

## FEATURE II

Charles Hill, *John Deere Golf*

# A Little Cajun Culture



*The GCSAA Education Conference and Golf Industry Show is just around the corner, taking us back to post-Katrina New Orleans, Louisiana. Now, we are all well aware of the Crescent City's reputation for its wild night life on Bourbon Street in the French Quarter (some of us more familiar than others I'm afraid). However, New Orleans is also a city with a rich cultural history and many attractions you can't find anywhere else but in the Bayou. In addition to the famous Cajun cooking and incredible live music, the city has a wonderful array of museums, aquariums, zoos, and art galleries. There are countless tours, steamboat rides, and historic buildings to explore within walking distance of the French Quarter.*

A visit to New Orleans provides a wonderful opportunity to see a great deal of wildlife simply not seen in the Midwest. The Audubon Park and Zoo has a wide variety of exotic animals and boasts a huge re-created Louisiana swamp just a ten minute streetcar ride from the French Quarter.

This is a great way to experience the feel of a real Louisiana swamp, without the fear of being forced to squeal like a pig having encountered Billy Bob or Cletus in a real Louisiana swamp. If you would like to travel at your own pace, paddleboats are available to travel between the French Quarter and the Audubon Park and Zoo. Another great place to view the wide array of aquatic life in Louisiana is at the Aquarium of the Americas. There you can touch a live shark, see a white alligator, and observe a large collection of aquatic animals native to the Mississippi River Delta and the Gulf Region. The neat thing about checking out all those native New Orleans critters during the day is that you can find most all of them on the menu of the many fabulous restaurants at night.

Although the timing of the GIS, for obvious reasons, doesn't coincide with Mardi Gras (French for "Fat Tuesday"), there is still a great opportunity to feel like you've at least

partially experienced a Mardi Gras parade by visiting Mardi Gras World. Free shuttles run from the French Quarter directly across the Mississippi River to Mardi Gras World, which is a full working factory warehouse where artists and float builders work year round to build the many elaborate floats used every spring during the Mardi Gras celebration. The trip includes guided tours, a gift shop, and a museum with floats that have survived previous Mardi Gras celebrations.

New Orleans is also home to many beautiful historical buildings and museums.

The Cabildo is both. This beautiful structure, dating back to the 1790s, was built during Spanish rule and currently houses the Louisiana State Museum.

The Louisiana State Museum features interesting artifacts from over 300 years of Louisiana history. New Orleans is also, surprisingly enough, home to the National D-Day Museum. The National D-Day Museum is broken up into four uniquely different exhibits, each concentrating on a different aspect of the D-Day invasion. On

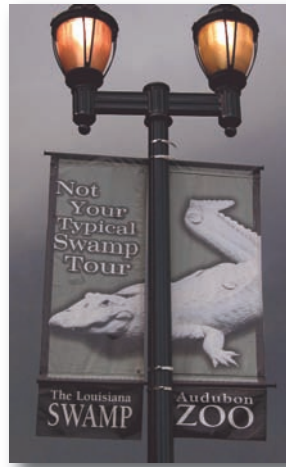
display are ships, planes, and light artillery used in the Normandy invasion. Both the Cabildo and the D-Day Museum are just a short cab ride away from the French Quarter.

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Just off of Canal Street, the Steamboat Natchez is docked behind the JAX Brewery. The Natchez is a three-story fully restored steamboat with two dinner cruises per night featuring live music and a Creole buffet. If the steamboat isn't fast enough for you, the Cajun Pride Swamp Tour is one of many airboat tours offered around the New Orleans area. These generally last about two hours and involve bus transportation out of the city. If you are looking for a guided tour of a different variety, twice a day you can take a haunted tour of New Orleans, including the French Quarter, the St. Louis Cemetery, and other haunted locations throughout the city. If that isn't spooky enough, you can visit the New Orleans Historic Voodoo Museum. In addition to viewing Voodoo artifacts, you can learn about the spiritual practice and history of Voodoo, or even buy some love potion or a Voodoo doll made in the likeness of your spouse or green chairman. The Voodoo Museum also offers a guided tour featuring swamps, plantations, and cemeteries in and around New Orleans.

New Orleans is a beautiful city with so much more to offer than just a good time on Bourbon Street or a night of gambling at Harrah's. There are hundreds of attractions in and around the French Quarter where you can spend a wonderful afternoon. If you find yourself in New Orleans sometime in the coming months, be sure to venture off of Bourbon Street, drop your souvenir Hurricane glass back at the room, and explore a little bit of New Orleans culture. Take in a plantation tour, or maybe catch a live zydeco band, get a little goofy and try a steaming cup of chicory, or suck the heads off some crawdads. So much to do, so little time! -OC



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