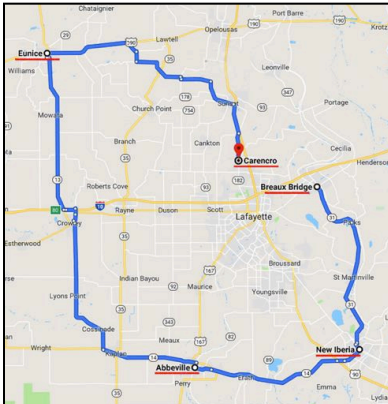


## CAJUN COUNTRY AIRSTREAM CARAVAN



How can you visit a friendly foreign country, listen to a foreign language and music, eat strange foods and still use the dollar without crossing an international border? Try the Cajun Country all located within 20 miles of Lafayette Louisiana!

If you are sitting on the fence about trying out the Airstream caravan experience and aren't sure if caravans are your sort of thing or perhaps don't want to commit to a long trek, then Cajun Country Caravan is perfect for you. This two-week trip in the spring covers short travel distances and only five campgrounds in a loop around Lafayette, LA.

You'll have to be prepared for a long wait for this popular adventure! Peter and Judy Schwarz took over in 2019 from Larry Boudreaux and courageously ran two separate 25 rig caravans back to back this year to help reduce the heavy backlog. We had been on the wait list since 2016. My recommendation is to sign up now even if you are unsure - you can cancel anytime up to 8 weeks before departure with minimal financial exposure.



Caravan leaders Peter & Judy Schwarz (left) at the final banquet invited Larry Boudreaux to join our celebration and honor his many years of past Cajun caravan leadership.

The Acadian Village is a collection of restored and recreated period buildings around a lake that shows what life was like for the early Acadian settlers.



The Cajun culture is unique having evolved from the forced migration from the Canadian Acadia area and gradual mixing and integration with Spanish and Caribbean cultures also present in the Louisiana area. Catholicism in Canada under British rule was not allowed and thousands of French ethnic families were shipped out in the mid 1700's. Over the decades Spanish territory became French, then in 1803, through the Louisiana Purchase, a US territory.

Life in the Mississippi Delta was then and still is full of harsh realities. The land is barely above the water table and is infested with alligators and snakes, making agriculture difficult. In many areas, transport is limited to waterways. Thus, the Cajuns developed into an independent, self-reliant community with pride in their origins and a strongly bonded cultural and social lifestyle.



Alligators up to 14 feet long and weighing up to 900 lbs have called Louisiana home for over 200 million years.

Immediately you notice their French-derived language, their music, and an exotic food culture. Everyone has heard the saying "Laissez les bons temps roulez" (let the good times roll)! How do you make that happen? Mix copious amounts of music, food and drink in a relaxed setting, and you'll quickly be caught up in the Cajun rhythm of life. The Cajun language is a mish-mash derived from French but modified over three centuries of Delta isolation and intrusion of Spanish terms and Caribbean influences.

The isolated communities fostered a rich, distinctive musical heritage driven by fiddle, accordion, guitar and harmonica. At almost every stop on our caravan, we had the opportunity to listen and dance to their lively performances or jam sessions in



Cajun music lineup at Pt. Breau Cajun restaurant featuring a pedal & knee lever steel guitar, lead singer and his accordion, drums and electric guitar. We also visited jam sessions at Savoy's Music Store and Fred's Lounge near Eunice.

restaurants, country barns, music hall, music stores, and, of course, bars! Some bands have evolved into Zydeco, a contemporary offshoot from traditional Cajun music.



Jane's Seafood Restaurant in New Iberia specializes in 5 lb trays of spicy or regular crawfish for a totally excellent dinner treat!

Food! Crawfish are king! As we approached Louisiana, we had our first taste of hot freshly steamed crawfish in local supermarkets. Based on a 15% meat yield, an order of 3 lbs will give you just 7 ounces of meat plus what you

suck from the head! For a blowout dinner, order the 5 lb. serving carefully specifying mild, medium or hot to your taste!

One of our most memorable excursions was visiting a crawfish farm. We were treated to a ride in a crawfish harvesting boat, which runs up and down a shallow (about 2 ft deep) rice paddy field, lifting out the conical mesh pots or traps, emptying the captured crawfish on to a sorting tray, loading the cage with fish bait and moving on down the line. The sorting tray bars allow smaller crawfish to pass through the grid and return to the water.



Andre' the crawfish harvester took us on a loop around the crawfish pond and we helped sort the lively little creatures, package them and within the hour consume them!

Bags of crawfish were taken to the farm house and steamed for us to enjoy as a most splendid lunch with sweet corn and steamed potatoes.

We were amazed to learn about the symbiotic relationship between crawfish and rice and the dual

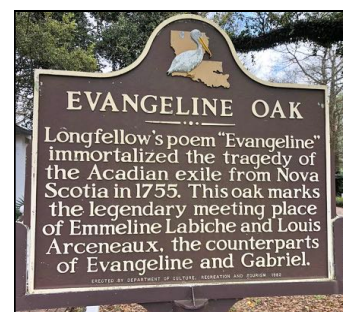
purpose of the rice paddy fields, the seasonal cycle of rice cultivation and crawfish sharing this mutual habitat. Rice grows in water from March to July and crawfish are seeded in June. Water is drained in August and rice is harvested. The fields are flooded again in September/October to become a crawfish pond, with the crawfish harvested from November to July! Repeat and enjoy!

Oysters were another memorable food highlights, raw or charbroiled with toppings such as onions and cheese. Another delight was boudin sausage in its many forms and concoctions. No one seemed very specific about the exact contents. We discovered that the ancient boudin recipes are now commercially banned by FDA edict so that part of the culinary heritage was tamed! Shrimp, frogs legs, alligator, and catfish were popular menu items at the restaurants promoting Cajun dining.



Oysters are on every menu in many forms including our favorite, char-broiled with a dressing of onion, parsley, cheese and bacon.

We visited some beautiful plantations, historical houses, villages, and churches, which gave us an excellent understanding of the Cajun values and religious heritage. Shadows on the Teche (Teche may be derived from Indian language for a bayou that meanders like a snake) illustrated the comforts and lifestyle of the wealthier sugar cane plantation families who had the financial means to build beautiful family homes in the 1800's. Jefferson Island house and gardens were developed by Joseph Jefferson a famous American actor who played Rip Van Winkle and hence the name of the gardens on the property.



The sad lovers' tale of Evangeline forms the cornerstone of Acadian culture and the story of forced exile from Nova Scotia to Louisiana.

Avery Island, home of the McIlhenny family and the Tabasco plant famous for its wonderful collection of





Avery Island is covered in pepper plantations. The plants curiously grow upwards and are only picked when their color matches the Tabasco logo color.

hot sauces, provides another perspective on the use of the local resources. A spicy seafood lunch and a tour of the museum along with tasting in the store got us into the spirit of the region. Incidentally, Jefferson and

Avery islands are part of five geological salt rock dome "islands" across the region, each approximately two miles wide and several miles deep.

We spent an enchanting misty morning cruising Lake Martin, where our Champagne's swamp tour guide shared the history and ecology of Louisiana swamps while we meandered through 500 year old moss draped Cypress and Tupelo trees. Keep your eyes open! The waters of the swamp are shallow and infested with alligators some up to 14 feet in length. Many visitors are attracted to the bird watching and vast nesting with over 200 species recorded.



The Louisiana swamp has magical qualities that allow life to adapt despite the tough environment amongst the cypress and tupelo trees.



The caravan group visits the Governor's mansion in Baton Rouge which features a continually updated mural painting that recounts the state's noteworthy environmental, historical and significant political lifestyle events of Louisiana.

The Cajun Country Caravan would not be complete without mention of visiting the wonderfully decorated Governor's Mansion in Baton Rouge,

along with the treasured old and new state capitols. The new capitol tour spent time discussing the politics of Louisiana and the murder of Huey Long in 1935 - the police report on his case was not published until 1991. Politics in Louisiana are well beyond the scope of this Airstream caravan adventure!

Although this travelog captures some of the memorable activities of this short caravan, one of the highlights of any Airstream adventure is the collegiality that comes from sharing experiences with like-minded travelers. Yes, we frequently meet with fellow Airstreamers at campsites and rallies, but caravan memories and friendships are the gift that endures. We look forward to catching up with our fellow travelers down the road.



Margaret & David Broad (WBCCI #2381) from Tappahannock Virginia, traveling 8 months of the year since July 2016 in their 2015 Flying Cloud 25 RB. Enjoying new-age Cajun Cuisine lunch at the Blue Dog Cafe' in Lafayette Louisiana with 2019 Cajun Country Caravan fellow Airstreamers John & Victoria Magnacca (left), Lisa Sessa, and ourselves. The Cafe' features the famous George Rodrigue Blue Dog Series of paintings throughout the dining area. Our travel blog is at [www.flyingcloud25.blogspot.com](http://www.flyingcloud25.blogspot.com) and David also publishes an Airstream improvement page at [www.facebook.com/airstreamtweaks](http://www.facebook.com/airstreamtweaks).

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

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