

CC C'EST WHAT?! BAYOU TECHE RIDGE RIDE

There's at least three different, delicious places highly recommended to eat along the cruise - Cafe Sydnie Mae's in Breaux Bridge, Poche Bridge Market in Poche Bridge and Josephine's in Sunset. More on each of those below ... But being as it is South Louisiana, loosen your belt and feel free to try 'em all!

The Bayou Teche is a 125-mile-long waterway with great cultural significance in South Central Louisiana. The word "Teche" most likely comes from the indigenous Chitimacha Indian word for "snake", which was "Tenche". Folklore has it that Indian villages fought a ginormous snake for many generations and when it was finally killed and it's carcass decomposed, the depression it left behind filled with water and became the bayou. We will follow it's winding path north from near Lake Martin up to the historic towns of Breaux Bridge and Arnaudville and Grand Coteau/Sunset (we just can't name anything a regular ol' name in Louisiana!).

The Bayou Teche was at one time the main course of the Mississippi River (now 60 miles eastward in Baton Rouge). In fact, as you drive out of Lafayette on Carmel Dr. (Hwy 94) you'll slope ever so gently down the only real hill we have in South Louisiana! That slope is the escarpment - the western most bank that The Mississippi ever had (thousands of years ago). Proving quite literally, that Lafayette is "high ground".

Lake Martin is a wonderful lake swamp and wildlife preserve. Upon turning off Hwy 353 onto the gravel Rookery Rd. There's place to park and walk back through the swamp on an elevated nature boardwalk. Gators, egrets and exquisite pink roseate spoonbill cranes are everywhere. Further up Rookery Rd. There are some nice homes in the original Acadian architectural style and even a freaky-cool chakra inspired seven story tower. From the boat landing you get cleared view out onto the lake.

Next, it's onto the quaint lil' historic town of Breaux Bridge (pronounced: "Bro") which is "The Crawfish Capital Of The World". Sadly, boiled crawfish aren't yet in season in October but Cafe Sydney Mae has a delicious Cajun bistro menu specializing in steaks and seafood - but if it's still too early to lunch, you can just grab a nice coffee/tea and maybe some grits and a pastry there, or at one of several nice cafes amongst all the great antique and funky vintage shops right downtown on Bridge St.

Leaving Breaux Bridge we'll cross over the Bayou Teche and under I-10, following the eastern bank of the bayou up to the Poche Bridge crossing. Located on the other side of the bayou there, is the word-famous Poche Bridge Meat Market and Lunch Room. Here you can get all your "pork and pork accessories" - award winning boudin and cracklins (they'll ship anywhere in the U.S.!) along with delicious cafeteria counter style plate lunches served atop heaps of rice n' gravy. You'll probably want to try a little something (at least a link of boudin if you're saving room for Cafe' Josephine later).

Back on the road, we'll skirt the hamlet of Cecilia and follow the winding Bayou Teche up to Arnaudville (pronounced: "Arno-ville"). This stretch of road is a lovely drive up a two-lane blacktop with lots of soft twists and turns laid between the bayou and long landscape vistas across big cane fields. This time of year they'll be harvesting the tall cane and burning the fields after it's cut. The caramel smell of burnt sugar smoke fills the air throughout St Martin, St. Landry and all the southern parishes.

Like Breaux Bridge, downtown Arnaudville is full of neat little antique shops with a slant toward art galleries, due to the town having become a haven for artists and musicians in recent years. In Arnaudville we'll visit the Bayou Teche brewery, who's LA 31 lager has become an in demand brew across the Gulf South and beyond. We'll tour the brewery and taste a sample flight of their beer with none other than GRAMMY award winning fiddler and brewer, Louis Michot of The Lost Bayou Ramblers as our tour guide!

Next, we'll motor over across over I-49 into Sunset, La and stop off at the very cozy/tasty Cafe' Josephine for a bite. The entire menu is killer, but their signature char-grilled oysters are to die for. As it's cool October and prime oyster season, ask to see if they have any "Murder Point" oysters in that day -they're the creme' de la creme'. Even if you've already had your lunch earlier in the cruise, at least sit at the oyster bar and have a lil' afternoon snack .. Or libation.

Feel free to take off from here north to Opelousas, west onto the prairie or back down I-49 south to Lafayette and Downtown Alive! where you can pick up your registration packets starting at 4pm at the Bayou Round Up tent in Parc Sans Souci (201 E Vermilion St).

As in previous years, we've got reserved parking for BRU cars around Parc San Souci and the stage. Take off your drivin' gloves and slip into your dancin' shoes. The Bayou Round Up weekend is upon you!