

## **Trip 2 – Episode #9: Leaving Louisiana, Entering Texas and Another Detour.**

We never thought we'd be in Louisiana for long. We ended up spending 9 days there. And the largest town we stopped in was Baton Rouge, where we just stayed overnight. The smaller towns and parks had so much to offer.

So, after our detour to Lake Charles, we decided it was time to head toward Texas, determined to find a great beach to settle beside for a few days.



Again, we were struck by the flatness of the terrain, and the prairie-like big skies.



But the birds here were different. All those white spots you see in this shot are great egrets.



We passed some fires that reminded us of our travels last summer in the Okanagan and the Rockies. But these were managed fires. And with water all around, we knew there was no danger.





In a little while, we left Louisiana and entered Texas, the Lonestar state, where apparently they drive friendly.



As we drove alongside the gulf, we couldn't get over how close the highway was to the water.



But we didn't stay by the water for long. We had another "must do" destination.

Most of you are probably not aware that Jim's middle name is Winston (after Churchill, of course). By coincidence, three of the plays he's written (or is writing) that are based on true Canadian stories, feature leading women characters who were named Winnie. Then we discovered that there was a town nearby called Winnie.

So, in less than an hour...





We found a nice park in town where we could overnight for free. And it was right next to a riding arena, where kids were getting riding lessons.

And when we looked out our window at night, we started feeling the festive spirit.



So it was a nice little stopover. But by far the highlight of Winnie was a restaurant called Tia Juanita's Fish Camp.

Part of the reason was the fun vibe of the restaurant.





[illegible]



But the best thing about Tia Juanita's was the two men sitting at the table next to us. They were about our age and had just been birding at a park down the road. They looked like birders. One of them was more talkative and outgoing. The other one looked and acted a little like Les Nessman. But ... in a classic example of why you shouldn't judge a book, he was the one with the story. Turned out he and his wife had literally sailed around the world. They spent 15 years doing it!

Unfortunately, I forgot to take a picture of them. But from now on, when anyone calls us "intrepid travelers", I will correct them. And tell them about the guy we met at Tia Juanita's. In Winnie, Texas.

The next day, following the advice of our birder friends, we checked out the Smith Oaks Bird Sanctuary just south of Winnie. (We were going that way anyway.)



They had an honour system, where you pay your entry fee in a tiny little receptacle.





This was another park with a system of elevated walkways (which was nice because the grounds were also home to alligators and snakes).



They offered great views and it was a beautiful day.





The park is a rookery for spoonbills and great egrets and many other birds. But when we were there, the only action came from the cormorants who were improbably perched on these branches in clusters. If I had an actual camera that could get a clean close-up, you might be able to see the babies in the nests.



Having paid our respects to Winnie, we returned to our main mission: To find a great beach to settle on for a few days. As usual, we didn't end up where we expected to...