

# Eating—always a great adventure

If you want to find a good restaurant in an unfamiliar location, ask somebody who has been there.

That somebody could be a friend who regularly travels to the area, or it could be a local restaurant guide. If the locals speak English, ask at least three different people and choose a restaurant that is mentioned more than once.

If you are in a foreign country, say restaurant with as much of a foreign accent as you can manage, rub your stomach and look puzzled. Then follow the nonverbal communication, like the direction in which the finger points. When you get to the crossroads, ask somebody else.

Eating is a great adventure when you travel this way. I am planning a winter trip to Marquette, so I recently asked for restaurant recommendations from several people who travel on business in Michigan. These are some of the places mentioned.

I have only visited a few of them, so I am not recommending them on the basis of personal experience. One of the rules I travel by, however is: take a chance.

I got unanimous shouts of approval for a place I personally love, Dougherty's in Clare, which is on U.S. 27 north of Mt. Pleasant. Their Sunday buffet is reasonably priced and delicious, including a bowl of blue cheese to scatter on your salad. This led two people to mention the Sugar Bowl in Gaylord and several restaurants on routes going north in the Upper Peninsula.

There was "the St. Claire Inn on the way to Port Huron and the Fog Cutter in Port Huron."

"The Old Mission, Bowen's Harbor Inn, and the Top of the Park Place in Traverse City."

"The Dam Site Inn near Pelston."

"Don't forget the Ristoranti on 28th Street East in Grand Rapids and the Point West in Holland," somebody said.

"The Embers in Mt. Pleasant," said another.

"And the Hack-a-ma-tar near Cheboygan. Does anybody know how to spell that one?"

Of course that doesn't begin to cover the good restaurants in the Lower Peninsula, the group agreed. You can't forget the Canopy in Brighton and

"and how about the Saratoga Trunk in Nott."

But you get the idea. We crossed the Mackinac Bridge at that point and added enough favorite eating spots up there to add 50 pounds to anybody's trip. Then someone suggested the Antlers in Sault Ste. Marie, "where they ring bells, blow whistles and shoot guns off. Excellent food and atmosphere."

The Pioneer Motor Inn restaurant in Escanaba had terrific whitefish. "The Dickinson Inn in Iron Mountain." "And the TNT, which looks like a storefront. They wait in line to go there." By the time the conversation got to the Summer Place in Houghton, I was so hungry, I left the group and went out for dinner.

Some of these will be closed, have changed hands or serve terrible

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(7-65, F.R. 53, 48B) +12C

## TRAVEL LOG of Iris Jones



food, but I'll take my chances. If you have a place of your own to recommend, send it to us.

FROM THE MAILBAG—Plan your first trip to Europe by exploring a four-week program at Southfield-Lathrup High School. From 7:30-9:30 p.m. Wednesdays, Jan. 24 to Feb. 14, practical information includes available tours, packing, U.S. Customs regulations and things the guidebooks don't tell you. Call 354-7456, for information.

The University of Michigan-Dearborn is offering a summer trip to the People's Republic of China, to study health and health care systems. If this interests you, call Marilyn Rosenthal at 593-5195.

If you prefer whales to health care, consider the Great American Whale Getaway, a photographic expedition offered by the John G. Shedd Aquarium at 1200 Lake Shore Drive in Chicago. It will cost you \$927, double occupancy, which includes a \$75 donation to the aquarium, but you'll watch whales on a boat that sails out of and around Hawaii.

Closer to home, Greenfield Village offers Winter Weekends, including guide tours, hot cider, a sleigh or wagon shuttle ride and entertainment by village minstrels, all for the regular price of admission.

## Romanticism is part of Cajun charm is swamplands of southern Louisiana



A wandering soul perhaps pauses to ponder the fate of Longfellow's Evangeline and Gabriel, who are said to have been reunited at the Evangeline Oak by the Bayou Teche.

BAYOU TECHE, LA.—You can't tell history from legend here in Cajun country where Longfellow's immortal lovers, Evangeline and Gabriel, are said to have met under a very live oak tree beside the Bayou Teche.

A statue of Evangeline sits beside nearby St. Martin de Tours Church, above the real tomb of a real woman called Emmeline Labiche, on whose story the legend is based.

Her lover, Louis Arceneaux, is said to have lived in the restored Acadian House which is the centerpiece of the Longfellow-Evangeline State Commemorative Area a few miles away. Louis is Longfellow's Gabriel.

Can this oak really be the same tree? Did Emmeline really die of a broken heart when she learned her lover had married someone else?

Historians may care, but most tourists find this romanticism "part of the charm of Cajun country, where an ancient French culture has developed over two centuries here in the swamplands of southern Louisiana.

A side trip into Cajun country is a favorite for travelers visiting the Mardi Gras activities in New Orleans Feb. 24-28. A brief circle tour follows highway 1-10 west from the Mississippi River at Baton Rouge, turns south at the city of Lafayette and circles back to New Orleans along the coastal road that runs through Evangeline country.

With a little extra time, you can take the highway built above the swamp to Bunkie, north, although you must go to wildlife areas near Lake Charles in southwest Louisiana where alligators can be seen beside the road.

All this land southwest of the Mississippi is bayou country, swampland where long fingers (called bayous) of water rise and fall with the rain and the tide.

Bunkie is not a tourist center, but people claim it has the oldest and largest live oak in the state. You can also see a newly restored slave cabin and mysteriously hidden plantations which only the local people know about, their folklore rich with stories of hidden treasure.

Bunkie leads you north to Alexandria or to a road back through Opelousas, the home of Jim Bowie, where the Acadiana Tourist Information bureau staffs an authentic old Acadian house beside the road. It is next door to a plaster and beam cottage "owned by a free woman of color in 1780." A Quebecer has written a note in pencil on the plaster wall:

"Visite le sud des Etats Unis pour trouver des ancestres. (Visit the south of the United States to find the ancestors.)" Unfortunately, French-Canadian, with their patois, a mixture of pre-revolutionary French and English, cannot now easily speak to Acadians, with their even older French mixed with various Southern dialects.

ACADIANS WERE a group of northern French settlers who lived in what is now Nova Scotia, on the border of New France and the English colonies, until the English tried to force them to take an oath of allegiance in the 18th century.

With typical historical irony, the British wanted the Acadians to stay and produce food and supplies for the British army, but threw the Acadians out because they wouldn't promise to fight against their French countrymen. Longfellow immortalized the various Acadian journeys.

Boatloads were sent to the British colonies (now American) where they were refused admission in a conflict that makes modern travelers think of Vietnamese boat people who have lately wandered the seas looking for a home.

Many who landed arrived eventually in Louisiana, where the Spanish governor welcomed them. Others went back to France.

However they came, they were directed up the bayous to the fishing, hunting and farming lands still held here in Acadiana. However you come, on the thoroughway from Baton Rouge or via Bunkie and Opelousas, you will arrive at the gateway of Acadiana—Lafayette.

LAFAYETTE IS the best central eating and sleeping place to use as a base for touring the area. It is just a few miles north of Evangeline country, and the beginning of the road which runs through country Cajun culture to the coast south.

If you want to find the best Cajun cooking, ask several people who live there and choose from the restaurants that are recommended more than once. One of the recurring names is Angelle's, a modern restaurant full of Cajun cooking, on the highway north of Lafayette.

Old Cajun farmhouses were built with a central sleeping platform called the garconiere, where the boys in the family slept. Angelle's is a modern Alpine-type building with a central garconiere used as a bar; the bar overlooks dining tables on all four sides.

Cajun food here, as at Houmas north in Henderson or Delahoussies south in New Iberia, centers on crawfish, gumbo and etouffee (etouffee means literal-

ly to strangle or smother, which is how the seafood is cooked under wraps in a lidded casserole.)

Lafayette is the site of an Acadian village. St. John Cathedral, the Azalea Trail, Evangeline Downs Racetrack, the Museum of Natural History, the Art Center, the University of Southern Louisiana and a lot of people who sing Cajun songs at the traditional Fais-do-do, or Cajun dance celebration.

Country cajun is more likely to be found to the south, where travelers can follow the Bayou Teche through St. Martinsville and New Iberia.

This is plantation and flower country.

On highway 31 north of St. Martinsville, an authentic Acadian house and exhibit area are preserved in the Longfellow-Evangeline State Commemorative Area. The exhibit shows the historical routes taken by the Acadians, as well as the artifacts with which they lived.

THE ACADIAN PLANTATION house said to be the former house of Louis Arceneaux-cum-Gabriel, is a beautifully restored two-story brick and clapboard house built about 1780 by a French military officer.

A 10-foot-wide-veranda runs the 40-foot width of the second floor front and back, with all the rooms opening on to this veranda. The house is built around a central chimney, because such homes were taxed by the numbers of chimneys used. It is authentically furnished

and overlooks convincingly 18th century grounds.

From the front veranda, a park of live oaks hangs over green grass as far as the eye can see. From the back veranda, you can see the kitchen and gardens, and the low brick wall where slave quarters once stood.

A humbler cottage is used as a crashpad near the road that leads back to St. Martin de Tours Church in Martinsville, where Emmeline and the fictional Evangeline are buried, and where the live oak still stands beside Bayous Teche.

The story says that it was under this tree that Evangeline and Gabriel were reunited after years of separation, her tears flowing into the bayous when she learned that Gabriel was married.

Highway 31 leads south to one of the area's most beautiful plantation houses, the Shadow-on-the-Teche, and south again to the coast. Avery Island is off this coast, with its jungle gardens and bird sanctuary. The island is where tabasco sauce originated and is still produced.

The coastal road, wet during heavy rains, circles back to New Orleans and another kind of Louisiana living. Cajun country living is popular all over this southern city as well, however, and you will find good Cajun cooking in restaurants such as the Bon Ton.

The Bon Ton is run by a Cajun called Al Pierce, who closes his restaurant down on weekends when he wants to go fishing.

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Louisiana past, of which this overseer's house is a part, is preserved at the Rural Life Museum at Baton Rouge. (Photos by Iris Sanderson Jones)

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