

WELCOME

Louisiana has a secret to share with you: this state has the oldest earthen mounds in North America, even older than Stonehenge or the Great Pyramids. Our rich and diverse environment has lured people who hunt and fish to these hills, bayous, streams, and lakes for thousands of years. As the beauty of our bounty captured the spirits of the first residents here, they began to build earthen mounds to celebrate their bond to this land. The concept spread throughout the Southeast and the Ohio Valley, producing magnificent mounds; but no other state's mounds surpass the span of time, diversity of style, or degree of preservation found here.

Louisiana has a long history of preserving prehistoric earthworks. It began in 1933 with the public acquisition of Marksville and, later, its development into a State Park, followed by Poverty Point State Park in 1972, and half of Watson Brake in 1998; each site is recognized internationally. The forward-thinking actions of the Louisiana Office of State Parks protect their uniqueness. But they are only three of more than 700 recorded mound sites in Louisiana.

Through the Division of Archaeology, Office of Cultural Development, the Ancient Mounds Heritage Area and Trails Initiative continues Louisiana's commitment to preserving our cultural heritage—with a twist. Privately owned mound sites are knitted together to create four self-guided tours in northeast Louisiana. Visitors can view as many as 39 mound sites that span 5,000 years of history. From this booklet and the roadside marker at each site, you will learn about dome-shaped, conical, and platform mounds, as well as ridges and enclosures, all of which you can see on the Trail.

You will be introduced to earthworks built by various prehistoric cultures. These magnificent earthworks have survived through the conservation efforts of individuals and families who realized that these monuments are rare and endangered expressions of the human spirit. The builders and owners both invite you to visit these vestiges of great and powerful cultures, and to honor them by not trespassing or walking on the mounds. Please restrict your activities to the shoulder of the road near the marker, and help conserve these rare historic resources.

Take the time to explore Louisiana and discover these unparalleled examples of ancient earthen architecture. Join me in informing the world about our unique and awe-inspiring record of human creativity and engineering genius. Welcome to Louisiana's Ancient Mounds Driving Trail.