Baton Rouge

CAPITAL UNDER 10 FLAGS

Today it is port, university town, major industrial site, and Capital City of Louisiana.

But Baton Rouge has been many other things to many other people under the ten flags which have flown over the territory—boundary between Indian hunting lands, Revolutionary War battleground, riverboat town.

More, the rich potpourri that is the heritage of Baton Rouge absorbed special flavors from Spanish conquistadors looking for gold, French Acadians exiled from Nova Scotia, bayou ghosts and legends, and a grandiose plantation era. The 34-story Capitol, the nation’s tallest, is open daily for tours. From its Observation Tower one can see it all—a panorama of landscaped grounds, port activity, gigantic industrial complex and the whole city itself, flung widely in three directions along the east bank of the Mississippi.

The Old Arsenal Museum, once a military powderhouse, contrasts sharply with the sky-scraper Capitol. Inside are cabinets showing phases of Louisiana’s growth. The origin of the building itself is disputed; although its architecture seems to reflect Spanish influence, other opinions claim French or American construction.

The Capitol—that Long-built is not Baton Rouge’s only capitol. Set grandly on a bluff overlooking the river is the Old State Capitol. Architecturally reminiscent of a Norman castle, the structure was once unkindly described by Mark Twain as “that monstrosity on the Mississippi.” It is now being renovated for occupancy by state agencies.

Another building transformed for today’s needs is that containing the Arts and Science Center. For 30 years, from 1932 to 1962, it was the Governor’s Mansion and is one more architectural testimony to Huey F. Long’s political reign. Today, the Center provides an enjoyable presentation of Louisiana’s many accomplishments and fascinating history.

Anytime is a good time for fishing in Louisiana, where the moniker "Sportsman's Paradise" is given credence to no small extent.

Louisiana’s 34-story capitol, tallest in the nation, rises majestically on the bank of Old Man Mississippi at Baton Rouge.

Louisiana live oak trees, New Orleans City Park

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shows and rodeos throughout each year. In autumn are the Dixie Horse Show Jubilee (Tennessee Walkers) and Livestock Show, and the Quarter Horse Show; spring brings the Livestock Show and Rodeo, biggest in the deep South, and the All Arabian Show; and summer is time for the Paint Horse and Appaloosa Shows.

Baton Rouge, the nation's farthest inland port, is meeting place for ocean vessels and river boats. From the levees, ships of many nations can be seen loading and unloading such cargoes as petro-chemical products and grain.

Majestic views of the Mississippi River and of Baton Rouge and Port Allen dock facilities are among rewards of a drive over the new River bridge. The $46 million, six-lane span, opened this year, is Baton Rouge's second bridge across Old Man River. The night lights of the city, and especially of the vast industrial complex stretching along the east bank, provide a truly spectacular sight.

Louisiana is well named "Sportsman's Paradise" and the bayou country affords Baton Rougians great opportunity for water sports. Sundays, especially, will see automobiles pulling boats headed out of town in every direction. And even lakes within the city itself are available for boating and fishing.

One of the most popular destinations for these sports-minded folks is False River, a few miles north at New Roads. Here, too, are fine old antebellum plantation homes. These homes include Parlane, only one of the ante bellum homes which is still a full-operating plantation and open to the public. Present occupants are descendants of the original owners.

Crossing the Mississippi River by ferry from New Roads to St. Francisville, explorers in this region find a concentration of ante bellum homes open to the public—the Myrtles, complete with its own ghost; Rosedown, one of the finest house and garden restorations in the South; Catalpa, with 30 acres of gardens; The Cottage, offering overnight accommodations; and Asphodel with both overnight accommodations and a dining room open for lunch and dinner (reservations necessary).

Each spring the city's past is honored with pilgrimages to historic sites in the area. Antebellum houses in Baton Rouge itself and along the River Road open their doors graciously to receive guests during the two weeks of the Louisiana Heritage Tours.

The sorcery Louisiana cooks perform with such ingredients as shrimps, oysters, crawfish, crabs, red snapper, file' and turtles is famous throughout the world. Café noir or café au lait, red beans and rice (Sounds plain and simple? Yes, but with its sausage, onion, roux and high seasoning, a South Louisiana treat that haunts the palate) jambalaya, gumbo—all everyday menus, but so delectable as prepared by Acadian or Creole cooks that they are rightly considered grand gourmet cuisine.

Baton Rouge has its share of splendid restaurants offering culinary accomplishments, particularly regional specialties, to tempt the taste buds and satiate whatever connoisseur instincts may be harbored in us all.

The heart of the unique Acadian Country—contracting lively Acadian folk with lazy bayous, and immortalized in Longfellow's epic "Evangeline"—is less than two hours' drive from Baton Rouge, as is the Queen City, New Orleans, with its fabulous French-Quarter sights and fun, lovely Garden District and the St. Charles trolley (rides for only a dime).

All in all, Louisiana's Capital City presents a delightful blend of the best of the old with the best of the new and visitors to Baton Rouge will certainly find plenty of Louisiana lagniappe—whether their interests are history, recreation, scenery, or just plain fun and entertainment.

TOURISTS ATOP the 34-story Louisiana State Capitol building at Baton Rouge view the Mississippi River, downtown Baton Rouge, and the Capitol Complex on the banks of the river.