



Dear Parks & Recreation Traveler:

We are excited to finally have the information for the “Magnolias, Mansions & More...” trip available to our travelers **March 22 – 29, 2010**. Join us as we step back into the pre-Civil War life of the mid-19th century with history, hoopskirts, festivals & food during a visit to the annual *Spring Pilgrimage* in Natchez, MS. Along with stops in Baton Rouge and Natchitoches, LA, we visit numerous antebellum homes, mansions and plantation estates to gain a historical glimpse into the resplendent world of southern plantation life. As always this trip is subject to change without advance notice.

Please note that registration for this trip is on a FIRST COME-FIRST SERVE basis.

We motor coach south with an overnight stop in Grenada, MS before arriving in Vicksburg, MS for a visit to *Vicksburg National Military Park*, a military park rich in civil war history with several museum exhibits. Upon arriving in Natchez, MS for a two night stay, we enjoy a candlelight dinner & tour of *Magnolia Hall*, a circa 1858 splendid example of Greek revival architecture and the last great mansion to be completed in Natchez before the outbreak of the civil war.

We begin day three of the trip by touring three of Natchez’s Historic Pilgrimage Homes followed by a guided tour of *Longwood Estate*, an octagonal historic antebellum mansion reputed to be the “Grandest Octagonal House in America” and considered one of Natchez’s most popular attractions. Dinner this evening is at *Lansdowne Estate*, nestled within 100 park-like acres and still occupied by direct descendants of the builder, George M. Marshall. Constructed in 1853, it is one of the most authentic houses in the area and contains original furnishings and a collection of old silver and Zuber wallpaper. Following dinner we enjoy the performance of the *Historic Natchez Pageant*. Presented by over 200 local performers in elaborate costumes, *The Historic Natchez Pageant* recreates the romanticized eras of old. So faithfully does the presentation recreate the diversity and grandeur of Historic Natchez that the pageant has become as famous as the old Natchez houses.

Our next leg of the journey visits historic Baton Rouge, LA for a two night stay. We visit the *Louisiana State Museum* featuring thematic exhibits on the diverse aspects of Louisiana history, industry and culture followed by a visit to the *Louisiana State Capitol*, the tallest state capitol in the United States standing 450 feet high with 34 floors and constructed of limestone & marble imported from Italy. Thursday evening we visit the magnificent *Nottoway Plantation House* for dinner and candlelight tour. This palatial mansion constructed in 1858 and consisting of 53,000 square feet is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is one of the very few antebellum plantations that survived the Civil War and is the largest remaining plantation home in existence.

We begin Friday with a docent led tour of the *LSU Rural Life Museum* and learn the lifestyles and life-ways of the rural people of Louisiana. The museum includes more than 25 buildings spread over five acres with literally thousands of artifacts and has the largest collection of material culture of the 19th century Louisiana. Our next stop on the trip is a visit to the crown jewel of Louisiana’s River Road—*Houmas House*. Constructed in the late 1820’s and designed in Greek revival architecture, this magnificent mansion is commonly referred to as the “*Sugar Palace*”. *Houmas House Plantation* at one point the nation’s number

one producer of sugar once boasted 300,000 acres and was the center of the largest slave holdings in Louisiana with over 800 slaves.

Continuing on, we step back in time as we enter the Creole world of Louisiana at *Laura Plantation*, a historic plantation built in 1805 and the center of Louisiana's Creole culture. On this 70 minute escorted tour, a professional interpreter will expose us to compelling; real-life accounts of generations of owners, women, slaves and children who called this typical Creole sugarcane farm their home.

As we head north we visit *McGee's Landing* and enjoy an authentic Louisiana experience on a 90 minute escorted swamp tour on the *Atchafalaya Basin* in Louisiana Cajun Country. The sights of moss draped trees, egrets and alligators will be narrated by guides that are informative and amusing, able to blend history, myth, opinion and practical lore in a one and a half hour tour. Before we overnight in Natchitoches, LA we enjoy a 40 minute narrated Trolley Tour of Historic Natchitoches, established in 1714 and the oldest settlement in Louisiana. This quaint little town with its mixture of Queen Anne and Victorian architecture, along with Creole style cottages is the film location of the award winning movie "*Steel Magnolias*".

Sunday we motor north to Little Rock, AR where this evening we visit *Marlsgate Plantation* for dinner and an unforgettable journey into the past with a fascinating tour of this stately columned Greek Revival Mansion shaded by ancient oaks and a pecan grove overlooking the waters of Bearskin Lake. *Marlsgate*, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is a reflection of the opulent plantation era when cotton was king and where a privileged class of wealth existed in the Arkansas Delta. As we complete the last leg of our remarkable journey home on Monday, we reflect on the many memories and experiences that we will cherish for a lifetime.

The tour includes 7 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 7 dinners, all attractions & admissions, trolley ride, swamp tour, step-on-guides, lodging, baggage handling, all gratuities, escort & motor coach transportation.

The brochures in this packet are for illustrative purposes only, particularly the Natchez Spring Pilgrimage brochure which will have a different sequence of homes offered during our trip. Times and dates as well as restaurant menus are subject to change due to the large lead time before the actual trip.

Participants should be aware that this trip will include moderate walking with some periods of standing during the home tours. Travelers will be negotiating some stairs during portions of the trip.

Participants will be restricted to one piece of checked luggage and one carryon bag to be carried inside the motor coach. Luggage tags & final itinerary will be provided closer to the actual departure date of the trip.

Participants who register must also complete a consent waiver form which will detail emergency contacts and any current and pertinent medical or medicinal information. This form will be sent at a later date.

Fee Schedule:

The cost of this wonderful trip will be **\$1275** per person (double occupancy). The single traveler fee is **\$1625** (includes a single traveler supplement of **\$350** per single traveler). This price is all inclusive and includes gratuities. We are asking you to pay in increments due to the cost of this trip. You can make payments as often as you like, but we will need a minimum amount paid as follows:

Payment Schedule:

Immediately: \$50 per person deposit (non-refundable). All refunds will be subject to a \$50 refund fee.

Friday, January 15: additional minimum of \$600 per person must be paid.

Friday, February 19: final payment of remaining balance per person must be paid.

Monday, February 22: after this date no refunds of any kind will be given for cancellations due to our commitment to the various vendors involved with this trip (see the information on travel insurance, highly recommended).

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Many of you have inquired about travel insurance for our extended trips. Travel insurance is a method of providing you a means to recoup your costs should you have to cancel at the last minute or become sick on the trip. We do not endorse any particular product, but after searching the internet we came up with a couple of sources for travel insurance.

Travel Insurance Services, 1-800-228-9792 or www.travelex-insurance.com

Travel Guard International, 1-800-826-4919 or www.travelguard.com Several of our travelers have used this provider.

Or compare several plans at once at www.InsureMyTrip.com 1-800-487-4722 or www.squaremouth.com 1-800-240-0368. With either service you can purchase online or over the phone. Please make sure you understand what you are purchasing. Buying the travel insurance is totally up to you and making any claims with the carrier is the total responsibility of the person purchasing the insurance.

Please note that registration for this trip is on a FIRST COME-FIRST SERVE basis
This trip is now open for registration

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call 636-949-3372.

Thank you for considering traveling with us.

Sincerely,

Carl Herr
Trip Coordinator

John Pike
Trip Planner