

In and around Natchitoches LA

2012 CHVA National “Plantations, Pines and Prairies” Tour

Those of us that have been on CHVA tours have learned that CHVA’ers really know how to tour! Actually driving our old cars in the comfort and safety of the CHVA family (when a hood goes up there’s expertise, tools, and many times parts) is one aspect. Another is seeing places and experiencing activities that we wouldn’t do on our own. We’re planning this tour to be a continuation of the wonderful tours we’ve had the pleasure of participating in the past, albeit we know the standard is pretty high!

Now that the holidays are over and the 2012 is underway, it’s time for y’all to set aside the dates September 30th thru October 7th and come join us. Hopefully this won’t jinx us, but generally October is a fine weather month in Louisiana and Texas – and though we can’t guarantee the weather, we do believe you will experience history and sights that will surprise, fun that will be had, and camaraderie that is expected of CHVA members.

We would like to enlighten you with a series of articles, this first “*In and around Natchitoches LA*”, so you have a better idea of what to expect when you get here.

Firstly, note President BK’s advice for the navigators in your AEV to “...learn how to spell ‘Natchitoches’ and ‘Nacogdoches’.” Don’t be intimidated or confused by the names. We will start in Natchitoches (pronounced ‘Nak-a-tish’) which is in Louisiana, and will be traveling through Nacogdoches (pronounced ‘Nak-a-doe-shiss’) which is in Texas. Legend has it there were two Indian brothers . . . but more about that in a future article.

Natchitoches is the oldest permanent settlement in the entire Louisiana Purchase, established in 1714 by the French, who combined (literally!) with plantation slaves creating the history of Creole. It is quite an active and picturesque little town and definitely displays a Louisiana flavor. Originally the Red River, a lucrative connection to the Mississippi river, ran through the town and countryside of cotton and pecan plantations. This was re-routed by nature leaving behind a very pretty 33 mile Cane River lake.



After a Sunday afternoon registration and opening 6:00pm “meet, greet and eat”, the Cane River National Heritage Area will be the major focus of our starting activities. Monday we will visit the Oakland Plantation that has 17 of its original buildings still remaining (it is a National Bicentennial Farm, one of two west of the Mississippi River).

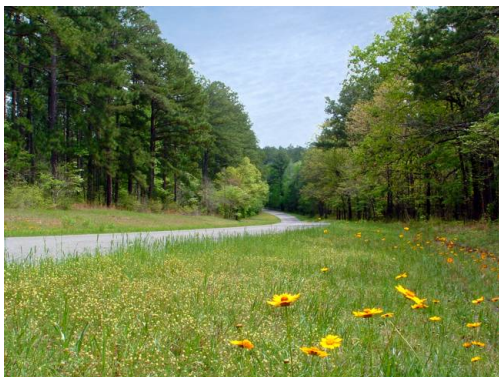
We will visit the St Augustine Catholic Church, the first Roman Catholic Church established in 1803 by and for people of color in the United States. There we will enjoy a lunch featuring gumbo and the famous Natchitoches Meat Pie!



After lunch we will tour the historical and very interesting Melrose Plantation. This was a very large pecan plantation built by and for free blacks. In the late 1800's Melrose became a hub for art and education and hence a haven for artists and writers. We will see many original works of Clementine Hunter, Louisiana's most famous folk artist.



Our return to the hotel will be via the Longleaf Trail Scenic Byway, a 17-mile route following a high ridge through the rugged Kisatchie Hills Wilderness (note - not to be confused with the ruggedness of the Rocky Mountains!). This is the kind of road that convertibles were built for, weather permitting – and if not a shortcut back to the hotel will be available.



Total tour miles for the day – approximately 75.



Two other points of interest: Natchitoches is also the basis of and location of the filming of Steel Magnolias (Truvy: *“Honey, time marches on and eventually you realize it is marchin’ across your face!”*). We will pass by the home of Robert Harling, writer, producer and director.

Lastly, Natchitoches is only 200 miles (4 hrs) from Canton Texas, home of the First Monday Trade Days. **NOTE - the trade days are not Monday** but rather the four (4) days prior to the 1st Monday of each month. Hence they precede the tour, Thurs Sept 27th thru Sun Sept 30th for those of you that like flea markets and wish to shop on the way to the tour. And for you gamblers, the Shreveport/Bossier City casinos are a mere 80 miles (1 ½ hrs) from our starting point.



We are looking forward to seeing each and every one of you this coming September 30th. Let’s get those AEVs on the road and plan to arrive in Natchitoches Sunday by 6:00pm for our opening dinner!

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