Day 2 of 3

Culture at a Crossroads
Cajun strive to preserve their way of life

Ken Trahan, left, of Fort Worth, Texas, and Leslie Ducote, right, of Lafayette keep an eye out for opportunities to photograph ancient cypress trees during a tour of Lake Martin south of Breaux Bridge led by Marcus de la Houssaye, standing in rear. Below, the giant crawfish that is part of the Acadiana Parish Tourism Commission's billboard seems to be aiming for a helicopter preparing to land at Industrial Helicopters Inc., an oil-field services firm across the parish line in Scott. Tourists are the actual intended catch of the day for the commission.

Acadiana calling

They come from Marseilles and Quebec, Montgomery and Kansas City, lured by bayou, boudin and Beaucaillou. The mass marketing of Cajun culture has become big business — good news to a region bit hard by the oil bust.

Story by Ron Thibodeaux

Photos by Ted Jackson

Crowley — It was just another day at work for David Guidry, sending his own business and trying to do his job while strangers peppered him with questions. Primarily a commercial striped, Guidry started working about 100 acres of crawfish ponds as a sideline about 15 years ago. Since then, the number of tourists driving across the Cajun prairie on Interstate 10 has increased steadily, and many of them just couldn’t help to stop and check him out.

Often, they’re drawn this way by the folks at the nearby tourist information bureau, whose mission it is to spread the word about what the area has to offer visitors and, hopefully, keep them interested enough in the Cajun way of life to stick around for a meal, shopping, maybe even stay the night.

This time, it was a couple from Illinois, musing the countryside while spending a week at a campground in Lafayette. Guidry put-plush his flat aluminum boat to the

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SPREADING THE WORD

Fisher Chevy Shulls spent his life introducing Cajun culture not just to the world, but to younger generations at home. Today, those influenced carry on the tradition. Page 14

FAUX CAJUN

They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, but some of these imitated Cajun products and the error takers who make fun of the Cajuns are at least just plain embarrassing. Page 13