahead

Welcome to Louisiana's Boom or Bust Byway

Accept our invitation to take a leisurely look at the natural and economic cycles that played such a prominent role in shaping both the history and the appearance of this region.

This byway is decidedly rural. Small towns prevail; residents have planted deep family and cultural roots. Miles of forest often bracket the byway. Fields of corn, soybeans, and cotton provide a contemporary bridge to the region's agricultural past. Railroads, less busy today, still crisscross highways and bisect towns.

At each end of the byway, pumps still tap under-ground pools of oil, although the rowdiest days of boomtowns have passed. Lakes and bayous channel the byway along higher ground. Resident and visiting boaters and anglers, swimmers and picnickers, hikers and birdwatchers have their choice of forest, meadow, wetland, or waterway for outdoor recreation.

Visitors should understand that as part of Louisiana's French legacy counties are called "parishes" in reference to the territories that were historically under the pastoral care and clerical jurisdiction of one parish priest. Even today, the Napoleonic Code (rather than Common Law) holds sway in the state's courtrooms.

Whether the goal is a glimpse of the ups and downs of this region's history and people, time away at a slower pace, or a taste of down home rural life, the Boom or Bust Byway is the route to travel.

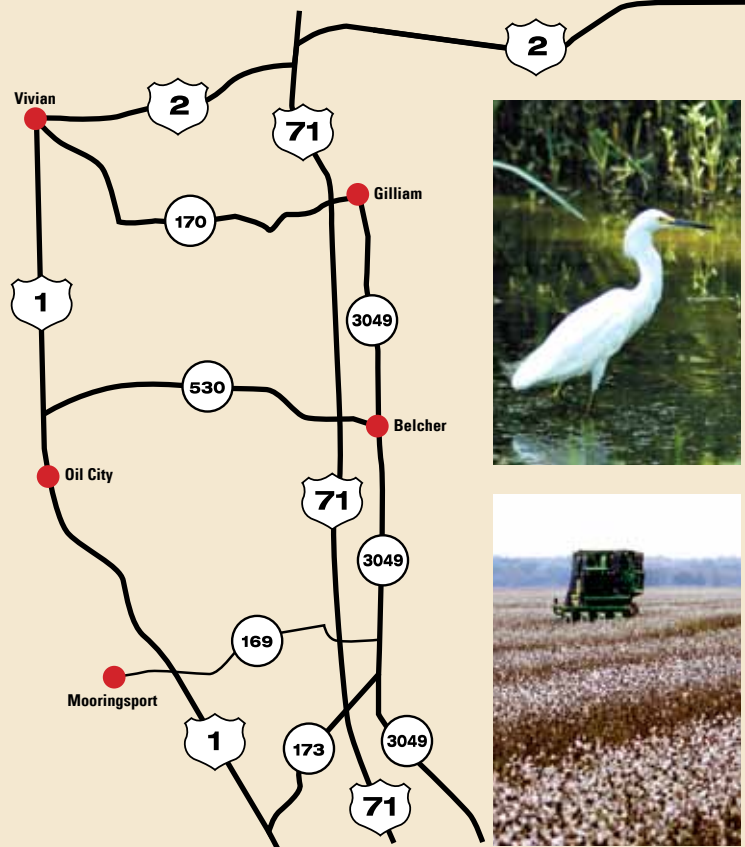


Louisiana's Byway Program

Louisiana has more than a dozen scenic byways, leisure highways that lure travelers through the state's natural beauty and open doors to local history and culture.

The Boom or Bust Byway follows Highway 2 and is defined by the Louisiana/Texas border on the west and the loop around the town of Homer to the east.

Byway travelers tend to be wanderers, easily enticed into side trips. Mileage end to end is a bit more than 130 miles. A purposeful trip, with stops at the byway's kiosks (in Vivian, Plain Dealing, Sarepta, and Homer) might take six hours. If you decide to fully enjoy the byway, plan at least a full day.



Experience Nature

Outdoor recreation abounds

In the 20th century, activities that once provided food and essential commodities for self-sufficient pioneers spawned another emerging industry—recreation.

Northwest Louisiana has water in abundance, particularly streams and lakes that are ideal for boating and fishing. The combination of federal management areas, Kisatchie National Forest, and state parks provides ample opportunities to slip away and enjoy nature from the inside out.

While recreation and tourism may not seem at all comparable to the railroad or oil booms of the past, they deserve a closer look. The innate respect for natural and historical environments that come in tandem with outdoor life may prove to have more staying power than the forest of oil derricks that once dominated the skyline.

For those who prefer to search for the past, the Herbert S. Ford Memorial Museum in Homer has collected and now displays its extensive collection of artifacts.

Exploring North Caddo Parish

Caddo Lake to the south and Black Bayou Lake to the east and north, offer scenic vistas and a taste of north Louisiana's Sportsman's Paradise.

But it is the boomtown history that underscores another reality—the prevalence of oil and gas in the past and the present. Beginning in 1911, drillers discovered that they could sink wells into Caddo Lake and tap huge pools of oil under the lake bed, prolonging and expanding the frenzy of oil and gas production that was a hallmark of north Caddo's boom or bust cycle.



Waterways along the Byway

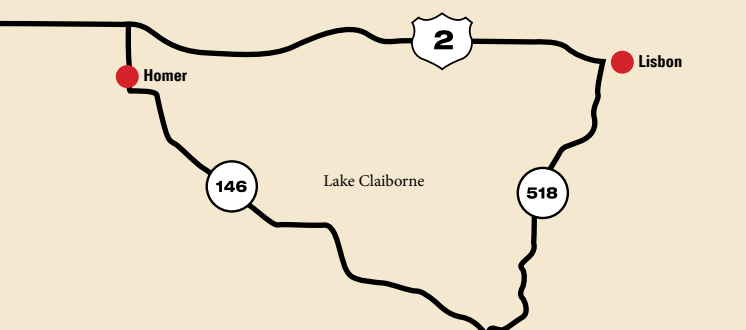
For centuries, water has been an important part of life in northwest Louisiana. Historically, water provided transportation and food. Trappers harvested furs. Flowing water powered sawmills.

Today, bayous, lakes (both natural and constructed), and the Red River still anchor many regional communities providing a source of recreation, flood protection, and natural beauty.

As the river meanders through the rich farmlands, it picks up soil, which contains iron oxide. This soil gives the water a reddish orange color and it is why the river got its name.

Boats carrying supplies up the Mississippi and then up the Red River were forced, at great expense, to detour and travel the bayous and lakes around the Great Raft. The government sent Captain Henry Miller Shreve to clear the log jam.

In the 20th century, the Red River Valley Association lobbied Congress to make the river fully navigable north to Shreveport. A lock and dam system constructed by the US Army Corps of Engineers now allows navigation of barges as far north as Shreveport, 225 miles from the Red River's confluence with the Mississippi.



Finding a Spot to relax

Picnicking or exploring a meandering stream in a world stalked by herons, egrets, and hawks, for a restful afternoon or a longer period of time, is inviting. Birdwatching, fishing, and hunting are good in this sportsman paradise. Eagle sightings are not uncommon.