Atchafalaya SWAMPBASE Louisiana

ADVENTURE • CONSERVATION • EDUCATION • CULTURE

Describe the "swamp" in one word…

Misconceptions of the Swamp….

There are many misconceptions and myths surrounding swamps. What came to mind when you heard the word "swamp?"

Was it tales of "Swamp Things" or gross creatures that lurk in the murky waters?

Maybe it was the idea of snakes dropping from the trees?

Did you get a little afraid of the idea of bayous literally infested with alligators?

What about the oppressive heat in the summertime?

Or maybe it was the vast numbers of biting insects that buzz through the air?

You're not alone. We've heard all of these concerns, and from Scouters from every corner of the country. What if we told you that everything you've heard or seen in the movies or on TV just isn't true???

Misconceptions of the Swamp - Alligators

For many, the major draw or thrill of exploring the swamp is the chance to see alligators in their native habitat. There is no doubt that Scouts will see plenty of alligators during a high adventure trek. Some crews see over 100 during their 5 day journey!

Is it really safe to paddle and swim in waters which alligators live?
Absolutely! Though alligators have lots of teeth, they are incredibly shy and docile creatures, and would rather swim away from a group of loud and energetic Scouts. Unfortunately alligators are too often mistaken for their more dangerous crocodile relatives. FYI, we have no crocs in the swamp!

Did you know?
There hasn't been a recorded death by alligator in Louisiana in over 70 years! When compared to sharks or bears, statistically alligator attacks are even less common than the very rare bear or shark attack.

Misconceptions of the Swamp - Snakes

Across the country millions of people have a fear of snakes, and the association of snakes with swamps is not unexpected. However, the reality is far different than their expectation.

How many snakes will we see on the trail?

It is incredibly uncommon to see snakes during a Swamp Base trek. Many times crews will be lucky if they see even one snake during their 5 days in the swamp. We have also never had an instance of a snake falling into a canoe.

Did you know?

The most common snakes seen during a trek are non-venomous water snake species, gray rat snakes, and racers. We still practice caution with snakes, as even non-venomous ones can bite.

Misconceptions of the Swamp - Mosquitoes

Whether you're traveling to your local Scout camp or going to Northern Tier, you know that mosquitoes and summer go hand in hand. However, the idea that mosquitoes are worse in the swamp is a myth.

How bad are the mosquitoes?

Mosquitoes in the swamp are no worse than other wilderness/recreation areas in the country. Many Scouts report very few bites. The added benefit of Swamp Base is that most of the programs happen on the water, where mosquitoes rarely congregate. When in a wooded environment, Swamp Base has planned activities and campsite locations so that mosquitoes rarely become an issue, as prevailing winds keep them away.

Did you know?

One misconception about mosquitoes found in the swamp is that they carry diseases. In fact, entomologists have determined that disease carrying mosquitoes are almost non-existent in the Atchafalaya.

Misconceptions of the Swamp - Heat

It's no secret that temperatures in the south are a little warmer than most places during the summer.

How hot are we going to be?

If you're traveling from a northern state or an area of elevation, the temperatures will likely take some time to get used to. However, temperatures in the swamp are much cooler than they would be in an urban or suburban environment, because our program is all about the water. Crews routinely stop for "swim breaks" to cool down, and when you're wet the flow of air from paddling can be quite refreshing.

Did you know?

South Louisiana's proximity to the Gulf of Mexico helps to regulate summertime temperatures, so that they rarely exceed the upper 80s or low 90s. This location also accounts for afternoon rain showers, which can help drop temperatures by 10 to 15 degrees.

So what is the Swamp?

Louisiana's swamps are one of the most ecologically rich environments in the world, full of plant and animal life!

The swamp's endless waterways, comprised of bayous, cypress swamps, and lakes make for one of the most diverse paddling experiences in the United States, challenging you daily, but filling your eyes with endless beauty and wonder.

Swamps are mysterious wildernesses, but only because we've made them that way. In fact, they are no less safe than any other adventure location in the country.

This is a Swamp!

Boy Scouts of America, Evangeline Area Council

Swamp Base is a non-profit organization, part of the Evangeline Area Council, Boy Scouts of America, located in South Central Louisiana.

Swamp Base was founded in 2010 as part of Scouting's Centennial Celebration to get local Scouts more involved in the Atchafalaya, with national high adventure treks beginning in 2013.

Swamp Base Pillars

As part of the Centennial celebration commitment to the Atchafalaya, Swamp Base established two sets of pillars, designed to encourage Scouts and leaders to focus on activities that will make a profound positive impact on the environment, either through stewardship activities, recreational planning, or promotion of the area.

Native Vegetation Planting

Trash Removal

Wildlife Habitat Creation

Stewardship

Miles Explored

Days/Nights Spent

Recreation

10 Facts About the Atchafalaya Swamp

1. The word Atchafalaya derives from the Choctaw *hacha falaia*, meaning "Long River."

2. Is the **largest river swamp in the United States at 1.4 million acres**, even larger than the Florida Everglades and Okefenokee in Georgia.

3. Is a **distributary of the Mississippi River**, starting at Old River Control near Simmesport, LA and ending 140 miles south near Morgan City, LA.

4. The Atchafalaya Swamp can be divided into three distinct areas: the northern part composed of **bottomland hardwood forest**, the middle, composed of **cypress-willow-tupelo swamps**, and the lower, which contains **freshwater and brackish marsh**.

5. The Interstate 10 Atchafalaya Basin Bridge crosses the swamp and at 18.2 miles long, is the third **longest bridge in the country.**

6. Includes the **largest nesting concentration of bald eagles** in the south central United States.

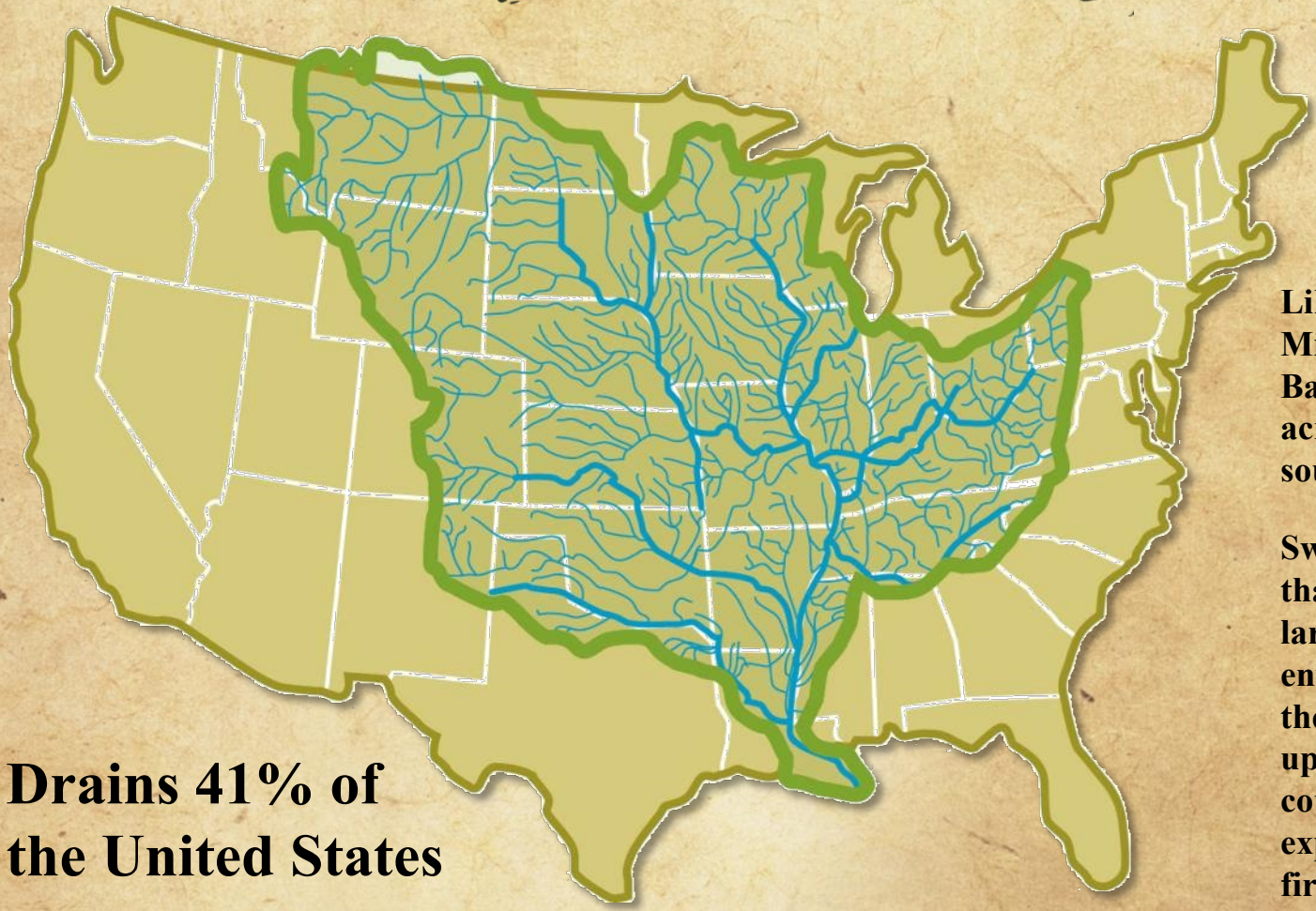
7. Over 22 million pounds of commercial crawfish are harvested annually from the Swamp.

8. The Swamp supports half of America's migratory waterfowl, more than **250 bird species**, and provides the most important habitat for Neotropical migratory land birds and other birds of the Mississippi Flyway.

9. Home to **65 species of reptiles and amphibians** and over **100 species of fish** and aquatic life.

10. Home to the Boy Scouts of America's **premiere high adventure Swamp program!**

Environmentally Connected to 100 Million People!

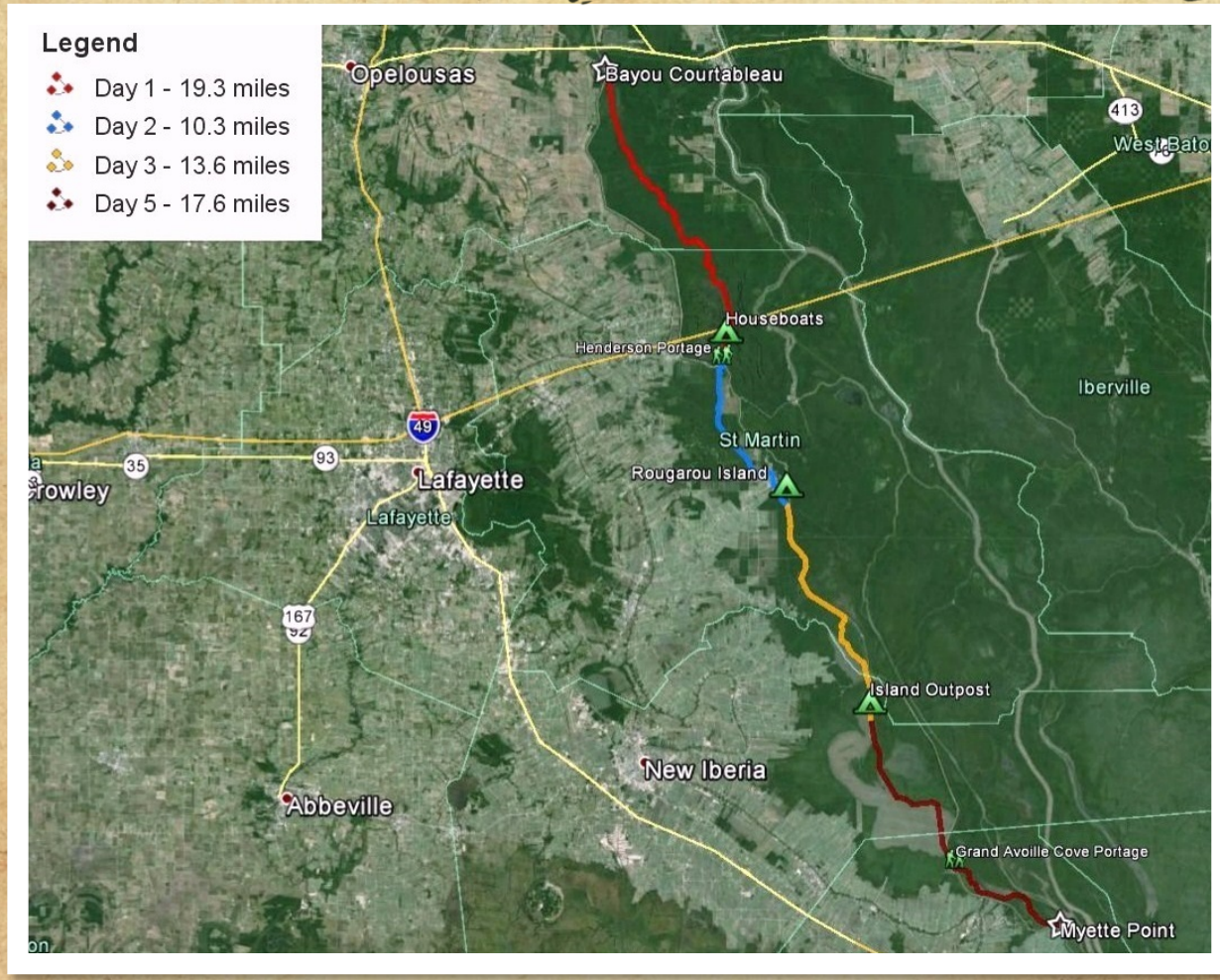


Drains 41% of the United States

Like a huge funnel, the Mississippi River Drainage Basin brings water from across the United States south to Louisiana.

Swamp Base has identified that in order to make a larger positive environmental impact on the swamp, Scouts from upstream and across the country needed to experience this wilderness firsthand.

Swamp Trek 1 – 61.6 Mile Expedition



About the Experience:

- Bayou Courtableau to Myette Point
- 6 Day Program
- 5 days/4 nights in the swamp

Trek Agenda:

- Arrival Day – Lafayette, LA
  - Orientation
  - Gear Shakedown
- Trek Night 1 - Houseboats
  - Airboats
- Night 2 – Rougarou Island
  - Blowguns
- Nights 3 & 4 – Island Outpost
  - Fishing
  - Stand Up Paddleboards
- Night 5 – Lafayette
  - Patch Presentation!

Crew Positions

Each Trek Crew is required to assign crew positions before beginning their trek. These positions are intended to help your crew operate with a chain of command and function as a team.

Crew Positions:

1. Trek Advisor (Adult) – Gray
2. Crew Leader (Youth) – Orange
3. Chaplain's Aide (Youth) – Black
4. Swamp Steward (Youth) – Blue
5. eScribe (Youth) – Brown
6. Swamp Base (Staff Member) – Red
7. All other crew members – Green

Crew Positions – Trek Advisor

Trek Advisor (Adult): Gray

- The Trek Advisor plays a major role in helping the crew have a successful Swamp Base trek
- Main point of contact with parents back at home
- Disciplinarian
- Part of the Trek's "KEY 3" with the Crew Leader and Trek Guide

Crew Positions –Crew Leader

Crew Leader (Youth): Orange

- He/she leads by example and practices servant leadership
- Responsible for organizing the crew, assigning duties, making decisions, and recognizing the capabilities of each crew member
- Part of the Trek's "KEY 3" with the Trek Advisor and Trek Guide

Crew Positions – Chaplain's Aide

Chaplain's Aide (Youth): Black

- Leads the nightly "Roses, Thorns & Buds"
- Leads the crew in the "Swamp Base Grace" at every meal
- Leads the crew's interfaith service at Island Outpost

Crew Positions – Swamp Steward

Swamp Steward (Youth): Blue

- Leads crew in following the principles of the BSA Outdoor Code and Leave No Trace
- Ensures that all equipment and gear is properly treated, and that all trash from meals is collected

Crew Positions – eScribe

eScribe (Youth): Brown

- Leads the documentation of the trek by capturing video, audio, and photographs
- Encourages crew members to capture footage and share on social media platforms
- Leads the creation of a crew Swamp Base experience presentation for the Scout unit upon completion of their trek

Crew Positions – Swamp Base Staff

Swamp Base (Staff Member): Red

- Staff Members provide crews with, food, program, orientation, outdoor skills, environmental/historical information, and resources for safety
- A Trek Guide will accompany each crew through the swamp
- Part of the Trek's "KEY 3" with the Trek Advisor and Crew Leader

Indian Bayou Area – Trek Day 1, 19.3 miles

Day 1 is the longest and most diverse paddling day at Swamp Base, with Scouts navigating through the twisting and turning Bayou Fordoche in the Indian Bayou Area before reaching the lake of the Henderson Swamp and its remnant cypress forest.

During this day Scouts will see alligators, osprey, and dozens of large wading birds prior to arriving to the houseboats for Night 1.

Henderson Swamp – Trek Day 1

Houseboats – Night 1 "Connection to the Wetlands"

Day 1 finishes at the houseboats, possibly the most unique camping site in all of Scouting!

While on the houseboats, Scouts will throw castnets, learn about the connectivity of the Mississippi River and take in a beautiful swamp sunset.

Please note that the houseboats have a working kitchen, beds, and A/C. You deserve it after paddling 19.3 miles!

Airboat Ride! – Trek Day 2

The morning of Day 2 begins with an adrenaline fueled airboat ride through the dense cypress tree forest that lines the horizon around the houseboats!

Scouts will "fly" through the swamp and learn about the impacts of invasive vegetation and the logging industry and how they have dramatically altered the environment.

Rougarou Island – Night 2 Primitive Camping

Following the airboat ride and a short portage over the earthen levee, Day 2's paddle begins in Bayou Berard. At 10.3 miles it is the shortest paddle day of the trek, and passes through the fishing community of Catahoula, LA before arriving to Rougarou Island.

A "Rougarou" is a mysterious wolf-man that haunts the swamps of South Louisiana.

Rougarou Island – Night 2 Primitive Camping

While on Rougarou Island, Scouts will compete in a blowgun competition, inspired by the Chitimacha Tribe of the area.

As night falls they will retreat to jungle hammocks and get a feel for sleeping in the swamp.

In addition to the hammocks, Rougarou Island is set up with a large screened-in pavilion for Scouts to mingle under.

Rougarou Island – Chitimacha Blowgun Program

Winners of the daily blowgun competition are awarded with this official Tribal patch!

Lake Dauterive – Day 3

Day 3's paddle is 14.4 miles in length and brings Scouts from Rougarou Island to Island Outpost.

The paddle includes bayous, a stop for lunch in a dense cypress swamp called Forgotten Forest, and the first experience of the ancient cypress trees that line Lake Dauterive and Lake Fausse Pointe.

Island Outpost – Nights 3 & 4

Island Outpost is a 24-acre island located in Lake Fausse Pointe and is the third overnight location of the trek.

Scouts will spend two nights on the island, which will allow them a day of rest from paddling and an opportunity for aquatic activities and the Swamp Base catfishing program!

At night Scouts will eat Cajun food and sleep in rustic cabins.

Out Adventure Day! – Day 4

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Lake Fausse Pointe – Day 5

The final day of paddling through the Atchafalaya Swamp is 17.6 miles in length, but is also the climax to a great trip on the water!

The day includes a sunrise paddle that brings Scouts through cypress trees that are 500 to 1,000 years in age, as well as the infamous "Swamp Stomp," a muddy portage that is the final challenge of the trek.

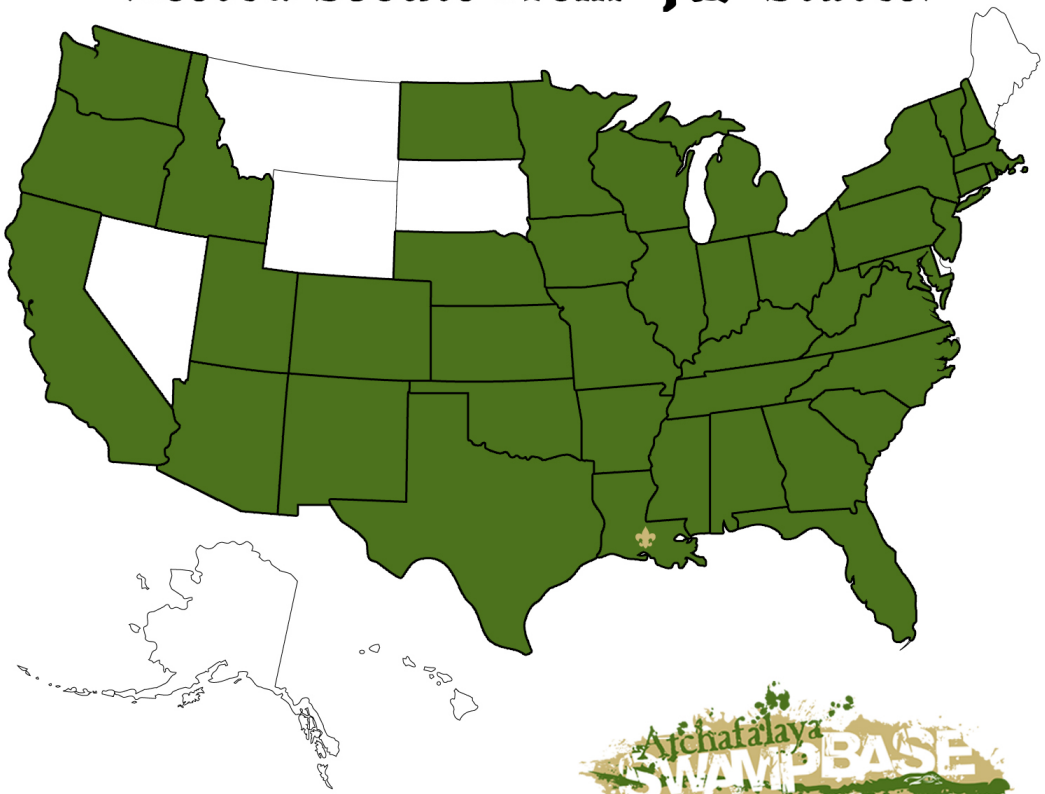
The trek finishes 61.6 miles later at Myette Point.

Swamp Stomp – Day 5

Paddles Up at Myette Point! – Day 5

National Participation

By 2021, Swamp Base will have hosted Scouts from 42 States!



Atchafalaya SWAMP BASE Louisiana

Contact Us

Download the Leader's Guide or find more information at:

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To make a reservation, please call **337-235-8552**

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