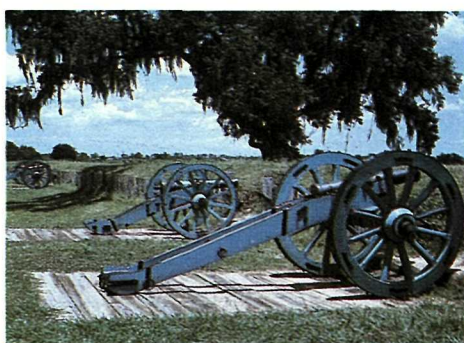


Jean Lafitte

National Historical Park
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



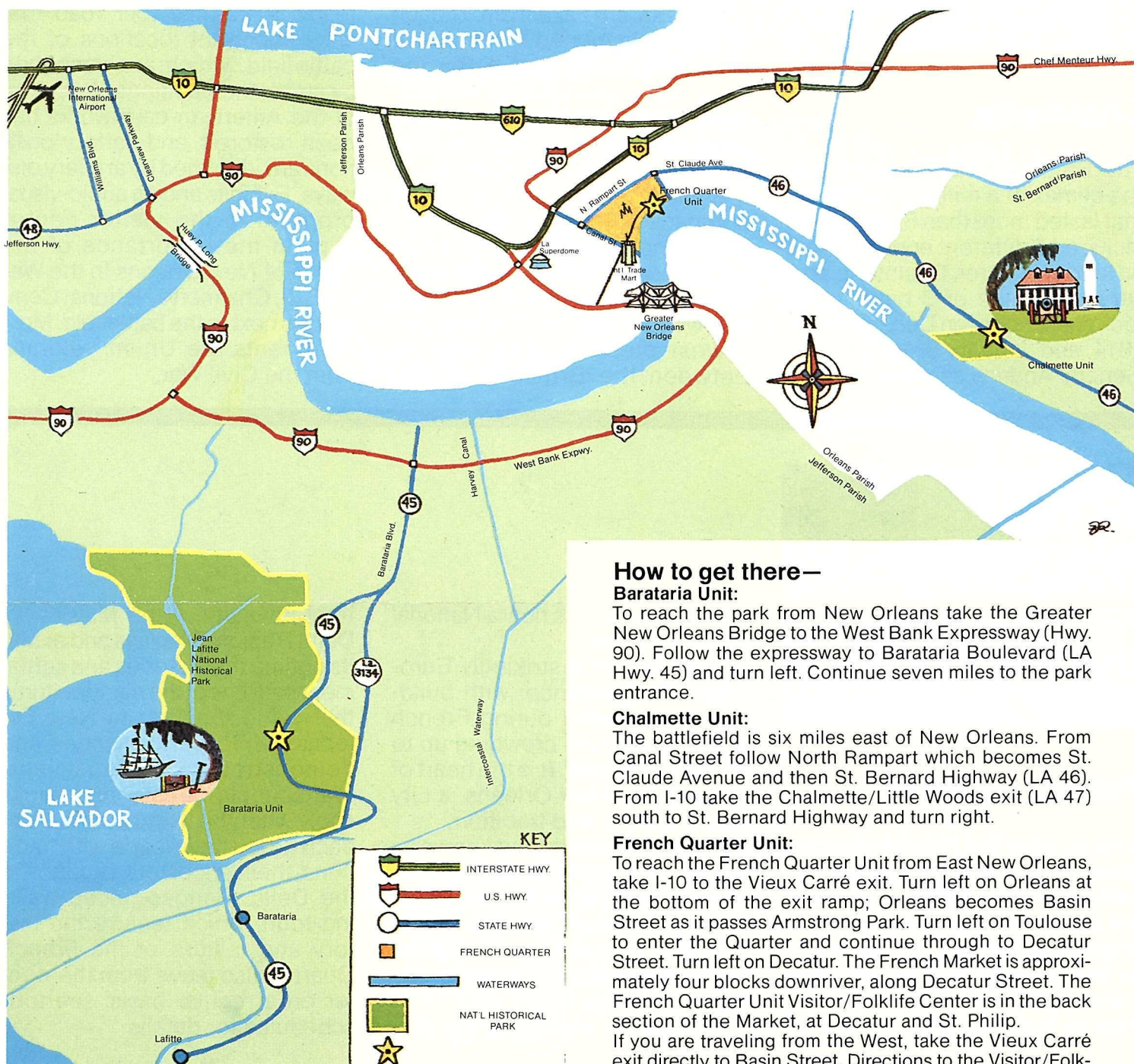
About the Park

The Delta—where the Mississippi River reaches the Gulf of Mexico. The great river-road drains the heartland of North America and has long brought the people and products of the continent to the sea. It works the other way too. People and products from Europe, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia have come by ship to the Delta and many stayed, to become part of this special place. This rich ethnic blend gives southern Louisiana and its great port city of New Orleans a very special flavor. Here one can hear many languages, and experience folklore, music, dancing, and cooking of a variety of cultures. It is a blend, yet as in the finest cooking, the parts have kept their distinct flavors.

Jean Lafitte National Historical Park, one of the newer parks in the national park system, celebrates the diversity of this Delta region. The park has three major units: the French Quarter, Chalmette, and Barataria. The French Quarter unit, headquartered at the old French Market, introduces visitors to New Orleans and the vivid cultural traditions of the region. The Chalmette unit preserves the battlefield where in 1815 American forces turned back the British advance on New Orleans. The Barataria unit preserves an area of rich and beautiful coastal wetland. The park is also a study center, researching the history of the region and documenting the cultures of the many ethnic groups which contribute to the special flavor of the Delta.

The park is named for Jean Lafitte, a well known resident of Louisiana from 1803 to 1818. From his remote harbor and headquarters on Barataria Bay Lafitte led as many as one thousand "Baratarians" in privateering and smuggling. Through arms, ammunition, and men Lafitte helped the American forces in their victory over the British in 1815.

Jean Lafitte National Historical Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The superintendent's address is Jean Lafitte National Historical Park, U.S. Custom House, 423 Canal Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130.



How to get there—

Barataria Unit:

To reach the park from New Orleans take the Greater New Orleans Bridge to the West Bank Expressway (Hwy. 90). Follow the expressway to Barataria Boulevard (LA Hwy. 45) and turn left. Continue seven miles to the park entrance.

Chalmette Unit:

The battlefield is six miles east of New Orleans. From Canal Street follow North Rampart which becomes St. Claude Avenue and then St. Bernard Highway (LA 46). From I-10 take the Chalmette/Little Woods exit (LA 47) south to St. Bernard Highway and turn right.

French Quarter Unit:

To reach the French Quarter Unit from East New Orleans, take I-10 to the Vieux Carré exit. Turn left on Orleans at the bottom of the exit ramp; Orleans becomes Basin Street as it passes Armstrong Park. Turn left on Toulouse to enter the Quarter and continue through to Decatur Street. Turn left on Decatur. The French Market is approximately four blocks downriver, along Decatur Street. The French Quarter Unit Visitor/Folklife Center is in the back section of the Market, at Decatur and St. Philip. If you are traveling from the West, take the Vieux Carré exit directly to Basin Street. Directions to the Visitor/Folklife Center from Basin Street are as described above.



Barataria

The Barataria Unit preserves 8,600 acres of Louisiana's coastal wetlands, including freshwater marshes, swamps, and hardwood forests. These wetlands are literally crawling with life and serve as important breeding grounds for untold numbers of birds, plants, and fish.

Inhabiting this fragile environment are mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. White-tailed deer, raccoons, and furbearers like otter, mink, and nutria are typical of the mammals living here. Because it is located in the Mississippi Flyway, some 200 species of birds may be observed in the Barataria Unit, some wintering, others breeding in the swamps and marshes. Reptiles and amphibians are well-represented by snakes, turtles, frogs, and alligators.

People also live in the wetlands. The first Native Americans arrived in approximately 300 B.C., settling along bayous and utilizing swamps and marshes for food. They left their calling cards in the

form of shell middens, which help today's archeologists decipher the past. Europeans first explored the region in the 1500's, enticed by the warm climate and the plentiful wildlife. Later, settlers farmed and logged the land, growing sugar cane and rice and harvesting oak and cypress. Like their predecessors they hunted, trapped, and fished, activities which many local residents still pursue today.

For your enjoyment a museum and visitor center provide exhibits on hunting, trapping, fishing, and early lifestyles of this area. A movie about the delta region, and programs which will give you a feel for life in this wetland, are presented daily.



Chalmette

The Battle of New Orleans was the climax of a military campaign that lasted more than 6 weeks and included 6 different engagements on land and water. Chalmette preserves the site of 3 battles that took place between December 24, 1814, and January 8, 1815. Major General Andrew Jackson, leading

primarily militia and volunteer units from Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana, prevented the capture of New Orleans by British troops led by Major General Sir Edward Pakenham. Though not formally trained in the arts of war, Jackson staged a "by the book" defense that dealt the British a crushing defeat and restored American pride during the closing hours of the War of 1812.

What Jackson's army lacked in comparison to the British veterans of the Napoleonic Wars was compensated for by superior position. The construction of a mud and wood rampart across the narrowest piece of solid ground between the British and New

Orleans forced the enemy to march through a bottleneck, thus concentrating the American firepower.

Today's visitors to Chalmette can follow a 1.5-mile tour road that links important locations of the battlefield, which are described by signs and paintings. A section of the American earthworks has been restored, and battery positions are identified by artillery displays. Exhibits and an audio-visual program in the visitor center explain the importance of the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812. Chalmette National Cemetery is next to the battlefield. Most interments are Union veterans from the Civil War.



French Quarter

Shortly after the French founded New Orleans in 1718, a formal city plan was established. It laid out the streets and boundaries of the original settlement, known today as the French Quarter or Vieux Carré ("old square"). It is about 1 mile by ½ mile in size—about 66

city blocks—and is now a National Historic District.

The Quarter is strikingly European in appearance, with buildings constructed during French and Spanish rule crowding up to its narrow streets. It is the heart of present-day New Orleans, a city rich in history and tradition.

An area 4 blocks long known as the old French Market hugs the Mississippi River bank along Decatur and N. Peters Streets. Within it, at St. Philip and Decatur, is the Visitor and Folklife Center for the French Quarter Unit.

The center highlights the cul-

tural diversity of the Mississippi Delta Region. Displays and exhibits outline the histories and settlement patterns of the many cultures that came together in New Orleans, while performances and demonstrations by musicians, craftspeople, artists, and cooks show what the living members of each group have made with traditions their ancestors brought to the Delta. Ranger-guided walking tours which feature the history and culture of the French Quarter also leave from the center on a regular basis; see tour schedules for details.