

# Central Louisiana: Where Culture Connects

## “Step Back in Time”

Avoyelles Parish  
TravelAvoyelles.com  
800-833-4195

Vernon Parish  
VernonParish.org  
800-349-6287

Rapides Parish  
AlexandriaPinevilleLA.com  
800-551-9546

Louisiana has a wide varied history. This tour will take you through three parishes with a long American Indian, Military, and historical background.

### Day One

Visit the **Burr Ferry Confederate Breastworks**. The Confederate Breastworks at Burr Ferry were erected during the Civil War to protect Texas from invasion. They are one of the few remaining earthen fortifications in Louisiana and the only Civil War site in Vernon Parish. And just down the road is the Burr's Ferry Bridge. The Burr's Ferry Bridge was built in 1936-37 by the W. Horace Williams Company under the Works Progress Administration. It spans the Sabine River and connects Texas Highway 63 with Louisiana Highway 8. The design of the **Burr's Ferry Bridge** addressed difficult site conditions and employed innovative solutions, including the use of long spans and a slightly curved alignment. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Go from Civil War history to more modern military history, take a peek in the **Fort Polk Military Museum**. The Fort Polk Military Museum is housed in a new building located at 7881 Mississippi Ave on Fort Polk. The 3,600-square-foot facility houses objects and historical artifacts relating to Fort Polk history, including uniforms, equipment, weapons, training aids and more to help visitors understand the role that Fort Polk has played in preparing the Army for war.

Then head back to Leesville to tour the **Museum of West Louisiana**. The Museum of West Louisiana is housed in the historic Leesville KCS Depot building. From 1916 until 1968, the Kansas City Southern railroad served as a primary travel and transportation center for the city of Leesville and all of the surrounding area, but eventually rail travel declined and the building fell into a state of disrepair. On October 25, 1984, the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and by 1986 had been fully restored to serve as a storehouse of artifacts illustrating the history, culture, and resources of Vernon Parish and the West Central area of the Louisiana Territory. Items of interest include archaeological artifacts, logging and railroad memorabilia, clothing and household items, and special displays. Recent additions include the P.O.W. Paintings, a group of scenes painted on the walls of a local hotel by German prisoners of war during World War II.

One of the unique historical museums in the area is the **Museum of the New Llano Colony**. The New Llano Cooperative Colony was founded in 1917 by Job Harriman. It was located two miles south of Leesville on 20,000 acres of cut-over land. Members paid \$2000 and were given a job. In return they received a home and their share of food. The people were self-sufficient, farming the land and operating various manufacturing and specialty businesses. They had their own school, infirmary, hospital, and recreational facilities. The colony was closed in 1937. The Museum houses exhibits and collections, which include photographs, artifacts, videos and more.

Grab dinner in Leesville. Try one of the stops on their convenience store eating trail! Overnight before heading to Alexandria for day two. If traveling with an RV, consider Shady Lake RV Park where you can bank fish in their stocked lake.

## Day Two

Begin the second day with a tour of **Forts Randolph & Buhlow State Historic Site**. This Civil War-era site was once earthen forts built to protect the area from Union invasion after the retreat of the Red River Campaign. Visitor can tour the visitor center, walk the ramparts of the forts, and view a kiosk detailing the naval engineering feat Bailey's Dam.

Then head to Camp Beauregard to tour the **Louisiana Maneuvers & Military Museum**. This museum holds artifacts, displays, and memorabilia from pre-WWII, the Louisiana Maneuvers, and Second World War. After touring the exhibits in a WWII-era barrack, step outside to see their collection of military vehicles.

The historic **Hotel Bentley**, located in downtown Alexandria, houses a smaller Louisiana Maneuvers museum on its lobby-level. Watch the short introductory film then walk through the timeline of the Maneuvers and WWII. The great generals of WWII stayed in the Bentley prior to the War – Eisenhower, Bradley, Patton and Kissinger. It is rumored the plans for the D-Day invasion were drawn on a napkin in the hotel's Mirror Room lounge. The Hotel Bentley is open and booking rooms – consider staying a night in the midst of history.

Take a short drive to the remains of **Camp Claiborne**, one of the camps where the Maneuvers took place. The maneuvers were used for training the soldiers that would be deployed to WWII's European Theater. Explore the kiosk and visualize the scene in front of you where the 101<sup>st</sup> and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne divisions were raised.

Complete the day with dinner and overnight before heading to Marksville for day three.

## Day Three

Begin the day at the Avoyelles Council on Tourism offices to pick up a map and information regarding the Solomon Northup Trail. Northup was a free man who was kidnapped and sold into slavery. After 12 years in slavery, through a fortuitous meeting with Samuel Bass, a Canadian builder, Northup was freed. The Northup Trail winds through central Louisiana, specifically in Rapides and Avoyelles Parishes. The Trail map will guide you to several stops along the trail including the Marksville Post Office, the Hypolite Bordelon House, Bayou Boeuf, and Dr. Jules C. DeFosse's home. (Other sites located closer to Alexandria include the Epps House and Historic Cheneyville Trinity Episcopal Church.)

Grab a picnic and head to **Yellow Bayou Memorial Park**. This public park area has Civil War significance, noted as Confederate Fort No. 2. Yellow Bayou is a relatively small earthwork fortification associated with the Civil War's Red River Campaign. The Battle of Yellow Bayou took place May 18, 1864.

Take a tour of the Adam Ponthieu General Store and visit the Sarto Iron Bridge. The Museum, representing a time capsule of Americana and old Avoyelles Parish, reflects the time period between 1900 and 1950 and is open to the public. Contents of museum feature many donated artifacts which include hardware, tools, kitchenware and utensils, medicine, grocery items, cold drinks, sewing materials and notions. Memorabilia pertaining to the Big Bend Post Office has survived and old ledgers used from the Ponthieu and Lemoine Times document business and transactions. The Sarto Iron Bridge recently had its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its establishment.

Then make your way to the **Tunica-Biloxi Indian Center & Museum**. The museum is constructed in the shape of a Native American mound and features the famed Tunica-Biloxi Treasures Collection. Make sure to peek in at the artifact restoration work being produced in the Center's laboratory.

Grab dinner at Brown Bag Gourmet or Fresh Catch Bistreaux before laying down for the night.