



Louisiana Par Chase

Audubon Golf Trail offers Texans another great reason to visit their neighbors

By Sean Kelly, Special to Lone Star Golf

With more than 900 courses in the Lone Star State, Texas golfers rarely need to cross state lines to find great places to play. Louisiana's Audubon Golf Trail, however, offers plenty of convincing examples of why golfers should look next door for some excellent options.

Named for renowned explorer, artist and ornithologist John James Audubon, Louisiana's official golf trail comprises a 15-course meal of quality golf. From the Big Easy to Baton Rouge, the Bluffs to Black Bear, each course on the trail is surrounded by its own native flora and fauna and has an individual character that's as unique as the state itself.

The folks at Louisiana Travel have created a guide that includes a trail map, a set of suggested three- to five-day itineraries and other information that takes the pain out of **planning quick getaways** from scratch.

Among the course highlights you'll find:

* **The TV Star:** TPC Louisiana near New Orleans in Avondale. This meticulously manicured host of the annual PGA Zurich Classic (and home to Tripod, the three-legged gator) is a top stop for local and visiting golfers who want to stare down monsters similar to those slayed by the world's best. The tour-caliber track is just 20 minutes from New Orleans' world-famous French Quarter, which means one can play like a pro and party like a pirate in the same calendar day.

* **The North Star:** Black Bear Golf Club. This dynamic layout just east of Monroe stands alone as the northernmost on the trail. It's a challenge, but a thrill to play. Errant shots into the woods will have you re-stocking balls. Sounds from the woods will leave you wondering if there's a Black Bear stalking you.



* **The Next Door Neighbors:** Cypress Bend Golf Spa and Resort (pictured) in Many, La., and Gray Plantation Golf Club in Lake Charles, La.. Nearest to the TexLa border, both are just a few hours' drive from Dallas or Houston and occupy an area with plenty of off course activities. Cypress Bend lines the shores 185,000-acre Toledo Bend Reservoir famous

worldwide for bass fishing and Lake

Charles offer the closest casino destination to Texas.

* **Old Reliable:** The Golf Club at Audubon Park (New Orleans). Hosting golf since 1898, it's the elder statesman of Louisiana Golf. At just 4,220 yards, it's short (but stout!) and intent on making the best use of your time. It's also connected to the pulse of the city. The zoo is across the street and one can even get there by streetcar. The food served on site is outstanding.



The **Audubon Golf Trail**, in full, has plenty more to deliver for those ready to venture further into the state known as the "Sportsman's Paradise." That goes for off-course activities, too.

Among them are Houmas House Plantation and Gardens (Darrow), the Robertson's Duck Commander Tour (West Monroe), and Big Mike's Sports Bar and Grill (restored and featured by Spike TV's "Bar Rescue" in Denham Springs).

Louisiana's Audubon Golf Trail is full of surprises that justify a month of weekends or more each year. The rewards you discover will depend on the time you have and the direction you travel, with completely different results being possible during each trip.

In the end, there are just two things 99 percent of Texan golfers should know when considering a visit to the Audubon Golf Trail. The first: Every trip starts pointed to the east. The second: Every visit will end with great new golf memories worth writing home about. ★