



VISIT MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST African American Heritage Itinerary

Day One

Begin your day at the new **Biloxi Visitors Center** at the Lighthouse. Explore the museum and learn about African American and other cultural influences on the history of Biloxi and the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Across the street, an historic marker describes the turmoil of racial desegregation during the beach Wade-Ins of the 1960s.

Take time to visit the **Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art** complex. Among the galleries don't miss the **Gallery of African American Art** which features exhibits from photography, sculpture and other art media about and by African American artists.

Walk through the replica of the **Pleasant Reed House**. The original house (destroyed by Hurricane Katrina) was the home of the late Pleasant Reed, the first free Black man in Biloxi to build and own his home outright after the Civil War. This historic "side-hall camelback shotgun" from the early 1900s will take you back in time to another era. The relocation of the Pleasant Reed House to the site of the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art insured that this cultural and educational resource can be used to tell the story of a modest but remarkable man who was part of Biloxi's diverse cultural legacy. Pleasant Reed Interpretive Center Gallery features **"The Native Guard: A Photographic History of Ship Island's African American Regiment"**. Photographs from the collection of C. P. ("Kitty") Weaver of Massachusetts from the diary of Colonel Nathan W. Daniels, supplemented by photographs provided by Isiah Edwards, record the history of the 2nd Regiment of Louisiana Native Guards that served for the Union at Ship Island in the Mississippi Sound.



"Blues Trail" markers dot the coastline. Coastal markers celebrate Biloxi Blues, Broadcasting the Blues, Blues and Jazz in the Pass, Gulfport Boogie and Blues Hall in Bay St. Louis.

Travel to the city of Gulfport and get a lovely view of **Bayou Bernard**, one of the Gulf Coast's bayous named after a free Black man, Bernard Beniot. Beniot operated a blacksmith and forge on the banks of this Bayou. For lunch, enjoy a delicious meal at the **Blow Fly Inn** while dining and enjoying a wonderful and relaxing view of Bayou Bernard.

This afternoon, drive south along the beach to the town of Pass Christian and wander the town green. Marvel at the Eagle tree sculpture dedicated to **Col. Lawrence Edward Roberts, Sr.** (December 9, 1922 - October 12, 2004), father of newscaster, Robin Roberts, a pilot with the [Tuskegee Airmen](#) in the 1940s and a [colonel](#) in the [United States Air Force](#) with 32 years of total military service.

The town of Pass Christian has been reborn since hurricane Katrina in 2005 with quaint shops and the wonderful **Pass Christian Olive Oil and Vinegars Shop**. Spend some time tasting, testing and pairing oils and balsamic vinegars to suit your personal palate.

Consider a relaxing cruise to **Ship Island** to visit Fort Massachusetts. During the Civil War, Ship Island was maintained by the **Second Regiment Louisiana Infantry Native Guards**, the first Black regiment organized during the war. By 1864 there were 1200 Confederate prisoners on Ship Island that were guarded by the 74th Regiment, U.S. Colored Infantry. The Louisiana Native Guards controlled the island and fort from 1963-1965.

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Day Two

Begin your trip with a spiritually unique tour of **St. Augustine Catholic Church and Seminary**, the first seminary in the United States created specifically to train African American men for the priesthood. St. Augustine is the oldest existing Catholic seminary in Mississippi, established in 1922.

Explore the fascinating **Marian & Agony Grotto** adjacent to St. Augustine Catholic Church. View the sculptures inside the Grotto that depicts the agony Jesus Christ went through before the Crucifixion. The grotto and the statues inside were designed and built by **Thaddeaus S. Bourcree**, and African American bricklayer.



Visit **St. Rose DeLima Church**, home to the magnificent mural, “Christ In The Oaks,” an African Christ figure. View the surroundings of the mural, the altar, the tabernacle stand, the ambo, and other interesting furnishings made from driftwood and trees found on the shores of the Bay of St. Louis. This still active church melds Southern Gospel with Roman Catholic tradition every Sunday. The multi-racial Gospel Choir perform each year at the New Orleans Jazz Festival.

Take a walk through the cemetery adjacent to St. Rose DeLima Church and see the different ways people (black and white) were buried above the ground in tombs and under ground.

Take a scenic drive through **Old Town Bay St. Louis**, and see the shotgun houses and many other businesses that were constructed by **Eugene Ray**, an African American carpenter and developer who built nearly half of the buildings in Bay St. Louis in the 1800s.

Visit the **100 Men D.B.A. Hall**, a longtime center of African American social life and entertainment. This meeting hall was built in 1922 by the One Hundred **Members’** Debating Benevolent Association. Over the years the association sponsored many events and also rented the hall to promoters who brought in blues, rhythm & blues, and jazz acts. Local residents have recalled performances by Etta James, Big Joe Turner, Guitar Slim, Irma Thomas, Professor Longhair, Ernie K-Doe, Deacon John, Earl King, and numerous others here. The Blues Trail marker, **Blues Hall** was erected in June 2011. Your group might enjoy Lunch and Live Blues at the club!

