



Top Events Along the Louisiana Coast

The Louisiana Coast is a region rich in history, culture, food ... and fun! It's always a good time for a festival, and there are plenty from which to choose. Here's a sampling of some of region's annual events – one event per month, each celebrating something that makes a visit to the coast unique, distinctive and memorable.

January

Louisiana Fur & Wildlife Festival

Parish: Cameron

Dates: January 10-11, 2014

A southwest Louisiana favorite since 1955, the Louisiana Fur & Wildlife Festival highlights local natural resources in the area. Known as one of the “oldest and coldest” festivals in the state, the event includes parades, pageants, dances, Cajun music, exhibits and a carnival. Trap-setting, nutria and muskrat skinning, oyster shucking, archery, and skeet shooting are among the unique contests held during the festival. www.lafurandwildlifefestival.com

February

Eagle Expo & More

Parish: St. Mary

Dates: February 20-22, 2014

The annual Eagle Expo & More in Morgan City is a tribute to the return of the American bald eagle to Louisiana, which is currently home to nearly 300 active nests. Each year, the Expo features a variety of events and activities, including seminars hosted by wildlife and nature experts, a live raptor presentation, eagle-watching boat tours, a photography workshop, and opportunities to meet fellow birders. www.cajuncoast.com/eagleexpo

March

Los Isleños Fiesta

Parish: St. Bernard

Dates: March 8-9, 2014

Held each March at the Los Isleños Museum Complex, this fiesta celebrates the heritage of the Canary Islanders known as *Isleños*, which is Spanish for “islanders.” During the 18th century, in an effort to repopulate some of its colonial regions, Spain sent several groups of Canary Islanders to colonies in the United States; the first Isleños arrived in Louisiana in 1778. Today, the Isleños communities of St. Bernard Parish survive as the last living vestige of Spanish Colonial Louisiana. The Los Isleños Heritage and Cultural Society is dedicated to preserving the Spanish language, legends, crafts, customs, folklore, rituals, music and history of this heritage. The annual fiesta features Spanish food, music and dance celebrations, tours of the Multi-Cultural Village, amusement rides for children, and a series of living history demonstrations. www.losislenos.org

April

Migratory Bird Festival

Parish: Jefferson

Dates: April 11-13, 2014

The annual Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration event corresponds with peak bird migration each April. The celebration was created, in part, to support the purchase and management of the Grand Isle Sanctuary, which protects some of the last remaining undeveloped chenier habitats (live oak ridges). These habitats are nationally recognized as premier areas to view migratory songbirds, because they provide food and shelter to songbirds before and after their long journey across the Gulf of Mexico. Festival-goers can also expect to see shorebirds and waders on beaches and in the marshes, plus raptors overhead. The festival is hosted by the Grand Isle Sanctuary Group and supported by the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program. www.grandisle.btneq.org/GrandIsleHome.aspx

May

Contraband Days Louisiana Pirate Festival

Parish: Calcasieu

Dates: April 29-May 11, 2014

Featuring pirates, music, rides and fireworks, Contraband Days celebrates the legend of the notorious pirate Jean Lafitte, a local hero in these parts. Legend has it that Lafitte docked his boat on the sandy shores of Lake Charles and buried his treasure along its banks. The festival includes nearly 100 events held during a 12-day period, including contests, pirate parades, games and more, each of which promotes Southwest Louisiana's quality of life and *joie de vivre* (joy of life). www.contrabanddays.com

June

Louisiana Bicycle Festival

Parish: St. Tammany

Date: June 14, 2014

The Louisiana Bicycle Festival celebrates the two-wheeler in a fun and laid-back event held in the heart of Abita Springs, a historic resort town across Lake Pontchartrain from New Orleans. Vintage bikes, creatively enhanced art bikes and others take part in an informal ride/parade that winds through Abita's eclectic downtown. Bike enthusiasts of all ages gather to buy, sell and swap components. www.labicyclefestival.com

July

Golden Meadow/Fourchon International Tarpon Rodeo

Parish: Lafourche

Dates: July 3-5, 2014

Held at the Fourchon Marina in Port Fourchon, this is the second oldest fishing rodeo in the United States. Participants can register in a variety of fishing divisions, including big game, shoreline, inside, spearfish, scuba diving, bow fishing, kayak and a children's division. Additional events each year include a "King of the Catch" cook-off, food booths and family events. The mission of this rodeo is to provide a college scholarship program and to contribute to the goals and aspirations of the community's youth. www.gmfourchontarponrodeo.com

August

Delcambre Shrimp Festival

Parish: Iberia/Vermilion

Dates: August 13-17, 2014

The town of Delcambre is known as the center of the shrimping industry and is home to one of the most productive shrimp fleets. Each year, the town devotes an entire weekend to honor this vital economic industry. Events include a shrimp cook-off, a pageant, *fais do-do* (Cajun dance parties), carnival rides and the blessing of the shrimp boat fleet. Shrimp, of course, is the featured cuisine, with such menu items as boiled shrimp, fried shrimp and shrimp sauce piquante. www.shrimpfestival.net

September

Best of the Bayou

Parish: Terrebonne

Dates: September 27-28, 2014

Located in Houma, this is a two-day, two-stage festival featuring some of the biggest and best acts in live music. The event is one big party, with easy access to both stages, food, activities and more. The performance schedule is released a few weeks prior to the festival. www.bestofthebayou.org

October

World Championship Gumbo Cookoff

Parish: Iberia

Dates: October 10-12, 2014

This three-day event takes place each October on New Iberia's historic and award-winning Main Street. While the gumbo competition itself is on Sunday, the festivities begin on Friday with music and popular food items. On Saturday, bands play all day, downtown shops have deals, museums offer tours, and more than 40 food vendors serve up local Cajun and Creole foods such as jambalaya, étouffée, and boudin ... but no gumbo. Sunday's full attention goes to the gumbo, when approximately 100 teams vie for bragging rights to the best gumbo in the world. Guests are invited to sample dozens of gumbos, from traditional chicken, sausage and seafood gumbos, to more daring creations featuring alligator, rabbit, quail and duck. www.iberiachamber.org/gumbo-cookoff

November

Giant Omelette Celebration

Parish: Vermilion

Dates: November 1-2, 2014

This celebration takes place in the town of Abbeville. According to legend, when Napoleon and his army were traveling through the south of France, they decided to rest for the night near the town of Bessieres, where Napoleon feasted on an omelette prepared by a local innkeeper. The dish was such a culinary delight that Napoleon ordered the townspeople to gather all the eggs in the village and to prepare a huge omelette for his army the next day. The Giant Omelette Celebration was born as an effort to bring Abbeville closer to its French heritage. Each year, a 5,000-egg "Omelette of Friendship" is made in downtown Abbeville in front of the Vermilion Parish Courthouse, featuring such ingredients as bell peppers, onions, parsley, crawfish tails and Tabasco sauce. All attendees are invited to taste the omelette. Live entertainment, food vendors and other family-friendly activities round out the celebration.

www.giantomelette.org

December

Plaquemines Parish Fair and Orange Festival

Parish: Plaquemines

Dates: December 6-7, 2014

Held the first full weekend in December, this festival promotes the bounty of the community, including the cultivation and marketing of Plaquemines' citrus crop. Louisiana boasts hundreds of acres of citrus crops, which flourish here because of the absence of severe freezes. Plaquemines, Louisiana's southernmost parish, is where the Mississippi River meets the Gulf of Mexico; more land here is dedicated to groves than anywhere else in the state. Among the most plentiful crops are navel oranges and satsumas, a seedless citrus that's also very easy to peel. Activities include orange peeling and duck calling contests, live music, a 5K run/walk, carnival rides and helicopter rides. www.orangefestival.com