In the middle of the eighteenth century, refugees from Canada began arriving in south Louisiana. French by nationality and farmers by trade, this group had been expelled from their homeland of Acadia by British rulers. Louisiana was the final destination for these homeless Acadians, and here they settled and flourished.

Acadiana is the name now given to this new homeland of the Acadians, or Cajuns, as they are commonly known. The official capital of Acadiana is Lafayette, a fast-growing industrial, agricultural, and professional center. Surrounding Lafayette, you will find a number of villages and towns with a unique Cajun character.

As you will soon discover, the French influence is the dominant one in Acadiana. But you will also find traces of the Spanish, German, English, African-American, and Indian heritages in the food, music, and folk customs of Acadiana.

Take gumbo, for example, a rich, spicy stew, which is a staple of Cajun cuisine. The ingredients and name are African in origin, the roux, which is the base of the dish, is French, the filé (pronounced fee-law), which gives it character comes from the Indians and the hot pepper which makes it spicy is a legacy of the Spanish. Acadiana, like gumbo, is a melting pot of many diverse cultures, and the resulting product is always hot and spicy.

In your travels around Acadiana you may hear the French language being spoken. French is still an important part of the culture of this area, widely used in business and social encounters. However, nearly all French-speaking residents of Acadiana are equally fluent in English, so you will encounter no language barriers.

When you leave Acadiana, we hope that you take with you an appreciation of this region and its people. It is one of the truly different cultures in the United States.
Lafayette is the hub city of Acadiana. Here you will find hotels and motels, fine restaurants and shops and nighttime entertainment. It is the perfect place to begin and base your tour of Acadiana.

If you enjoy good food, you will enjoy Lafayette. The city is home to a wide variety of restaurants specializing in Cajun and Creole cuisine. Dishes such as seafood gumbo, crawfish etouffe and jambalaya will please your palate. And every restaurant has its own specialty which will convince you of the genius of the Cajun and Creole chefs of Acadiana.

From April to September it's racing season at Evangeline Downs, located just north of Lafayette. Swift thoroughbreds compete for top cash prizes under the lights, while you place wagers and enjoy gourmet dining in the air-conditioned comfort of the clubhouse. After an evening at Evangeline Downs you will understand why horse racing has been called "The Sport of Kings".

Lafayette also offers many opportunities for the recreation-minded sportsman. Just 15 miles to the east is the Atchafalaya Basin, a vast wilderness swamp. Here you will enjoy excellent freshwater fishing in a primitive setting of uncompromised beauty. Hunting for waterfowl is prime sport during winter months in the coastal marshes south of the city. The Gulf of Mexico is within easy driving distance of Lafayette if saltwater fishing is your forte. Lafayette has two municipal golf courses and a number of public tennis courts.

Whatever your idea of fun, it's yours to enjoy in Lafayette.