



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."

VISIT **LAKE CHARLES**

1205 N. Lakeshore Dr., Lake Charles, LA 70601
1-800-456-SWLA | VisitLakeCharles.org

CreoleNatureTrail.org



TRAVEL ADVISORIES

It will be necessary to board (in your car) the Cameron Ferry to cross the Calcasieu Ship Channel to or from the community of Cameron. Since ferries can be a bit fickle, get the current status by scanning the QR code below or visit www.wapps.dotd.la.gov/operations/ferrystatus/fimbs_status.aspx?PID=F_STATUS.



SCAN ME

American Alligators

Along the marshland roads of the Creole Nature Trail, you may 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 a canal.

Alligators may seem slow and ungainly, but they can actually run upwards of 20 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!



Birding

It is estimated that as many as half of all land birds that breed in eastern North America pass through Louisiana twice yearly. In a typical year, more than 470 species can be spotted in Southwest Louisiana!

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.

Beaches & Shelling

There are 26 miles of natural beaches along the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road.

The beaches are largely undeveloped and easily accessible, providing a wide variety of activities, including shelling. Deposits from the Mississippi River's southeast tidal flows include a variety of shells with the best opportunities for shelling at low tide or after a storm.

Crabbing

From May through September, catching Louisiana blue crabs is great fun along the Creole Nature Trail.

All that's needed to crab is thick cotton string, any kind of raw 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. [A fishing license is required to crab.]



Fishing

Surf fishing is excellent along the beaches, and plenty of waterways along the Creole Nature Trail are perfect for wetting a line.

Professional charter guides are also available. Popular catches are speckled trout, redfish, red snapper, black drum, and king mackerel.

Leave No Trace

Know Before You Go

Be prepared! Remember water and clothes to protect you from cold, heat, and rain, as well as sunscreen and bug repellent.

Leave It As You Find It

Leave plants, rocks, and other natural objects as you find them so others can enjoy them and treat all living plants with respect.

Respect Wildlife

Observe wildlife from a distance. Never feed animals—doing so damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.

Control Pets

Control pets at all times or leave them at home.

Preserve Our Natural World for Future Generations!

Keep a bag in your vehicle for garbage. Take out what you brought in. If a garbage receptacle is full, take it with you rather than overflow it. Secure items so they cannot fly out of your vehicle and become litter. Always leave a place better than you found it.

Visitor Resource Centers

Creole Nature Trail Adventure Point

2740 Ruth St., Sulphur, LA 70665
337-502-4358 • AdventurePoint.info

Visit Lake Charles

1205 N. Lakeshore Dr, Lake Charles, LA 70601
800-456-SWLA • VisitLakeCharles.org



Experience GUIDE

In days past, you didn't use a car to rush around the city running errands. Cars were vehicles that took you out of ordinary day-to-day life and into the extraordinary experience of exploration. Cruising down a long stretch of picturesque roads was your destination. Your journey was your adventure. And it still is, on the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road.

CreoleNatureTrail.org



CREOLE NATURE TRAIL ALL-AMERICAN ROAD

Imagine a place where prairie melts into marsh, where the Gulf of Mexico laps against sand 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 57 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.



For the most up-to-date and detailed information on the trail and its flora or fauna, visit CreoleNatureTrail.org. To explore the Cajun/Creole food, music, festivals, casino resorts, and more of Southwest Louisiana, check out VisitLakeCharles.org.

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

Before 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. Also, remember phone chargers, camera batteries, sunscreen, and insect repellent.



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 personal tour app

in advance to get the full Louisiana's Outback experience! Once downloaded, the app uses your 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 these are limited. Most importantly, assign each person in the vehicle to a window. On the Creole Nature Trail, everyone is a lookout!

Kick Off Your Excursion at Creole Nature Trail Adventure Point

2740 Ruth St. • Just south of Exit 20 in Sulphur
Familiarize yourself with the trail and Southwest Louisiana by visiting Adventure Point. Imaginative hands-on displays invite you to 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 available to answer your questions at this free attraction.



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

To access the Creole Nature Trail from Interstate-10, you may take either **Exit 20** in Sulphur or **Exit 36** east of Lake Charles.



Sulphur to Hackberry

Between Sulphur and Hackberry, Louisiana's Outback is somewhat industrial as solid land slowly slides to marshland. Just before reaching Hackberry, you'll cross over the Intracoastal Waterway. The massive tanks and pipelines just past the bridge are part of the area's LNG (liquefied natural gas) industry. LNG is a clear, odorless, nontoxic liquid formed when natural gas is super-cooled to minus 260 degrees Fahrenheit. This process shrinks the volume dramatically, making the resource easier and more economical for transport over long distances. Hackberry is a center for commercial crabbing, fishing and shrimping. It is also home to some of the first oil wells drilled in Louisiana.

Hackberry to Holly Beach

Traveling south, you'll come to the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge. 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, there is 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! 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.

Holly Beach to Cameron and Oak Grove

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 of Mexico. Massive freighters, LNG 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 a convenience store as well as Lighthouse Bend (lighthousebend.com). 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.

LICENSING

Everyone over 17 must possess a valid license to fish or crab in Louisiana. For the most up-to-date information and full details, scan the QR code below or visit <https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/recreational-fishing-licenses-and-permits>.



Creole to Lake Charles

You'll pass through acres of pristine marshlands between Creole and the Conway LeBleu Memorial Bridge. Next stop is Pintail Wildlife Drive, a three-mile driving loop with a half-mile boardwalk on Cameron Prairie NWR. Then, you'll come to the Visitor Center at Cameron Prairie NWR with interactive exhibits and two overwater boardwalks where you can spot wildlife. Continuing north, follow LA 27 to LA 14 N. into Lake Charles.

Spur: Holly Beach to Texas Border

From Holly Beach, the trail also continues west along La 82. 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.

Spur: Oak Grove to Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge

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. [Fishing license or WMA Access Permit, and self-clearing permit, required]

Spur: Holmwood to the Lacassine "Pool"

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.

