

Laissez Les Motocyclettes Rouler !

by Robert Odendahl

Lately much of the news has been focused on the aftermath of hurricane Katrina and the destruction it caused to New Orleans. But there is more to Louisiana than New Orleans. Much of it is over-looked by travelers. There are all kinds of sights and activities in Louisiana such as swamps, bayous, salt domes, the Mississippi river, gambling casinos, rednecks, good eating, and Cajuns with funny names. Take Hebert Cycles for example, the Baton Rouge BMW motorcycle dealer. Now every self-respecting Cajun knows that Hebert is pronounced A' bear. Yet most Yankees, get it wrong most of the time. A Yankee, as defined by many Cajuns, is someone from north of I-10.



The word Cajun came about from English speaking Americans who could not pronounce l'Acadien correctly. Go figure! What is a Cajun? Well a Cajun can best be described as a redneck who speaks a foreign language, though the French will debate whether or not Cajuns speak French. The original Cajuns have a lot in common with the evacuees of hurricane Katrina. Most were forced from their homes in Acadiana, which is now Nova Scotia, Canada. The similarity ends there. The Cajuns were evicted by the British who gained control of Acadiana. The British evicted the French inhabitants in the late 1700's for various reasons. A few went to locations in present New England, a few went to Maryland and Georgia, a few went back to France, and some went to New Orleans. The ones that found themselves in New Orleans quickly moved out of the city mostly west toward Texas. Most settled on the fertile plains of south Louisiana centered near present day Lafayette. Others moved southwest of New Orleans to the wetlands comprised of bayous, swamps, and marshes. At that time a few moved further west across the Sabine River into present day Beaumont and Port Arthur, Texas. Anyway, this exile of the l'Acadiens inspired a rather long poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow called "Evangeline".

One more thing you should know about Louisiana and Cajuns, not every body from Louisiana is a Cajun. People from New Orleans are not Cajun. They might be considered Creole, which is a combination of upper crust colonial Spanish and French descendants.

Every chance I get, I go to Louisiana. Why you ask? I lived there most of my life. I'm half Cajun. Also I'm still a life member of HOG and I love the food especially ecrevisse, commonly known as crawfish. The Louisiana HOG Rally is held every spring during crawfish season.

These succulent crustaceans are great boiled in a cayenne



based seafood boil. They are also fixed in an etouffee or a bisque.

Of course who will ever forget Boucherie, Cochon de Lait, Alligator, Cracklin', Andouille, and Boudin.

Makes your mouth water, doesn't it?

Besides all this good food, there is riding and exploring between meals. Avery Island is the home of Tabasco. The island is formed in the swamps by a salt dome that was discovered in the 1860's and is still mined today. Tabasco sauce is brewed there also. Brewed may seem like a funny name for it. But that is what it is. The peppers, originally from St. Martinsville, LA, are mixed with salt, vinegar, in a secret recipe, put in oak barrels and aged for 3 years before it is bottle and shipped. The Tabasco country store is on the island and who can pass up an opportunity to spend money on Tabasco branded items that will tantalize their taste buds, decorate their kitchen and bodies. Besides the scenery ain't bad either.

Tabasco Store



Historical sign.
Where am I?



Exploring the area around Lafayette I found a great place to eat crawfish. I does not look like much on the outside nor the inside. But the crawfish were great. It is located in a small town 10 miles east of Lafayette called Breaux Bridge, home of my grandmother, who did not own a TV and spoke English only when she had to.

This roadside grocery and vegetable stand served the best crawfish I've ever had. I definitely plan on returning next year. Right down the street from this easily missed



eatery, is Mulate's where you can find great cooking and free Cajun music and dancing. Eat crawfish and dare to be different.

Mulate's has a second location in New Orleans

at the corner of Julia and Convention Center Blvd. But it won't be opened until after the hurricane cleanup. There are other things to see around Lafayette, such as the Acadian Village which is a living museum of Cajun cottages. It is free to the public and has a country store that helps support it. It is owned and run by an organization that takes care of the mentally handicapped.



*The Acadian Village
Lafayette, LA*



So, the next time you ride east, take some time and explore Louisiana. It's an adventure for your taste buds as well as our spirit. It's one place you can eat well and *pass a good time chère!*
