

Romance with History and Mountain Escape

By Linda Holloway / Photography by Holloway Photography

The Treasures of River Road

There is a place so mesmerizing that Hollywood often rejects their own stage lots for Louisiana's River Road—proof there are some locations that simply cannot be duplicated. This 80 mile stretch of highway from New Orleans to Baton Rouge is not only a place that I like to visit, but I must visit. Here, more than a half dozen grand antebellum plantation homes still stand, inviting visitors to peer through the windows of history when sugar was king. Our favorite homes are Bocage, Houmas House and Oak Alley.

Houmas House Plantation and Gardens

Enter a time warp of gentility at Houmas House dating back to the 1770's. The present antebellum structure dates to the late 1820's making Houmas House one of the first great columned mansions on the Mississippi. Known as "The Sugar Prince of Louisiana," John Burnside purchased the estate in 1858 and became the largest sugar planter in America. Our tour guide, Judy, pointed to a rare 1847 map of Louisiana and the Houmas China. The French mantle clock made in Paris, is reputed to have been acquired by Napoleon from the estate of Marie Antoinette. Entrepreneur Kevin Kelly purchased and began restoring Houmas House in 2003, where he also resides.

We exited the mansion and meandered along the pathways on the grounds before enjoying the delectable cuisine at Latil's Landing. The award-winning restaurant is located in the original 1770's structure overlooking the fountain and gardens. Dining "with history" by candlelight was pure romance. We recommend Chef Langlois' Tasting Menu filled with delectable regional dishes. Don't be surprised if you see a film star at the next table—it seems some of Hollywood's elite have also found the restaurant's ambience irresistible.

Houmas House is no stranger to Hollywood. In 1964 the classic icon "Hush, Hush Sweet Charlotte" starring Betty Davis and Joan Crawford, was filmed here. Two major motion picture films, featuring actors such as Jane Seymour, James Brolin and Raven Symone were recently filmed under the majestic oaks at Houmas House as well.