

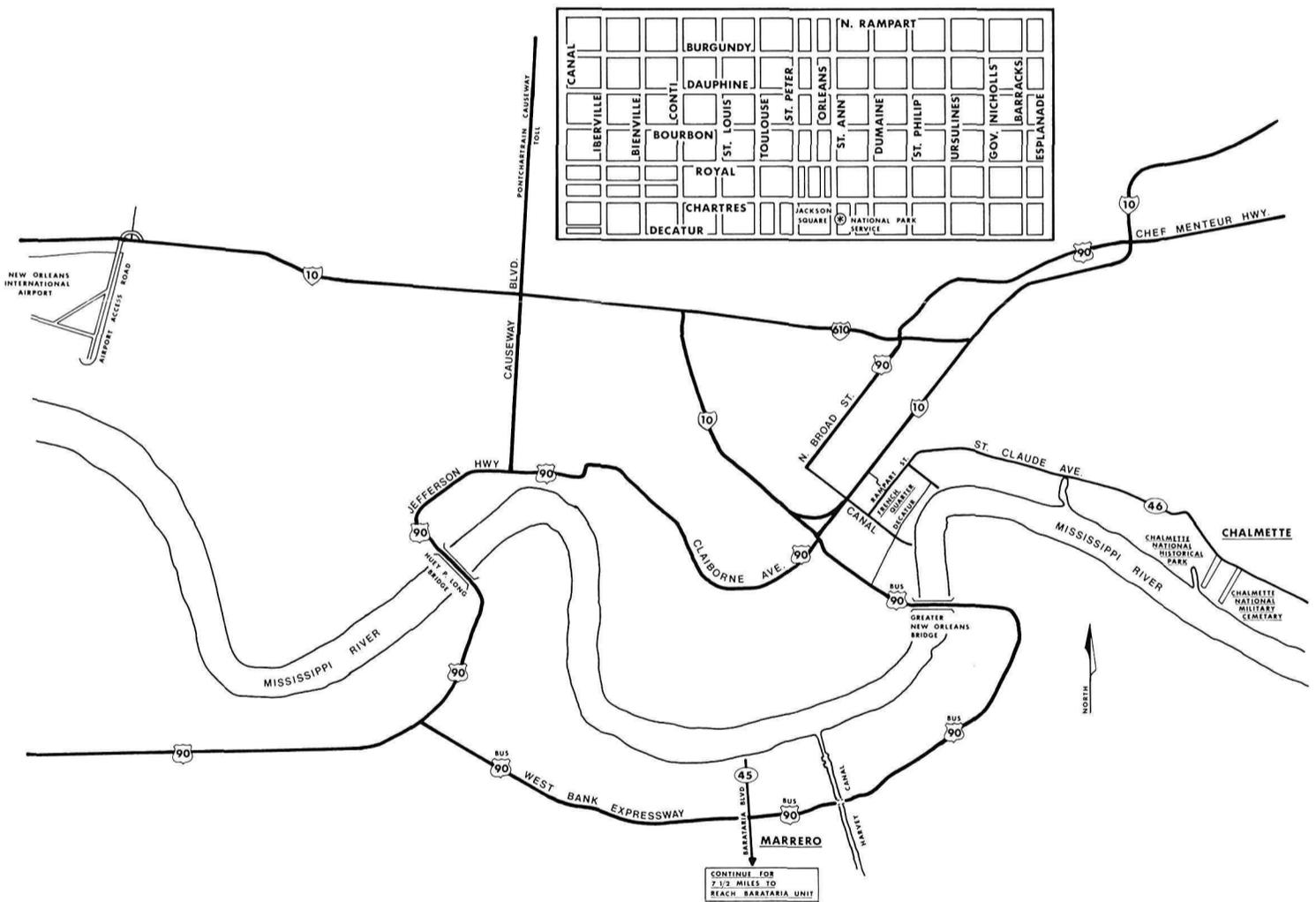
Jean Lafitte

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

About the Park

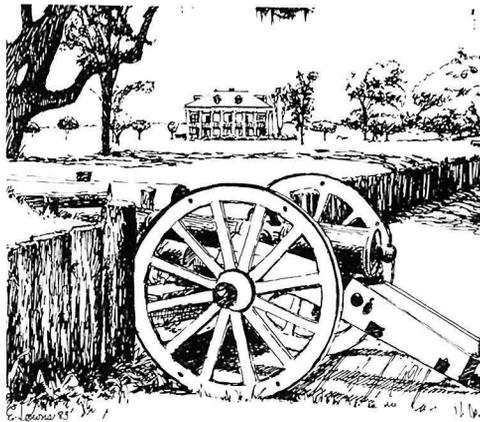
The Delta — where the Mississippi River reaches the Gulf of Mexico. The great river-road drains the heartland of North America and has long brought the people and products of the continent to the sea. It works the other way too. People and products from Europe, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia have come by ship to the Delta and many stayed, to become part of this special place. This rich ethnic blend gives southern Louisiana and its great port city of New Orleans a very special flavor. Here one can hear many languages, and experience folklore, music, dancing, and cooking of a variety of cultures. It is a blend, yet as in the finest cooking, the parts have kept their distinct flavors.

Jean Lafitte National Historical Park, one of the newer parks in the national park system, celebrates the diversity of this Delta region. The park has three major units: the French Quarter, Chalmette, and Barataria. The French Quarter unit is headquartered at the visitor center on Jackson Square, introducing visitors to New Orleans. The Chalmette unit preserves the battlefield where in 1815 American forces turned back the British advance on New Orleans. The Barataria unit preserves an area of rich and beautiful coastal wetland. The park is also a study center, researching the history of the region and documenting the cultures of the many ethnic groups which contribute to the special flavor of the Delta.



The park is named for Jean Lafitte, a well known resident of Louisiana from 1803 to 1818. From his remote harbor and headquarters on Barataria Bay Lafitte led as many as five thousand "Baratarians" in privateering and smuggling, which were common means of doing business then. Through arms, ammunition, and men Lafitte helped the American forces in their victory over the British in 1815.

Jean Lafitte National Historical Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The superintendent's address is Jean Lafitte National Historical Park, Room 206, U.S. Custom House, 423 Canal Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130.



French Quarter

In the heart of the French Quarter, facing famous Jackson Square, stands an historic building erected by the Baroness Pontalba, an early benefactor of the city. Today 527 St. Ann Street is the visitor center for Jean Lafitte National Historical Park. The center is open 9–5 daily, except Christmas, New Year's Day and Mardi Gras.

From the visitor center, Park Rangers lead walking tours of the area on a regular basis throughout the day. Walks include: *History of New Orleans*, an historical walk featuring the ethnic, historical and cultural diversity of the area; *City of the Dead*, a walk to the oldest above-ground cemetery in the city; *Faubourg Promenade*, a streetcar ride and walk through New Orleans' historic Garden District; and *Odds and Ends*, a pot-pourri of walks about legends of the French Quarter, the haunts of Jean Lafitte, and a variety of other topics. The walks are free, and each is about 1½ hours long. For more information call (504) 589-2636. (National Park Service walks do not enter buildings. Other groups in the city do have tours which enter select historic buildings.)

Sightseeing in the French Quarter is best done on foot. The streets are narrow, one-way and difficult to drive, and parking is limited. However public transportation to the French Quarter is excellent. Many bus routes lead to the streets that bound the Quarter: Esplanade, Rampart, Canal, and Decatur. For more information call the New Orleans Transit Information Center at 569-2700.

There are excellent restaurants and hotels in the French Quarter, many internationally famous. They become quite crowded during holidays and special events.

Chalmette

General Andrew Jackson's stunning victory over crack British troops at Chalmette Plantation on January 8, 1815 is considered the greatest land victory in the War of 1812. Commonly called the Battle of New Orleans — the last battle of the last war between the United States and England — it preserved America's fixed western boundary, and restored American military pride. It also made Jackson a national hero.

The Battle of New Orleans was the climax of a military campaign which lasted more than six weeks and included six engagements on land and water. The Chalmette unit of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park preserves the January 8 battlefield. A section of the American earthworks has been restored, and battery positions are identified by artillery displays. A 1½ mile tour road links important locations of the battlefield, which are described by signs and paintings. Exhibits and an audio-visual program in the visitor center explain the importance of Louisiana and the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812. Chalmette National Cemetery is next to the battlefield, though virtually all of the burials are of veterans of later wars.

Chalmette is open 8-5 daily, except Mardi Gras, Christmas and New Year's Day. Park Rangers present talks on the Battle of New Orleans every day at 10:30 and 4:00. Special services for organized groups are available by advance reservation. Call (504) 589-4430 or write. There is a small family picnic area.

The battlefield is on the east bank of the Mississippi River, six miles from the heart of New Orleans. From Canal Street follow North Rampart Street east which becomes St. Claude Avenue, then St. Bernard Highway (La. 46), which passes directly in front of the park. From I-10 take the Paris Road exit (La. 47) south to St. Bernard Highway and turn right.

Barataria

Long before there were any towns or cities on the Delta it was a special place. A warm climate, fresh and salt water, and rich soil carried by the Mississippi River from the heartland combined to form the remarkably rich coastal wetlands. Even today, crossed and criss-crossed by man's developments, Delta wetlands support an astonishing diversity of life. The Barataria unit of the park, still in early stages of development, will eventually preserve some 8,600 acres of the coastal wetlands, with bayous (a bayou is a slow-moving waterway), live oaks, Spanish moss, alligators, birds, fish, and much, much more. Centuries ago people came here to take advantage of this natural bounty, and as a result the park today contains important archeological sites. Self-guiding trails take the visitor past these archeological sites and into the heart of the fascinating wetlands.

There is no public transportation in the Barataria area, which is approximately an hour's drive from the French Quarter. Follow Decatur Street across Canal Street, where it turns into Magazine Street. Cross the bridge and follow West Bank Expressway (Rt. 90) to Barataria Boulevard (La.45). Turn left on Barataria Boulevard, and continue until you come to the signs for the Barataria unit. For more information call (504) 348-2923.