

Trip 2 – Episode #4: Into Louisiana, to New Iberia

The Magnolia Grill in Natchez was like a warm-up for what we'd find in Louisiana: Great food! And much more.

On our first day, we headed toward Baton Rouge (also known as The Red Stick). Along the way, we saw some interesting sights – some magnificent, some not so pretty.

We never get over the magnificence of the live oak trees – you'll see lots of photos of these.



There were throwbacks to the past, like this drive-in diner, where you order from your car (or more likely truck) and the food is delivered to you.



And while there were many signs of prosperity, there were many more of poverty.



In Baton Rouge, we met up with Jeff Clayton, a friend of Jim's who's a professor at Louisiana State University there. He and his girlfriend, Charmaine, introduced us to a fun restaurant, Parrains, where we got to try some grilled alligator, hush puppies, crawdads and etouffee. Foolishly, we forgot to take pictures of any of that! So you'll just have to take our word for it that Jeff and Charmaine were lovely and the food was all pretty yummy.

Unfortunately, we didn't get to spend much time in Baton Rouge. We did stay in an interesting campground - the Farr Park Equestrian Centre and Campground. Although the campgrounds weren't too glamorous, it was fun to wander around the barns the next morning and visit some of the horses (which we found out afterward we weren't supposed to do. Oh well, better to ask for forgiveness...).





We had hoped to go to New Orleans, but news of the Omicron cruising into port there convinced us that this was perhaps not the best time to visit NOLA. So, we continued south and west toward New Iberia and Evangeline country.

As often as possible, we like to take the “scenic route”. Which means we never quite know what we’re going to find. The trip along this section of the Mississippi took us past literally miles and miles of the most toxic looking factories and plants we could ever remember seeing – all right beside the river.



We had checked different RV websites that gave us information about where we might be able to stay, and one of the campgrounds, Seth's RV Haven, got a rave review from one person, who said it was the best campground he'd ever been to. I suspect Seth may have posted that.

This sign didn't fill us with a lot of confidence...



And then we got to the site. We slowed down only long enough to realize we'd better speed up and drive away! I was so shocked, I didn't have time to take a photo. The only photo I could find online made it look a lot better than it was.



Fortunately, we found the K.O.C. campground in New Iberia which not only gave us a much greater sense of confidence but also gave us a spot right next to our twin!



The van next to us, from Reno, was exactly the same make, model and year, although it had a murphy bed instead of the island bed we have in ours.



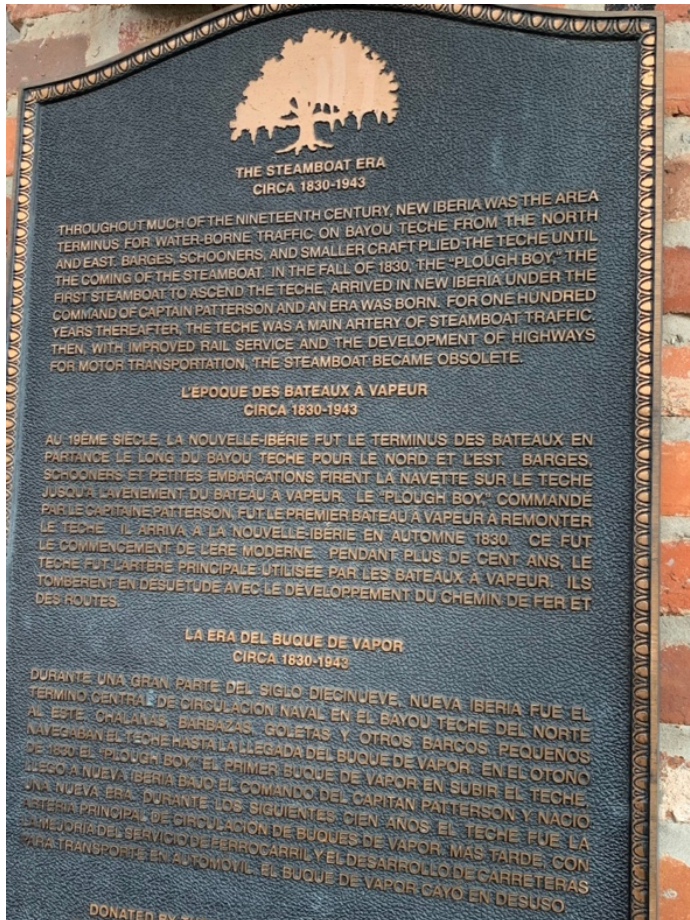
The town of New Iberia has lots of charms, with a mix of French, Cajun, Creole, Art Deco, Antebellum and Victorian influences. And of course, those giant mossy oaks everywhere.







Lots of history, of which they're clearly proud.



A large, colorful sculpture of a cat, split vertically into yellow and blue halves, standing on a circular brick base. The base is inscribed with "GEORGE RODRIGUE PARK" and "201 EAST STREET". The background shows a street scene with buildings and trees under a cloudy sky.

New Iberia is on the Bayou Teche, well known to readers of the Robicheaux books by James Lee Burke. (Jim, who's read them all, got a copy of his latest book, signed by the author, in the New Iberia bookstore.)



We ended up staying at the K.O.C. in New Iberia for three nights, because there was so much to see. Continued in the next blog...