

Sunday | March 21, 2021

# VACATION & TRAVEL

— An Advertising Special Section —

INSIDE

Eating & Entertainment

Your Road Trip Emergency Kit

How to Save on Gasoline



First Road Trips with Baby

Culture Comes Alive in Oxford

Living it up in Lafayette

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# LOCAL CULTURE TAKES CENTER STAGE IN OXFORD AS SPORTS, ART, MOVIES AND MORE FILL THE SPRING CALENDAR

By Amanda McElfresh



Some activities are beginning to resume this spring in Oxford, Mississippi as more people receive virus vaccines and organizers finalize details for events that are safe and socially distanced.

Ole Miss baseball is off to a hot start, with a top five national ranking and its sights set on a College World Series appearance. Fans are allowed at home games at Oxford-University Stadium, where traditions like Swayze Showers continue. During these celebrations, fans – often led by the right field student section – celebrate Ole Miss home runs by tossing their beverages as high as they can into the air. The team will be looking for plenty of showers this spring as they face several SEC rivals at home, including Arkansas, LSU, South Carolina and Vanderbilt.

Each Friday before a home baseball series, Visit Oxford offers a guided tour on a double decker bus. The tour stops at multiple points of interest on the University of Mississippi campus and around the city of Oxford, including historic sites with ties to famed author William Faulkner. The unique buses themselves are a treat, as they are imported from England to give Oxford visitors a one-of-a-kind view of the city.

Visit Oxford is also organizing several weekends of activities through the spring edition of Pop-Up Oxford. This will include art vendors, Tunes Around Town and much more. The schedule is continually updated at [www.visitoxfordms.com](http://www.visitoxfordms.com). There also are plans for the Summer Sunset Series, which will take place each Sunday evening in June. Visit Oxford and the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council will host a local musician to play in an open air location, where locals and visitors can bring their own chairs,

coolers and snacks while they listen to music while the sun goes down.

In addition, the 2021 Oxford Film Festival will be a hybrid presentation including open air outdoor theaters, drive-in movies and a month of virtual screenings. Screenings will be in the Oxford Commons area on March 24-28. From April 1-30, virtual cinema screenings will be offered via Eventive. The festival will feature 183 films, including 15 narrative films, 18 documentaries, 126 short films and 19 music videos.

Oxford is nestled in north-central Mississippi. Its most popular attraction is The Square, which features locally-owned eateries, many led by chefs with national awards and credentials. This cultural and economic hub includes Square Books, an independent bookstore with a national reputation as one of the best in the country, plus many other locally owned shops and boutiques.

If you are looking to spend a weekend or a few days in the Oxford area, there are plenty of hotel options, including The Graduate Oxford, the Chancellor's House Hotel, The Inn at Ole Miss and many more.

"I would tell people that the main thing is to come to Oxford to see it for themselves," said Nadia Thornton, sales and marketing manager for Visit Oxford. "We're a progressive and diverse community and we're proud to be home to the University of Mississippi. We offer a little bit of everything for everyone. Oxford has good food, good shopping, good drinks and good people. Everyone who comes here wants to come back."

For more information, go to [www.visitoxfordms.com](http://www.visitoxfordms.com).



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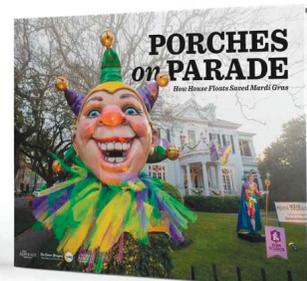


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# NO MAN'S LAND IS IDEAL FOR HISTORY BUFFS, NATURE LOVERS AND THOSE WHO ENJOY SMALL TOWN STOPS

By Amanda McElfresh

If you are looking to visit a region of Louisiana that is steeped in a unique history and has a tradition all its own, look no further than No Man's Land.

This swath stretches from Lake Charles in southwest Louisiana to the Natchitoches area in north Louisiana, covering multiple parishes along the Louisiana/Texas border – Allen, Beauregard, DeSoto, Sabine and Vernon. Also known as Neutral Ground, the area is so named because it was not part of the original Louisiana Purchase. At the same time, it was also outside of the realm of Spanish rule. This in-between stage lasted for about 13 years, from 1806 until 1819, when the Adams-Onís Treaty established the Sabine River as the western boundary of the Louisiana Purchase territory.

“It was a haven for pirates and gangs, but also a haven for people who did not fit the norm and didn't conform to the new rules of the Louisiana Purchase,” said Rebecca Blankenkaker, executive director of the Cane River National Heritage Area. “It became a home for people

who were marginalized, including runaway slaves and Native Americans who were being pushed out of their original lands.”

Blankenkaker said those who settled in No Man's Land had a spirit and determination to succeed that can still be felt today in towns like Many, Logansport, Leesville, DeRidder and more.

“These were people who were full of grit and who were going to make it,” she said. “There was a culture of independence and a feeling that they didn't need a government to guide or protect them. I think that grit has stuck with the region.”

The topography in No Man's Land is also unique in Louisiana. It includes Kisatchie National Forest, the only national forest in the state, which is filled with long-leaf pines, hills, lakes and rivers. In decades past, American soldiers who fought during World War I and World War II trained in No Man's Land because the terrain closely resembled the battlegrounds they would face in Europe. Today, the area

is ideal for outdoor recreation activities like fishing, camping, boating and hiking.

Several attractions are located throughout No Man's Land for visitors to immerse themselves in the history of the region. Some of the most popular spots include the Mardi Gras Museum of Imperial Calcasieu, the Leatherwood Museum in Allen Parish, the Lois Lofton Doll Museum in Beauregard Parish, Fort Jesup State Historic Site just east of Many, Rock Chapel in Mansfield and Cane River Creole National Historical Park near Natchitoches, among others.

“It's a very powerful place for Louisiana history that not many people know about,” Blankenkaker said.

To plan a trip through No Man's Land, download the official app by searching for “No Man's Land Trip Planner” on your mobile device. A new app that provides a guide to the best gas station eats in the region will be available beginning in April.

*For more information on No Man's Land, go to [www.visitnomansland.com](http://www.visitnomansland.com).*



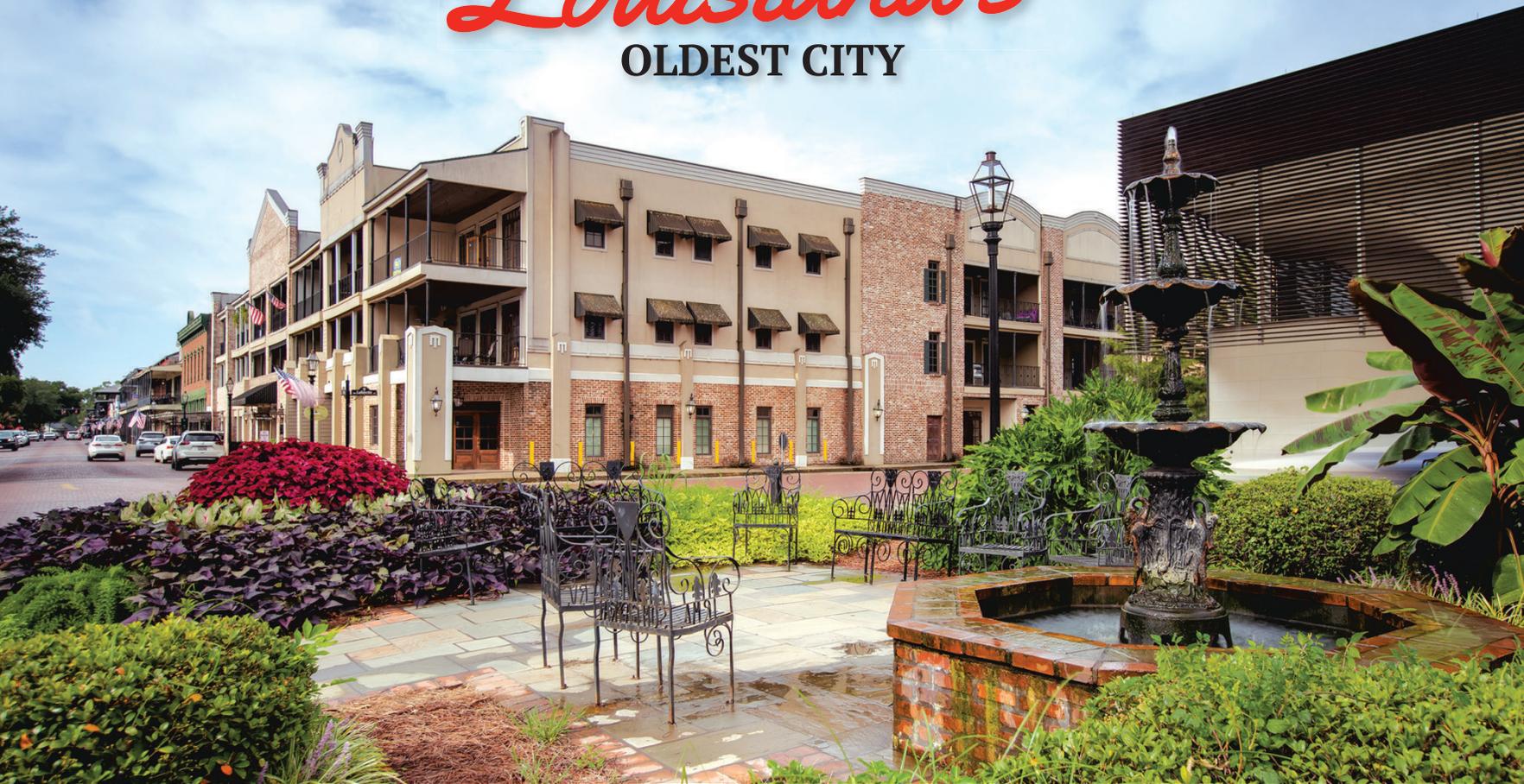


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# LAFAYETTE STEPS UP AS ACADIANA'S HUB CITY WITH MUSIC, FOOD AND CLOSE CONNECTIONS WITH NATURE SPOTS AND LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

By Amanda McElfresh

Lafayette is known across the world for its festive atmosphere, friendly people and first-rate cuisine. Although some events had to be put on hold because of the coronavirus, many are beginning to return in a way that is safe for everyone involved.

Carenco, located just a few miles north of Lafayette, is resuming its popular Mercredi live music shows in Pelican Park each Wednesday night, beginning on April 7. The shows continue through May 19 with a lineup that includes Geno Delafosse & French Rockin' Boogie, Kevin Naquin & the Ossun Playboys, Dustin Sonnier & The Wanted, Bobby Page & Swamp Pop Express, Clay Cormier & The Highway Boys, Chubby Carrier & Bayou Swamp Band and High Performance Band.

Other venues are beginning to welcome more visitors to a combination of great Cajun food and some form of music. These include Blue Moon Saloon, Randol's Seafood Restaurant, Hideaway on Lee, Rock 'N Bowl and others. The Wurst Biergarten is a relatively new addition, but often features live comedy and works from local artists.

Traditionally, the biggest spring event in Lafayette is Festival International, a four-day event that brings together food and music from dozens of countries around the world. The 2021 edition will be a virtual event, with exact details still to be announced. However, organizers have confirmed they will move forward with FEASTival International throughout all of April as a way to celebrate the unique food that Festival is known for. In addition, a virtual and immersive festival filled with musical performances is scheduled for April 23, 24 and 25.

As the Hub City of Acadiana, Lafayette is within close driving distance to many restaurants and attractions that make the region so unique. These options include swamp tours, tours of many local breweries, antique shopping, museums and more. Whether you're interested in history, culture, food or having fun with kids, your family is sure to find something fun. Many sites are beginning to open back up or return to normal hours, so make sure to check their websites and Facebook pages for the most updated information.

For those who simply want to take in nature, the Acadiana area offers plenty of places to do just that. Spanish Lake and Lake Martin are both just a short drive from Lafayette and are ideal for birdwatching, photography, fishing and more. In Lafayette Parish, the Vermilion River Paddle Trail offers various routes to explore local flora and fauna. Other popular sites in the region include the Acadiana Park Nature Station in Lafayette, Chicot State Park in northern Acadiana and a 20-mile azalea trail throughout Lafayette that is filled with popular spots to observe the spring blooms.

Lafayette has topped multiple lists of the best food cities in America. While Cajun and Creole cuisine are the most popular, several restaurants offer other favorites, like fried chicken, barbecue, Mexican fare, hand-crafted burgers and more. Whether you are looking for a plate lunch or just a quick bite, you're sure to find a restaurant that appeals to your taste buds.

*For more information on Lafayette-area attractions, restaurants, activities and more, visit [www.lafayettettravel.com](http://www.lafayettettravel.com).*





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# YOUR ROAD TRIP EMERGENCY KIT

By Scotty Reiss · SheBuysCars.com

**What's the best way to prepare to be safe on the road? If you ask a dozen different people you'll get a dozen different answers.**



**W**e asked family travel experts to share what they keep in their cars — whether they are driving through the desert, heading to an earthquake zone or just driving around town.

Here's what they had to say:

## **ALWAYS KEEP HANDY**

Stock your car at all times with paper towels, toilet paper, Dramamine, granola bars, Band-Aids, Ziploc bags (for trash and vomit), a multi-purpose tool like a Leatherman or Swiss Army Knife, work gloves, wet wipes, duct tape, the car owner's manual, cell phone charger, smartphone apps that will help you to find local things quickly, a towel and water bottles.

Toss in a few tools and repair necessities, including jumper cables, a ratchet set, pliers, screwdriver, electrical tape, a can of emergency tire inflator, road flares and automotive fuses.

Finally, keep near the driver's seat a hammer/seatbelt cutter in case you are in an accident and need to get out of the car fast.

## **WINTER WONDERS**

Winter requires special tools, such as an ice scraper and snow brush, but for safety reason, be sure to also bring a blanket, extra mittens or gloves and kitty litter to create traction when you get stuck on the ice. Keep the kitty litter in a sealed plastic container so it stays dry and

doesn't spill all over the car.

If you're planning a winter road trip, it's also important to make sure you understand the differences among the various winter weather advisories issued by the National Weather Service. You might still be fine traveling under a winter weather advisory, but you might want to alter your plans if it's a more serious winter storm watch or warning.

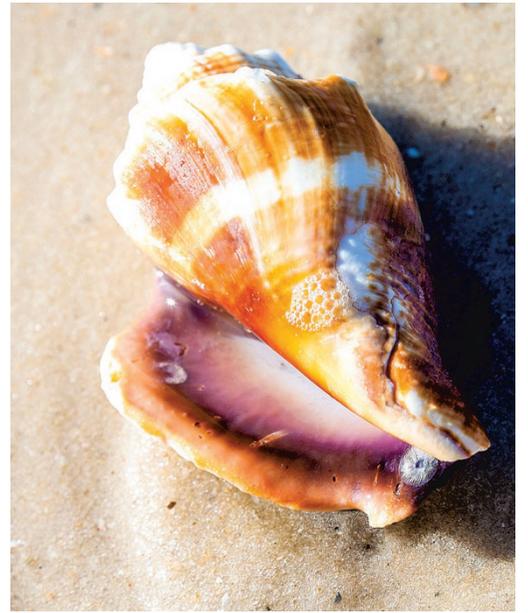
## **DESERT DESIRABLES**

In the desert, gas, water and fellow humans can be in short supply. So prepare for longer-term emergencies. Bring three gallons of water (enough for the people and the radiator), space blankets for each traveler, 'Survival' chocolate bars, tire patch kit, an air pump, solar charger for your phone, hiking boots or good walking shoes and socks and sunscreen.

## **QUAKE NECESSITIES**

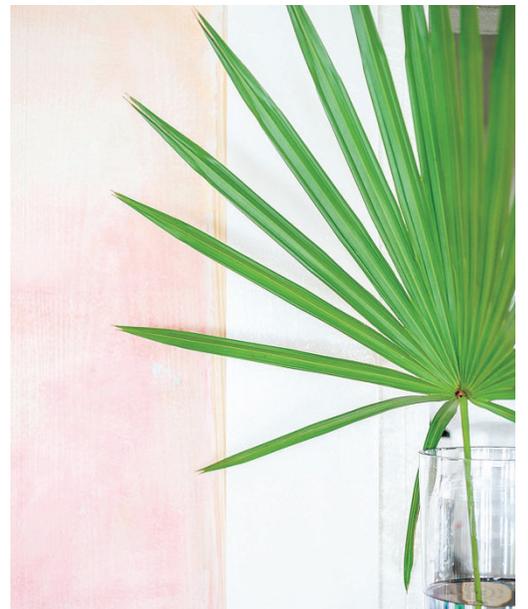
If you're traveling through earthquake country, bring along a small backpack filled with a blanket, jacket, duct tape, flares and three days' worth of water and dried food.

*A content development expert, Scotty began as a journalist and has written for the New York Times, Town & Country, Entrepreneur and Adweek, among others. Scotty can be reached at [Scotty@shebuycars.com](mailto:Scotty@shebuycars.com).*



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# FIRST ROAD TRIPS WITH BABY

By Anuja De Silva · [TravelingMom.com](http://TravelingMom.com)

**If you were a road warrior in your B.C. (Before Children) days, there's no reason you can't still hit the road with a baby on board. It takes a little more planning and a lot more gear, but it can be a fun way to introduce the newest member of your family to travel — without the pain of airplane takeoffs and landings on tiny ears.**

**H**ere are tips to ensure both you and your baby have fun on your first road trips together.

## **NEWBORNS: SLEEP IS KEY**

As new parent, most challenging part of traveling with the baby was making sure we had enough of everything we might possibly need. The diaper bag which contained all our necessities was within an arm's reach.

We tried to keep the baby cool and comfortable in the summer heat to help him sleep easily. Once he was asleep, the trip was smooth sailing for us.

## **4-6 MONTHS OLD: KEEP TRIPS SHORT**

As the baby got older, he was sleeping less frequently and for shorter spells, generally less than two hours. Once he woke up from his naps, he wanted to be taken out of the car seat. That meant our drives were limited to his nap time with stops planned beforehand.

Having a full stomach and being exposed to fresh air made the baby ready for another nap, so we could put him back in the car for the second leg of our drive.

## **6-9 MONTHS OLD: DISTRACTION HELPS**

Once the baby started crawling and wanting to stand up, it was a challenge to convince him to stay confined to the car seat when he was awake. Since he was eating solid food by then, we could offer little snacks as distraction.

As a last resort for longer drives, we downloaded nursery rhymes to the iPad so

we could play them without a wifi connection. Though we had vowed to stay away from gadgets, we found it necessary to keep our active little one engaged during demanding travel schedules.

Those few months where he really wanted to walk and couldn't were our most trying times of traveling with baby.

## **9-12 MONTHS OLD: ENGAGING WITH THE WORLD**

Around his one year birthday he was walking and running about quite steadily. He was also on a two-nap schedule for the day. To make the trips easier on us, we did the bulk of our traveling after breakfast to coincide with his longer morning nap. Once he was able to recognize things in his surroundings, we stopped using toys and the iPad and encouraged him to look out the window instead.

When your child is old enough, sitting in a forward-facing car seat makes a huge difference. It provides a better view of the road, letting kids see cars and buses.

We also learned the hard way that eating and drinking tends to give him motion sickness. We now stop every 2-3 hours so he can eat and has time to play before we all get back in the car.

*Anuja De Silva, Cosmopolitan TravelingMom for [TravelingMom.com](http://TravelingMom.com), lives in Westchester, New York with her husband and active toddler son. She works full time in research & development for the semiconductor industry. Travel is a means for her to challenge herself with new experiences. She loves the energy of big cities as well as the tranquility of small towns.*



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# EATING & ENTERTAINMENT

By Cindy Richards · [TravelingMom.com](http://TravelingMom.com)

**Hunger and boredom are the enemies of family road trip happiness. Focus on food and fun to make sure the hours in the car are building happy family memories.**

**F**or travel snacks, choose healthy foods that are less messy. For example, opt for tiny sweet, easy-to-peel-and-eat Clementine oranges rather than the big, juicy hard-to-peel navel oranges. Or freeze sweet seedless grapes. They will help keep the cooler cool and taste like little popsicles to kids.

Bananas are another good, less messy choice. But be sure to toss the peels at the next stop. Learn from my mistake: After a two-hour hike through the South Dakota Badlands in August, you won't want to get back in a car filled with the smell of banana peels that have been rotting in the hot sun.

For more substantial hunger, pack a bag with bread, jam, peanut butter and utensils for making sandwiches at a rest stop. Fill Ziploc bags with homemade trail mix made of Cheerios, raisins, and (a few) M&Ms.

For quenching thirst, stick with water. Kids might prefer juice or milk, but water is good for them and less hazardous to your car seats. Stay green (and save money) by refilling bottles at rest stop water fountains.

## ENTERTAIN WITH EASE

With built-in DVDs and personal head phones, it's tempting to let the TV babysit the kids. But this is not the best way to make family memories. Try books on tape rented from your local library instead.

Plug the CD, cassette or your iPod into the

car stereo and listen together. Even tweens and teens can be enticed to take out their ear buds and join the fun if everyone else is laughing to the antics of the "Sideways School" stories or debating a plot point in a Harry Potter book.

Get kids involved in road trip route planning — and teach your tech-obsessed teens how to navigate without GPS — by encouraging them to follow along on a paper map. Buy laminated maps for younger kids who tend to have sticky fingers.

The toughest part of a road trip for kids, especially for kids young enough to need a car seat, is the forced stillness. Stopping every two hours to let kids (and adults) stretch and move is important. But you can get everyone moving during those two-hour stretches of driving as well.

Try a rousing game of head, shoulders, knees and toes. As the song name implies, you first touch your head, then shoulders, then knees, then toes. To make it more fun, speed up the pace. Or give each person a turn singing the song — in any order they choose. For examples, try toes, stomach, nose and head.

*Cindy Richards is a Pulitzer Prize-nominated journalist who serves as Editor-in-Chief for [TravelingMom.com](http://TravelingMom.com). She previously worked at Chicago's two major newspapers, 15 years for the *Chicago Sun-Times* and two years for the *Chicago Tribune*.*



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