

Landscape and animal life in Cajun country

In this recording you will hear a conversation between two people, Clothilde and Carla, about what Cajun country looks like and the animals that live there. Cajun people were originally French people who lived in today's Canadian provinces Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and moved to Louisiana after 1755. Clothilde, who is Cajun tells Carla in this conversation about Cajun country and the animals there.

Carla: It seems that Cajun music and Cajun food are really different from traditional American food. What else is different in this area?

Clothilde: So, the bayous, we talked about the bayous earlier and they look quite different from Norwegian rivers. You'll find, not in the bayous, you'll find in rice fields crawfish, because they will farm crawfish there. In the water, you will see catfish and frogs and plenty of alligators in the swamps and we Cajuns create meals with all of the food that you see, all of the creatures that live in the bayou. Another thing is that bayous are found in flat lands. You know there are no mountains in south Louisiana and the elevation of our state is sea level, so my hometown Lafayette is only 8 feet above sea level. That is approximately 2,5 meters. Norway's average elevation is 460 meters or 1500 feet above sea level. The average elevation of Oslo is 23 meters above sea level.

Carla: So, much higher.

Clothilde: Norway is much higher above the sea, yes.

Carla: The countryside is different in the south of USA than in Norway. Norway is very mountainous, but the southern states in the US are flat, so the rivers are different. That makes really sense. As you said, in Louisiana the rivers are slower and in Norway they flow with more speed, because there is more mountains. There seems to be a lot of animals. You mentioned crawfish, catfish, frogs and alligators. I mean, alligators, that sounds really scary. Do you go for walks along the river?

Clothilde: You know, we do have to be careful, don't we?

Carla: When you said that, I imagined children playing by the bayous and I thought – maybe not...

Clothilde: You've got to be careful because sometimes alligators can move pretty quickly.

Carla: Have you seen alligators yourself?

Clothilde: Yes, many.

Carla: And have you eaten one?

Clothilde: Yes.

Carla: What does it taste like?

Clothilde: You know, I hate to sound cliché because you know I'm going to say it tastes like chicken.

Carla: I didn't know.

Clothilde: Yes, and it does. I actually like it. They have a lot of different dishes you can make with alligators.

Carla: That's so cool. So do you ever go and bath in the summer?

Clothilde: So do I ever go swimming in the bayou? You know, when I was in high school and college, I actually would go water skiing on the bayous and there would be alligators there.

Carla: Wow!

Clothilde: I know. It could be scary, but it worked out.

Carla: Well, that's lucky for you, but it sounds really scary. I imagine you water skiing between the alligators.

We talked about crawfish already, so I know what these are now, but catfish is another one. So, I quickly looked it up in the dictionary and it gave me several results. So it says, it could either be a fish that is called 'malle' in Norwegian, another type of fish it could be, a different name for wolffish which is called 'steinbit' in Norwegian, or it could be a type of shark.

Clothilde: It's not a type of shark.

Carla: No. And I checked the fishes. So, three different types of fishes. So, it's definitely not a shark and we talked about fresh water, really slow flowing water. So that's probably 'malle' in Norwegian. It doesn't live in Norway, because the water is too fast in Norway.

Clothilde: You know, you'll find catfish at the bottom of the water, at the bottom of the river.

Carla: That makes sense. Another difference to Norway is, Louisiana is much warmer too.

Clothilde: Yes, let's think about this. The latitude of Lafayette, Louisiana is 30 degrees above the equator; the latitude of Oslo is 59 degrees above the equator. We're much closer to the equator, we have warm weather most of the year. In Norway, how many months do you wear heavy coats?

Carla: I would say all months.

Clothilde: In south Louisiana, you might wear a warm coat six days of the year. From June to September, the average temperature is 32 degrees Celsius. That's one reason why you should visit south Louisiana in February or March when the weather is a lovely 16 degrees Celsius. Another reason to come in February or March is Mardi Gras.