

# HOPPY TRAILS

A craft beer lover's travel guide to Louisiana

STORY BY MARK PATRICK SPENCER PHOTOS BY MELANIE WARNER SPENCER

## WE WERE ON THE ROAD

en route to visit a brewery in Lake Charles — listening to Lucinda Williams spin tales born of memories — when I realized how my life was filled with craft-beer memories. From having pride in the old-school Cincinnati beer culture during my wild Northern Kentucky youth through falling in love with Shiner Bock in my 20s just because it was different. Drinking Yuengling 10 years ago in Pennsylvania, because the locals couldn't wait to introduce me to it. Vacations spent drinking Sierra Nevada in San Francisco and Uinta's Traders IPA getting me through tough movie jobs in Salt Lake City. Fairhope, Alabama to that Sweetwater in Georgia — so many memories, distilled, vivid, a craft beer in my hand.

Isn't it weird how craft-beer memories stick with you? I've obviously had it, but I don't have any great memories sponsored by AB Inbev, the makers of Budweiser. Though, I guess those Clydesdales are cool.

The craft beer scene in Louisiana is a tricky beast. Due to legislation, it has wallowed in the lower echelon of breweries per capita ever since they kept track of such things. Fortunately, making money talks, nonsense eventually walks and the folks in Baton Rouge started listening and got into the craft brewery game — a game which involves over 5,300 breweries across the United States.

Yet, including brewpubs, there are only 29 breweries in the state of Louisiana.

There would be a lot less if it weren't for House Bill 232, which was passed in the 2015 regular session and allowed breweries to sell up to 250 barrels of beer a month. This flexibility allowed a vital source of revenue for craft brewers and enabled smaller companies to expand slowly if need be. If you're drinking at a craft brewery that opened in the past two years, you can probably thank this bill for the pale ale in your hands.

Yes, Abita Brewing has been around since 1986 and NOLA Brewing cranked up in 2009, but the industry is still in its growing stages and, with the support of the government, could roar into a bright Louisiana future. A lot of legislation causes Louisianans to throw their hands up in the air, both in confusion and frustration. But with the support of the state government, we can all throw our hands up in the air, bring our hands together and start clapping for an industry that is built with brick and mortar and provides permanent jobs in the Pelican state.

Louisiana craft beer is here. Now, let's get to some breweries, turn the music up and have a good time.

\*  
Great Raft  
Brewing poured  
Shreveport's  
first locally  
brewed beer  
since Prohibition  
in October, 2013.



# NORTH LOUISIANA

SHREVEPORT AND BOSSIER CITY ARE SO FAR north, I considered putting snow chains on the Saturn to get there. Of course that's ridiculous, but Shreveport does have a hockey team, so maybe I'm not that far off.

The first sights welcoming ramblers into town are whimsical, large-scale murals by artist Chris Opp dotting the cityscape. If you see a mural of a young girl sleeping on a pile of books under the sea (it's called "Blowing Bubbles"), then you're right next door to **Flying Heart Brewing** (700 Barksdale Blvd., Bossier City, 318-584-7039, [flyingheartbrewing.com](http://flyingheartbrewing.com)) in Bossier City.

Two couples that were home-brewers and wanted to take a shot at making some coin in a business they loved created Flying Heart. Ben and Leah Hart teamed up with Ben and Elizabeth Pattillo and purchased an old fire station in what is soon to be, after all of the construction clears, the epicenter of Bossier City. I knocked back a few smoky Barrel 52's and some Black Heart Ales on the patio and realized that if you start going to the brewery now you can be one of those people who say, "Oh yeah. I remember what Flying Heart was like before everyone started coming downtown."

I was standing in **Red River Brewing** (1200 Marshall St., Shreveport, 318-317-4110, [redriverbeer.com](http://redriverbeer.com)) the moment I discovered Louisiana still has a hockey team. Jared Beville, co-owner, told me that the Shreveport Mudbugs hockey team was a local favorite, so much so, that Red River used the Mudbugs logo on its dynamite Penalty Bock Lager — a lager that compares favorably to the Texas legend, Shiner Bock. Another hit is the Hay Ryed Louisiana Wheat Rye. If you can't find the Red River beers yet, believe me, they're coming.

Our ramblers rambled on to **Great Raft Brewing** (1251 Dalzell St., Shreveport, 318-734-9881, [greatraftbrewing.com](http://greatraftbrewing.com)), a stellar compound in a warehouse district. Great Raft is easily one of the most respected breweries in the state. "Drink Real Beer" is the motto and the crowds have shown up to do just that. We dug into the latest release, an easy drinking saison called Farmhouse Slang. We left with the latest volume of Provisions and Traditions and saluted the Louisiana state flag that hangs over the brewery.

Speaking of flags, head east to Monroe and check out the **Flying Tiger Brewery** (506 N. 2nd St., Monroe, 318-547-1738, [flyingtigerbeer.com](http://flyingtigerbeer.com)). This joint wants you to drink heroic beers such as the Burma Blonde and Man At Arms amber ale. A replica of the shark-faced Curtis P-40 "Flying Tiger," as the flyboys say, "checks your six," while you sit at the bar. Just across the Ouachita River, sits the original craft brewery in Monroe, the appropriately named **Ouachita Brewing Company** (95 McClendon Ave., West Monroe, 318-387-9816, [ouachitabrewing.com](http://ouachitabrewing.com)), a brewery — like so many others — that hosts events at the brewery and promotes charities around town.



**TOP TO BOTTOM:** You can't miss Great Raft brewing in Shreveport's Historic Fairfield District. The taproom is open Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 4 to 9 p.m. and Saturday 12 to 9 p.m. Flying Heart's Louisiana Amber, (left), is smooth and flavorful. The brewery is located in a former firehouse in downtown Bossier City. Great Raft's Southern Drawl (right) is an easy drinking lager.



Patrons check out the craft beer selections at Flying Heart Brewing in Bossier City. The reporter recommends the Black Heart Ale.

FLYINGHEARTBREWING.COM

SEES \$5  
NT \$20  
NER \$5  
H \$1

## GEAR

LOGO T-SHIRT \$15  
SPECIALTY T-SHIRT \$20  
PRODUCT T-SHIRT \$20  
HATS \$20



WIFI PWD: FlyngH



WE ❤️ CRAFT BEER

BEER NAME	STYLE	ABV	IBU
FIREHOUSE BLONDE	KÖLSCH	4.8	32
6 OF HEARTS	PALE AMERICAN BELGO-STYLE ALE	6.6	15
LOUISIANA AMBER	AMERICAN AMBER	6.6	18.6
MILK MAID STOUT	MILK STOUT	6.5	41.1
BLACK HEART	AMERICAN BLACK ALE	7.3	53.96
BARREL 52	ROBUST PORTER	7.4	53.39



**STAY** **HOMWOOD SUITES BY HILTON** in Bossier City is a solid pick for those who like complimentary breakfast, large, apartment-like suites and a sweet pool and putting green.



## CAJUN COUNTRY

FOR ONLY HAVING ONE BREWERY, Lake Charles should be ecstatic that the **Crying Eagle Brewing Company** (1165 E. McNeese St., Lake Charles, 337-990-4871, [cryingeagle.com](http://cryingeagle.com)) fell into its lap. Eric Avery, local businessman (and eventually brewery co-founder and president) hooked up with Bill Mungai, a local home brewer who would become Crying Eagle's brewmaster. The doors opened July 2016 to a taproom built for hanging out. Rolling into the building you find a lounge with comfy chairs to the left and to the right, just outside the taproom, you have a courtyard with the standard, nationally accepted game of craft breweries — cornhole.

Crying Eagle launched its beers into the Lafayette market by building a nest overnight in the city. The nest contained

three, beer can-filled eggs. After word got out, the big reveal was a new brand of brew in town. Now that's a great way to open up a beer into a new market.

Another great way to open a beer is with your hands, which I did repeatedly wandering around Lake Charles. We tasted an excellent American-style lager at the brewery and hit Sloppy's Downtown later, a restaurant and bar that has that "it" factor and Louisiana brew on tap. Luna Live with its 44 beers on tap and Rikenjaks Brewing Company are also great places to kick back for a few local cold ones.

On our way out of town, and at the insistence of my social media feed, we hit Darrell's Po-Boys. I knew we were in for some goodness when I counted 54 people

gobbling down sandwiches. The "Special" seemed more sub sandwich than poor boy, but the bread was fantastic and as the house mayo rained down upon my shirt and shorts I knew I had made the right choice. Don't eat poor boys and drive, folks.

Doesn't it seem like Lafayette would have more breweries? This town is too cool not to have craft beer coursing through its veins. Thankfully the Wurst Biergarten exists right downtown, sporting a large selection of beer (with a large courtyard to match) from Louisiana and beyond. **Cajun Brewing** (206 Rayburn St., Lafayette, 337-806-9196, [cajunbrewing.com](http://cajunbrewing.com)) however, is currently the only brewery in town. This brewery is far from a one-trick pony but the Cajun Wit is definitely its big horse in the craft beer race. Wits are a perfect beer for the Louisiana summer time, the kind of beer you can drink all day long

**TOP TO BOTTOM:** Crying Eagle's second floor taps. Canebrake six packs at Parish Brewing. The long, wooden bar at Parish Brewing.

and ponder if you're really going to talk about dogs in the next paragraph.

You see here's the thing about Murphy and Mr. Claude. They don't brew any of their own beers — because they're dogs at **Parish Brewing Company** (229 Jared Dr., Broussard, 337-330-8601, [parishbeer.com](http://parishbeer.com)) and that would be odd. Pro-tip for when you visit the brewery: Mr. Claude is all about meeting the humans and Murphy is all about following Mr. Claude. So, they're sort of a package deal.

Blame my general sense of direction (or lack thereof) for not realizing that Broussard is a suburb of Lafayette. I always pictured these guys making the near legendary Ghost In The Machine IPA or Doctor Hoptagon Black IPA out in the bayou somewhere. So color me surprised when I left Lafayette, blinked and my Waze app told me I was at the brewery.

North of Lafayette, sits **Bayou Teche Brewing** (1106 Bushville Highway, Arnaudville, 337-754-5122, [bayoutechbrewing.com](http://bayoutechbrewing.com)) — one of the oldest breweries in the state. Of course, old is a relative term when you're talking craft beer in Louisiana, be that as it may, the Bayou Teche crew formed way back in 2009. Way back in my earliest days of visiting New Orleans, I stumbled upon the LA 31 tap and inhaled my first LA 31 Biere Pale. It was wonderful. Bayou Teche also makes the Ragin' Cajuns Ale, which is the first officially licensed beer involving a university. I assume everyone in Lafayette drinks this beer, as they try to figure out how to get everyone else to call their school the University of Louisiana without mentioning the Lafayette part.

If you're driving through the countryside and find yourself in Thibodaux you should hit up **Mudbug Brewery** (1878 LA-3185, Thibodaux, 985-859-4899, [mudbugbrewery.com](http://mudbugbrewery.com)) makers of the satisfying, singular Café Au Lait Stout. Head the other way off I-90 and you can have some pints at **Spigot's Brew Pub** (622 Barrow St., Houma, 985-333-3103).

## PLANTATION COUNTRY

I'VE BEEN HOLDING OFF talking about Baton Rouge because I know when I say, "Baton Rouge," you think, "traffic." It's a strange vortex of steel where no matter what time you hit town, you're too late and traffic is a mess. So let's get off the highway, shall we?

**Tin Roof Brewing Company** (1624 Wyoming St., Baton Rouge,

225-377-7022, [tinroofbeer.com](http://tinroofbeer.com)) is the big beer in town. It opened in 2010 and has been a major player in southern Louisiana ever since. Tin Roof's starting line up is built for easy drinking with the Bayou Bengal Lager and a couple of light ales (Tin Roof Blonde, Turnrow Coriander, Perfect Tin) at the forefront. The newest brewery in production

on the Baton Rouge scene is the **Southern Craft Brewing Company** (14141 Airline Highway, Baton Rouge, 225-663-8119, [socraftbeer.com](http://socraftbeer.com)) — a company that makes the superb Red Stick Rye. While you're in town, and since traffic is a mess, you should stop by the Chimes restaurant, which features over 70 taps of beer on draft.

After freeing yourself from the entanglement of Baton Rouge traffic, don't start driving too fast or you will blow by multiple opportunities to remind yourself about the good things in life on the North shore of Lake Pontchartrain, such as the scenic woods and bayous, quaint town centers and, of course, the wealth of breweries.



Brew master Bill Mungai checks out one of his and brewer Joel Prudhomme's latest creations. The American Style Lager excels and Peanut Butter Porter is a nice change of pace.

**STAY** LAUBERGE CASINO RESORT is the place to be if you're in town for the craft beer, McNeese State football or just to live that groovy casino lifestyle.