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Jax Brewery, St. Louis Chapel & the French Market over the Moon Walk  
The heart of New Orleans -- Jackson Square

## Lower Mississippi River Trail Baton Rouge - New Orleans

The Mississippi connects the two big river cities of Louisiana in a lyrical curving passage of heavy industry, commercial traffic, ancient trade routes and colorful history. Put in below the State Capitol in downtown Baton Rouge and embark on this epic journey downstream through proud parishes and storied places like Bayou Manchac, Bayou Lafourche, Saint James, La Place, Audubon Park, and Algiers, passing by old channels that the Mississippi used to follow to the Gulf of Mexico, camping on the very last mid-channel islands on the main stem Mississippi River (Plaquemines & Bayou Goula Towheads), alongside the busiest concentration of graineries & refineries in North America, viewing old catholic

church steeples over the levee, and underneath its legendary bridges like the Huey P. Long, and the Greater New Orleans Bridge (last Bridge on the Mississippi River). You will paddle along the ancient routes of the great tribes of North America, whose rumored riches were later pursued by Cabeza de Vaca & Hernando DeSoto, little did they know that the wealth was contained in the land itself and the omnipotent river meandering through. The Cajuns journeyed by big canoe along these waters after being expelled from Acadia and found their new homeland in the bayous & prairies of South Louisiana and made a cultural paradise and music almost equal to the excitement & tragic beauty of the river. Nothing will match the romance of a river arrival into New Orleans. Imagine making a landing directly into the French Quarter on the levee at the Moonwalk, with the St. Louis Chapel projecting heavenward from Jackson Square, Jax Brewery on one side and the French Market on the other. The campsites can be creative & challenging, sometimes in the proximity of power plants, sometimes on the levee, sometimes on muddy riverbanks. The river seems to get younger as it approaches its final destination, getting deeper, more mysterious, more mystical, allowing industry & commercial transportation only on its surface all the while remaining aloof & keeping its power & beauty hidden down deep just beyond the ambitions of humanity. Oftentimes paddlers are challenged by abrupt right-angle bends and a fast moving freighter nearby, notably at Forty-Eight Point, Bringier Point, Point Houmas, Helvetia Point, Brilliant Point, College Point, Magnolia Point, and Forty-Eight Mile Point. The river is deep at these bends, over 200 feet in places. The natural deepest hole in the entire Mississippi Drainage is off Algier's Point (opposite Jackson Square), where it dives to 250 feet deep.

Most Quapaw Canoe Company expeditions are at least 90% wilderness and no more than 10% industry. In this section of river, the converse is true, its at least 90% heavy industry and maybe 10% woods & wetlands. Any journey down the Mississippi is a journey filled with superlatives, the biggest, the widest, the greatest, and etc -- this section of river is no different, except instead of just being the biggest & best of nature, it is also the biggest & the most gargantuan of post-industrial America. While not for everyone, this section of river, if approached with a good measure of precaution & careful planning, can be the education of a lifetime and an exciting adventure that truly can't be equaled anywhere on earth.

To help safeguard the Baton Rouge to New Orleans Lower Mississippi River Water Trail for future generations of paddlers, 10% of our guiding & outfitting fees from any expeditions of any length in this section of river are donated to the Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper, Paul Orr.



Paddling past the Louisiana State Capitol

**Day 1: Baton Rouge to Plaquemines Towhead** (20 miles)

Put in from downtown Baton Rouge (MM 230), around Red Eye Dikes (possible picnic site) paddle past the noisy Dow Chemical Megaplex West bank, and then into the long forested length of Sardine Crossing and into Manchac Bend, one of two huge cypress-knee shaped bends, so big they can be seen from orbiting satellites. Manchac & Australia Bends make long 10 mile passages each with multiple crossings involved. They are edged by bottomland hardwood forests and at low to med water levels plenty of sandbars to stop on.

**Camp:** Plaquemines Towhead (Mile 210)



Camp on the bottom end of Bayou Goula Towhead

**Day II: Plaquemines Towhead to Goula Bayou Towhead** (15 miles)

Stop off in historic downtown Plaquemines for a fascinating walking tour of this beautiful village. You might recall Bayou Plaquemine from Longfellow's Angeline, a romance of the Acadian Exodus. Historically the flooding river poured over its banks into these arteries of the wetlands and fed the prolific surrounding marshes and created useful shortcuts for the coastal inhabitants who could easily travel east & west through this region in their pirogues without having to negotiate the difficult traverse of the big channels and strong currents of the bird's foot delta. Possible access westward via Bayou Plaquemine and the Lower Grand River into the Atchafalaya River Basin and the Gulf of Mexico. Below Plaquemines paddle past Georgia Gulf Chemicals & Vinyls and swing into St. Gabriel Bend for a river view of Willow Glen Power Plant. Bayou Goula Towhead becomes visible downstream, like a bright green sailboat on a muddy sea. This is the last main channel island of any permanence on the Lower Mississippi and also the last possible island campsite.

**Camp:** Goula Bayou Towhead Towhead (Mile 195)



Bringier Point Mile 174

**Day III: Goula Bayou Towhead to Brigier Point** (21 miles)

The river gets exponentially busier coming around Point Clair and into the White Castle reach, a steady increase of freighters will be met with from here on downstream, and the corporate superstars they serve: General Electric, Borden Chemical, OSCA Calcium Chloride, Triad Nitrogen. Giant scrap metal loading docks and Grain Stevedores come into view around Philadelphia Point. A beautiful sandbar at Eighty-One-Mile Point. Possible side trip into town of Donaldson. A thousand years ago the Mississippi River followed a due south course to the Gulf that is today occupied by Bayou Lafourche and Bayou Teche.

**Camp:** Brigier Point (Mile 174)



Magnolia Landing (Paulina) 149

**Day IV: Bringier Point to Magnolia Landing** (21 miles)

Downstream from the relative quietness & seclusion of Bringier Point appears noisy River Cement & the giant Ormet Alumina Terminal. Around Point Houmas the river flows under the famous Sunshine Bridge and then down through a gamut of refineries & petrochemical installations including Motiva, Eagle Asphalt, IMC Phosphates and Chevron Phillips. The Port of St James Parish is surprisingly the 2nd largest inland port in North America. Combined with New Orleans & Baton Rouge they make the largest. The megalithic Grain Elevator Zen-Noh appears East Bank around St. Alice. Oak Alley Plantation can be seen at high water levels from the levee at Belmont, and shortly below is the beautiful sandbar/wetlands at Magnolia Landing, safely tucked away off the main channel near Paulina.

**Camp:** Magnolia Landing (Mile 149)



Camp at the end of the Revetment Bonne Carret Point, Mile 134



Bonnet Carre Spillway Mile 128

**Day V: Magnolia Landing to Bonnet Carre** (21 miles)

You know you're getting close to the Gulf now as more & more Brown Pelicans fly over, Roseate Spoonbills, and other sub-tropicals, and you get your first whiffs of brackish water floating across the Bonnet Carre Spillway from Lake Ponchartrain. The spillway was built in response to the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 that inundated much of the Mississippi River basin. It was first opened during the flood of 1937, and eight times thereafter through 2008 to lower river stages at New Orleans. The most recent opening began on April 11, 2008, when river levels in New Orleans approached the flood stage of 17 feet.

**Camp:** Bonnet Carre (Mile 128)



Huey P. Long Bridge

**Day VI: Bonnet Carre to Jackson Square** (32 miles)

The last day of this epic journey through Cancer Alley is so densely packed with industry and so congested that there are very few opportunities for making landings, indeed its non stop action on both sides of the river from here to the city. The docking & installations read like a Fortune 500 list: Union Carbide, Movita, Volero, Shell Chemical (Norco), ARTCO. The river continues on around Twenty-Six Mile Point and under the main span of the I-310 Bridge, a beautiful 2-tower suspension bridge constructed entire of thick sheet metal, even the pylons, the whole rusting clotted blood red like a piece of modern sculpture. Commercial Jets make their final approaches over the river to the Louis Armstrong International Airport near Kenner. Down past Monsanto and Northrop Grumman Ship works is the famous Huey P. Long Bridge, after which the river dives into a 180 degree bend around 9-Mile Point and flows past 3 giant Entergy Power Plants. You're now the vicinity of Tulane University & neighborhoods, the terminus of the St. Charles Trolley is now just over the levee on the East Bank. Possible landing & respite at Audubon Park before the final push around 6 Mile Point and the miles of wharving & drydocking at Thalia Street, Erato Street, Napoleon Street. Under the last bridge on the Mississippi River, the greater New Orleans Bridge, downtown New Orleans & the French Quarter are now clearly seen. Paddle past the Canal Street waterfront and the Canal Street Ferry and make a landing at the Moonwalk just below the dock of the Natchez, the last authentic steamboat on the Lower Mississippi. Celebrate your successful journey down America's biggest port on America's biggest river by crossing the levee

into Jackson Square and making toasts with cafe au lait & fresh beignets at Cafe du Monde.

**Take-Out:** Jackson Square (Mile 95)



### Downtown New Orleans

Navigation Fact 1: The river flows North into downtown New Orleans! Imagine yourself standing in downtown New Orleans in the above photo at the Canal Street Ferry. You are watching a big orange full moon rising over the moody waterfront and are surprised to see it rising over the river downstream. Looking across the river you are actually looking East and the river is flowing North! Weird huh? Everyone says the Mississippi river runs South, but here it is running North!

Navigation Fact 2: Locals say that downtown is the “East Bank” and Algiers is the “West Bank,” even though they are in fact North & South of each other. East Bank and West Bank refer to which side of the Mississippi River you are identifying, but the Mississippi River runs predominantly West to East from Baton Rouge to New Orleans with several giant meandering loops North & South, Hence the term should not be confused with the compass heading.

Navigation Fact 3: When towboat pilots signal each other on the VHF radio with the “One” or the “Two” as they navigate past each other along the river, they are resurrecting a simple form of negotiation born in the era of steamboats. When an downstream steamboat encountered a up-streamer he would decide which side they should pass each other according to the shape of the river, the wind, the possible shoals & snag fields and other hazards, and then he would give either one sharp blow of the steam whistle, or two. One blow meant pass Port to Port. Two blows would mean pass starboard to starboard. This simple decision would decide for the pilots exactly where they will be positioned as they cross paths, the same way it does today for towboat pilots, freighters, and all other water craft big or small.



From the German Expedition 2009 -- These gals know the best way to paddle on a hot day is with some shade!



We'll include fresh Crawdads on the menu whenever we can find them!



310 Bridge



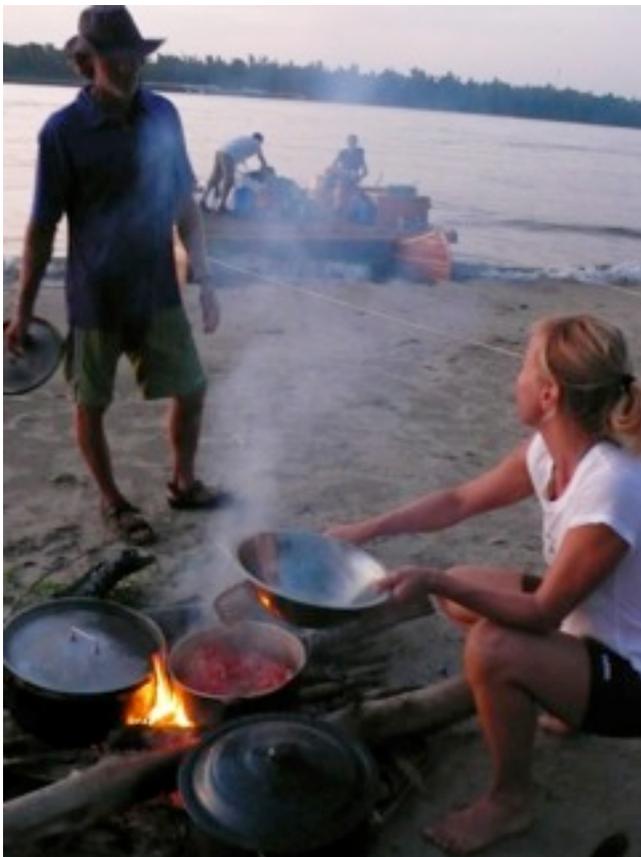
Freighters at Anchor near Bonnet Carre Spillway



A Freighter at Full Steam



Stealth Warships under construction Northrop Grumman



Making homemade spaghetti at the end of the  
Revetment at Bonne Carret Point, Mile 134



Magnolia Landing (Paulina) 149



A Paddler awed by the size of an anchored freighter



Zen-Noh Grain Wharf



Duncan Point



Lingering colors in the water & sky at dusk -- Red Eye Dikes



All expeditions in this section of river benefit the Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper