LOUISIANA'S HEARTLAND
ALEXANDRIA-PINEVILLE-RAPIDES
CONVENTIONS COMMISSION
AND
Greater Alexandria-Pineville
Chamber of Commerce
214 Jackson St. P.O. Box 992
ALEXANDRIA, LOUISIANA 71301
For Information on group or individual tours call ...
(318) 442-6671

Welcome To
Central Louisiana
Whether you are here for a short visit or to spend a lifetime, you will find something of interest in this area. And chances are, you will discover that you are kinfolks with some of us, because our ethnic heritage is as varied as our terrain. You can go thirty miles in any direction from Alexandria and discover whole new worlds, for Central Louisiana is a potpourri of people. North, East, South, or West, you will find ours an interesting country.

Alexandria and Pineville is in the heart of the state—we call our area the "Heartland". But it's also like the palm of a hand, its fingers reaching out into regions of several cultures and customs.

Franco-African
To the north is one of the most unique settlements in the United States, and a culture which has spanned two centuries practically unchanged. These are the Franco-African people, whose forefathers were the men staffing the French outpost in Natchitoches and Cane River. The women were of African or Indian nationalities. "The People" as they call themselves, still speak the Creole language of their French ancestors. This is the Isle Brevelle country, midway between Natchitoches and Alexandria, known in the 1700s as "Le Cote Joyeuse" or the Joyous Coast. These people, who attained great wealth as free people of color prior to the Civil War, have married within their own race and have an immense pride in their ancestry.

Indian
Long before the white man settled this country there were Indians here. Marksville, a short drive to the east, still retains something of this heritage. The parish of Avoyelles, in which Marksville is located, was named for the Avoyel Indians, and one of the most important finds on the continent were artifacts uncovered in the Indian mounds there. A Louisiana Prehistoric Park and Museum, set up by the Smithsonian Institute, exhibits many of the artifacts which were moved from the mounds, indicating a civilization there dating back thousands of years. Some of the descendents of these Indians still live in the area, retaining their tribes and their dialect. These members are of the Biloxi-Tunica Tribe.

Acadian French
You hear a lot about "Cajuns" these days, and they are a vital part of Louisiana history. Some 30 miles south is the unofficial beginning of the Acadian country. These are people of Canadian-French descent who moved to Louisiana about 1758, after having been forcibly driven from their home in Acadie, now called Nova Scotia. One of the most amazing aspects of the Acadians (or Cajuns, as they are often called) is that they have preserved their French language through the years, along with their peculiar dances, songs, and cuisine.

Spanish
An hours drive in a westerly direction there is another culture—settlements established by the Spanish who were sent into the country as early as 1721 to establish the eastern outpost of the Spanish empire. They founded Presidio Neustra Senora del Pilar de los Adais, and for fifty years this spot at Robeline was the Capitol of the Province of Texas. Now a park, a stone and bronze marker explain the fort's significance. Towns such as Zwolle, (which initiated a Tamale Fiesta this year in honor of their heritage) Provincal, and other villages have retained much of the Spanish influence.

Famous Footprints
History has walked along our pathways.
Hernando DeSoto marched his bands across the lands in the mid 1500s leaving us a gift of the Catahoula Hog Dog, a one-of-a-kind hunting dog famous worldwide. LaSalle came through a hundred years later. But this remained Indian country until a shrewd merchant named Alexander Fulton opened up a store, gave liberal credit to the Indians and then allowed them to pay off their debts with their lands. On this land is the town of Alexandria, laid out by Fulton in 1805.

Other lands were settled by people who came in and received Spanish land grants in the turn of the 18th century. They settled along the bayous—Bayou Rapides, Bayou Boeuf, Bayou Roberts, and laid out their roads along the paths believed to have originated as buffalo trails long before man touched these shores. Indians used the route for their seasonal or spontaneous migrations, and such notables as Sam Houston, Jim Bowie, U.S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, William Sherman, George Armstrong Custer, and others followed along later.

Blood soaked both the blue and gray flannel uniforms during battles fought along this road in the Civil War, and gravestones of important figures through the years mark their time spent here.

So we in Central Louisiana, who have made so many people welcome, extend a cordial welcome to you. We may say "good morning" in a language you have never heard before, but it will be a warmly meant greeting.

We are proud of our heritage. We enjoy our part of the country. We hope you will, too.
War I and hundreds of servicemen died there from insteading Union troops also moved southward, that Alexander Fulton laid gunboats were trapped upstream. The opposite side of the waterfalls, or rapids, caused by limestone edges in the Red River, they called the place “Les Rapides”. Later, the Spanish came along with their families, created a permanent settlement which was called “Alcâtre”. The Spaniards called the post “El Rapido”. When the state was divided the parish was named Rapides.

By 1791 the settlement was renamed Pineville because of the abundance of pine trees. The opposite side of the waterfalls, or rapids, caused by limestone edges in the Red River, they called the place “Les Rapides”. Later, the Spanish came along with their families, created a permanent settlement which was called “Alcâtre”. The Spaniards called the post “El Rapido”. When the state was divided the parish was named Rapides.

It would be difficult to determine at exactly what year the beginning of a settlement was ... in toward Baton Rouge.

"We enjoyed having you in Central Louisiana. Y'all come back now!!

TOUR #1
ALEXANDRIA-PINEVILLE
This territory, along Bayou Boeuf and Bayou Roberts, is a fertile field of rich history.

1. Ingelow and hardtimes, both private.
2. Site of Mountmel, home of Thomas Overton Moore, Louisiana Sesquicentennial Governor (1800-1804). Home, buildings destroyed by Union forces, 1864.
4. Louisiana State University at Alexandria.
5. Oakland Plantation site.
7. Quantoico home site, remains of sugar mill.
10. St. John Baptist Church, unusual architecture.
12. Warehouse Row along Bayou Boeuf, main shipping thoroughfare in 1800's.
13. Warehouse and terminal for Ralph Smith railroad, first railroad which connected Alexandria to the southern market.
14. Holy Comforter Episcopal Church.
15. Home Place, settled by Compton Family.
16. Hollywood Plantation, home of Wells Family. This pioneer family included James M. Wells, Union sympathizer who became Governor of Louisiana in 1865. Members of the Wells family fought in the Vidalia sandbar duel which involved the neighbor, Jocquey, who introduced his famous knife in this fracas. They also owned the racehorse Lecompte, an internationally known champion who set a world record in 1854 in Metairie, Louisiana. The town was later named Lecompte in his honor.
17. Lunenburg (unoccupied).
18. Loyd’s Hall (open appointment).
19. Trinity Episcopal Church. Cemetery contains grave of Ralph Smith Smith and members of Wells Family.
20. Columns of Old Christian Church, destroyed by Yankee troops.
21. Walnut Grove, private, built by Tanner family, first immigrants to area. One of oldest homes in Cheneyville, established in 1811.
22. Peter Tanner plantation home. (Private).
25. Wytchwood, built by Tanner family. (Private).
26. Meeker Sugar Mill, northernmost sugar producing facility of the area. From Meeker, take 167 down into Acadiana, or continue on 71 into Bunkie, then take highway 115 and a headquarters building has been constructed exactly as it appeared in those long ago days when the fort was one of the best the American army had. Open.

TOUR #2
BAYOU RAPIDES
The area along Bayou Rapides and Bayou Jean de Lacombe, sometimes called “The Island” is bound by a craft, housed in building 7 formerly used for slave quarters on Melrose Plantation.

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5. Oakland Plantation site.
7. Quantoico home site, remains of sugar mill.
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TOUR #3
CANE RIVER COUNTRY
Cane River Country, an area extending from approximately 20 miles along the Cane River, is a unique region, it has been immortalized by writers and artists. This tour starts approximately 25 miles north of Alexandria-Pineville on Highway 1.

1. "Little Eva" Plantation, legendary home of "Uncle Tom" and of the person believed to have been the character after which Simon Legree was modeled in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s book “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”. Replica of cabin and graves of the two are located off Highway 1.

TOUR #4
LECOMPTE-CHENEYVILLE
This territory, along Bayou Boeuf and Bayou Roberts, is a fertile field of rich history.

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4. Louisiana State University at Alexandria.
5. Oakland Plantation site.
7. Quantoico home site, remains of sugar mill.
10. St. John Baptist Church, unusual architecture.
12. Warehouse Row along Bayou Boeuf, main shipping thoroughfare in 1800’s.
13. Warehouse and terminal for Ralph Smith railroad, first railroad which connected Alexandria to the southern market.
14. Holy Comforter Episcopal Church.
15. Home Place, settled by Compton Family.
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25. Wytchwood, built by Tanner family. (Private).
26. Meeker Sugar Mill, northernmost sugar producing facility of the area. From Meeker, take 167 down into Acadiana, or continue on 71 into Bunkie, then take highway 115 to Mansura, and Marksville. Highway 1 leads back into Alexandria or on toward Baton Rouge.

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