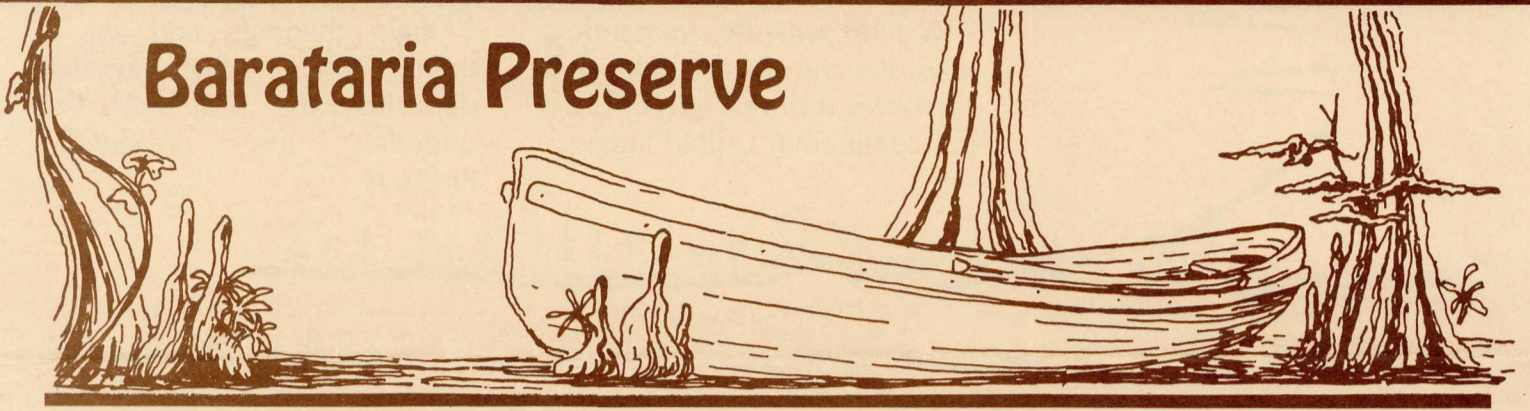


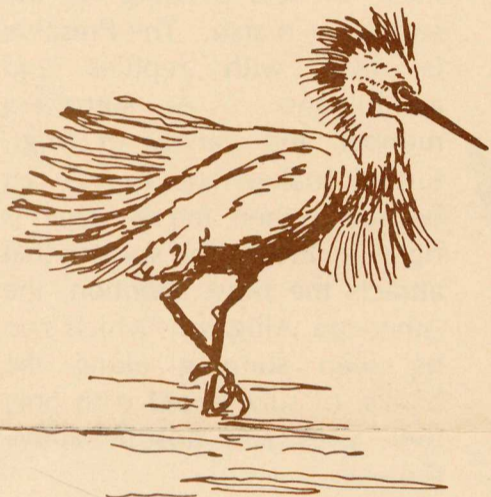
Jean Lafitte

National Historical Park and Preserve
National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior

Barataria Preserve



About the Preserve



The Barataria Preserve is one of four units comprising Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve. Jean Lafitte is a unique park within the National Park system. Rather than interpret a single theme, Jean Lafitte encompasses units which interpret many diverse but ultimately related themes: the Battle of New Orleans at Chalmette; the history and cultural diversity of Louisiana's Mississippi Delta region and New Orleans, in the French Quarter; and Acadian culture in Lafayette, Thibodaux, and Eunice.

The Barataria Preserve interprets the culture of people, past and present, who settled the delta and the unique ecosystem which sustained them. It preserves a representative example of the delta's environment, containing natural levee forests, bayous, swamps, and marshes. Though wild, and teeming with wildlife, this is not a pristine wilderness. Evidence of prehistoric human settlement, colonial farming, plantation agriculture, logging, commercial trapping, fishing, hunting and oil and gas exploration overlay much of this former wilderness.

What to See and Do

The visitor center is located at 7400 Highway 45 in Marrero, LA and is open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Trails in the Preserve are open daily from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with extended hours during Daylight Savings Time.

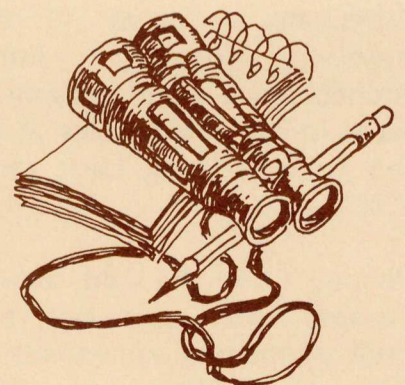
Spend some time in the visitor center, view the exhibits, and watch the 25 minute film, "Jambalaya: A Delta Almanac." Explore the Preserve by foot or canoe. Over 8 miles (13 km) of hiking trails, including two-and-a-half miles (4 km) of boardwalk, allow you to visit the various environments. Nine miles (14 km) of canoe trails, closed to motorized boats, and accessible by three canoe launch docks allow further exploration of the swamps and

marshes. Another 20 miles (32 km) of waterways are open to all types of boats. Canoe rentals are available just outside the Preserve, and a number of public and private boat launches provide access for motor boats.

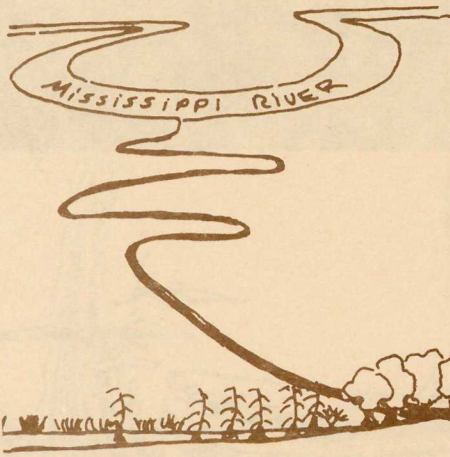
Picnic tables are located at the Pecan Grove Picnic Area, Lower Kenta Canal, and Twin Canals. Restrooms are available at the visitor center and in the Pecan Grove parking area. The visitor center, restrooms, and the Bayou Coquille Trail are wheelchair accessible.

Fishing is allowed with a valid state fishing license. Hunting and trapping are allowed by permit only.

Ranger guided walks and canoe treks are presented year round. Check at the visitor center for dates, times, and places. For more information call (504) 589-2330.



Geology



Stand anywhere in the delta, and you are standing on some of the newest land in North America. Over the last 5,000 years the Mississippi River has built a series of deltas, creating new land with the tremendous load of sediment the great river carries as it drains two-thirds of the continental United States.

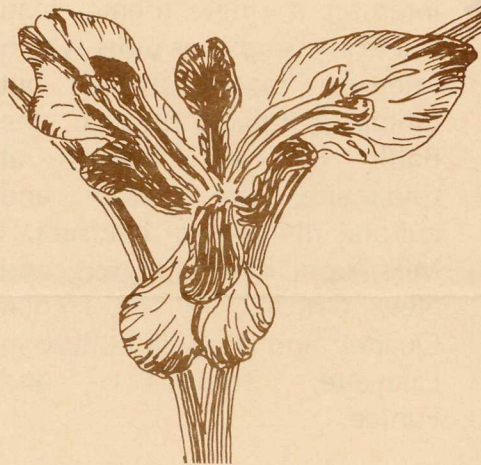
Some 2,500 years ago the river began building a delta in the area that is now New Orleans. Within each delta, the river may occupy several different channels. This delta had at least 3 main channels, and one of them, **Bayou des Familles**, deposited the sediments that underlay the present-day Preserve.

Ecology

In the delta, a combination of soil-type, elevation, moisture, and salinity, controls what plants grow where.

Hardwood forests grow on the elevated land of the natural levee. Here majestic Live Oaks take advantage of the dry ground. On the back-slope of the levee, the forest changes to one dominated by an understory of palmetto. Swamp covers the lowest portion of the natural levee, where water stands for much of the year. This forested wetland is the home to the stately Baldcypress. Beyond the swamp lies the flat treeless marsh, the eastern end of one of the largest expanses of floating freshwater marsh in the world. The climate of the Preserve is humid sub-tropical. Despite occasional freezing weather, the long growing season, abundant rainfall, and fertile soils support

a great variety of plant and animal life; from shrimp in the marsh, to crawfish of the swamp, and the spectacular butterflies and orb-weaving spiders of the forest.



Most of the animals in the Preserve are secretive and nocturnal. Animals active during the day commonly include, Gray Squirrel, Swamp Rabbit, Nine-banded Armadillo, and the introduced aquatic rodent, Nutria.

While hiking or canoeing one may discover a heron, egret, or flock of ibis feeding in the swamp or marsh. The Preserve is alive with reptiles and amphibians. A surprising number and variety of frogs, turtles, snakes, and lizards can be seen when the weather is right, including the species that attracts the most attention, the American Alligator, which can be seen sunning along the banks, or submerged with only their eyes and nostrils above the water.

Something is in flower virtually year round. However, the peaks are during spring and fall. In April, acres of Giant Blue Iris can be viewed. The same areas are awash with yellow in October when Bur Marigold bloom.

History

Not long after the river built this area of the delta, Native Americans migrated to the newly formed land. Archeological investigations have found village sites along the bayous dating back some 2,000 years.

People from the old world, Europe, Africa, and Asia, first built permanent settlements in the early 1700's. In 1779, hundreds of Canary Islanders

(*Isleño*) were settled along the banks of Bayou des Familles in a community laid out by the Spanish government. Over the next 200 years, much of the land was cleared by loggers and farmers. For a time, much of it was a sugarcane plantation. Even the swamps were stripped of Baldcypress trees at the turn of the century. And finally, oil and gas were discovered in the early 1930's.

Evidence of these historical uses abound, including house sites, roads, furrows, ditches, and canals. Even today, the Preserve's marshes are dotted with recreational hunting and fishing "camps", a tradition which dates back to the early days of hunters and trappers building cabins in the marsh.