



Foundation Document Overview

Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve

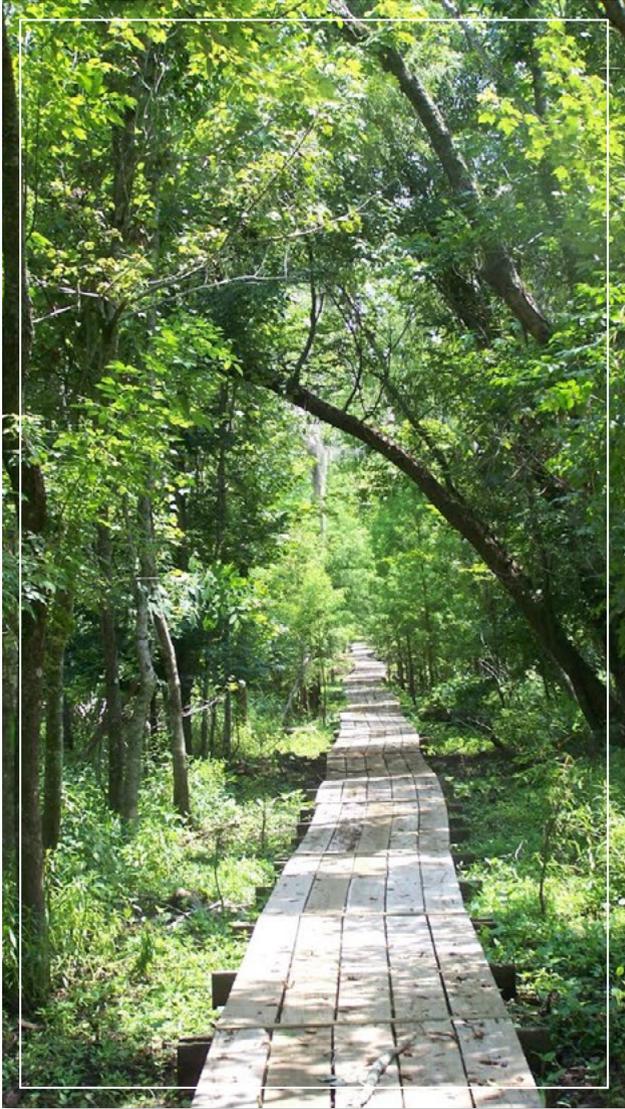
Louisiana



Contact Information

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Purpose



Significance

Significance statements express why Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The park's Acadian cultural centers trace the transformation of Canada's Acadians to Louisiana's Cajuns, descendants of Acadian exiles, as they adapted to their new home's physical and cultural environments.
- Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve connects people to places to experience the living legacy of south Louisiana's blend of diaspora cultures from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Caribbean. Together with the indigenous American Indian cultures that have thrived in this dynamic natural environment, their stories and lifeway are shared with park visitors.
- Chalmette Battlefield commemorates the 1815 Battle of New Orleans and those soldiers who died during this last major engagement of the War of 1812. The American victory shaped new ideas of American identity, encouraged American expansionism, began an era of national pride, and had broad and lasting consequences on the American Indian population and homelands.

JEAN LAFITTE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK AND PRESERVE protects and interprets significant examples of the Louisiana Mississippi River Delta's rich cultural and natural resources that demonstrate the interaction of this region's distinctive environment, complex history, and diverse communities, lifeways, and traditions.



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Fundamental Resources and Values

- The Chalmette National Cemetery is a commemorative site established as a Civil War cemetery in 1864. It is the final resting place for more than 15,000 interments from every major U.S. conflict between the American Revolution and Vietnam.



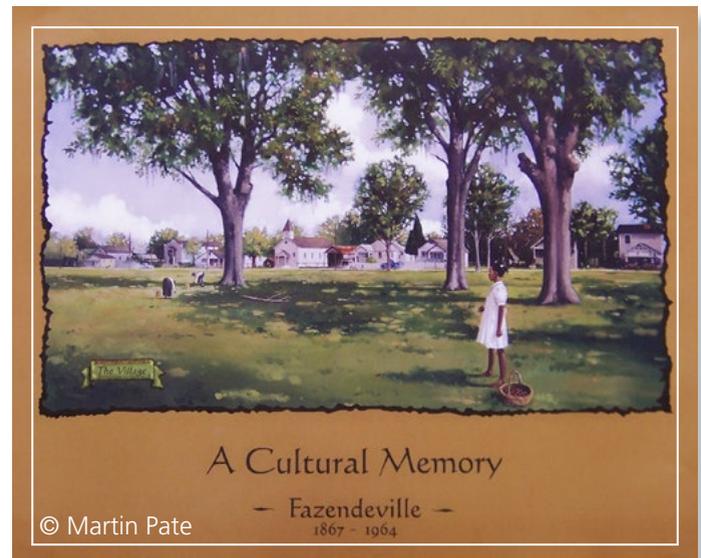
- Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve tells the story of New Orleans, a cultural crossroads for more than 300 years. A colonial French African population and culture helped shape the city by preserving the city's Creole culture, which produced distinctive architecture, food, music, legal framework, and customs.
- The Barataria Preserve provides a glimpse of the Mississippi River Delta's natural world, and its interactions with humans from pre-European contact to the present, a "cumulatively man-altered landscape" that has changed over time. The river's creation of the land over thousands of years, the wide biodiversity of plants and wildlife, ecosystems from bottomland hardwood forest to deepwater swamp to one of the world's largest expanses of rare, floating freshwater peat marsh, and evidence of human occupation, reveal a complex interrelationship between natural and human history in the Mississippi River Delta.

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Cultural Lifeways of the Lower Mississippi River Delta**
- **Dynamic Delta Landscape**
- **Barataria Cultural Landscape**
- **Barataria Wetlands Ecosystems**
- **Chalmette National Cemetery**
- **Chalmette Battlefield**
- **Museum Collections and Archives**
- **Cultural Connections**

Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **El Camino Real de Barataria (the royal road of Barataria)**
- **Malus-Beauregard House (c. 1833)**
- **Fazendeville (1867–1964)**



Description

In creating Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve in 1978, Congress recognized the Mississippi Delta region as an area of national significance, in terms of its natural, cultural, and historical resources. At the mouth of the Mississippi River and the gateway to the interior of the North American continent, the region has long been a focus of economic, political, and cultural activities. The region contains the largest and most productive estuarine and wetland system on the continent, and the wetlands of the Delta are among the most extensive and productive in the United States.

In 1939, Chalmette National Historical Park, the first unit of the national park system in Louisiana, was established on the east bank of the Mississippi River below New Orleans to preserve a portion of the site of the 1815 Battle of New Orleans. In 1966, Louisiana proposed a state park named for Jean Lafitte, a French pirate and privateer, to be established at the present site of the Barataria Preserve. Although advocates of the state park concept emphasized wetlands preservation and recreational needs in the Jefferson and Orleans Parish areas, no funds for land acquisition or lease of property for such a park was authorized by the state.

Eventually, the supporters of expansion of Chalmette National Historical Park and state park proponents found a champion in Senator J. Bennett Johnston, and their efforts culminated in the establishment of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve in 1978. The enabling legislation was amended in 1988 by Public Law 100-250 to authorize the establishment of folklife centers in the Acadian region. This expanded the park into six geographically separate units in south Louisiana that are managed as three administrative units: the Crescent City Unit (including the French Quarter site in New Orleans, and in neighboring Chalmette, Louisiana, the Chalmette Battlefield and Chalmette National Cemetery), the Barataria Preserve Unit, and the Acadian Unit (the Prairie Acadian Cultural Center in Eunice, Louisiana, the Acadian Cultural Center in Lafayette, Louisiana, and the Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center in Thibodaux, Louisiana). The historical figure Jean Lafitte was associated with the three original sites of the park: he roamed the streets of New Orleans' French Quarter, he navigated the swamps of the Barataria Preserve for smuggling contraband and slaves, and he helped the Americans win the Battle of New Orleans at Chalmette Battlefield.

