

Weekend Wanders: Cruising Caddo

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There is no better way to truly experience the majestic and mysterious Caddo Lake than with a little paddle power, and in Uncertain, Texas, you're certain to get the ride of your life during a one-of-a-kind, eco-cruise experience on The Swamp Thing.



Climb aboard The Swamp Thing for a true Caddo experience.



After your cruise on The Swamp Thing, enjoy Caddo cuisine and an ice cold beverage at the Uncertain General Store and Grill. Some favorite dishes include gator eggs, frog legs and crawfish etouffee.

With a quiet, dependable electric push, this 28-foot, 16-seat paddle wheel tour boat slides through the lily pads in less than a foot of water. Its in its element in the backwaters, taking visitors to intriguing places on this mystic lake.

Husband and wife team Johnny and LaLette Fletcher will be your tour guides aboard The Swamp Thing. For an hour and a half, they take you through winding bayous and lush cypress alleyways while Johnny navigates and narrates his knowledge of Caddo, including the history surrounding it, the wildlife that inhabit it and the tales behind it.

"Guests have a great time on this tour, which is like a laid-back history lesson and nature show in one," Johnny said. "There are many stories to tell about the area, and you can see tons of wildlife — beavers, ducks, beautiful blue heron and white egrets ... and on hot summer days you may even see an alligator or two."

The charm and mystery of Caddo Lake is known across the globe. "We see all kinds of people who come out to see what Caddo is all about, from honeymooners to senior groups to world-travelers," LaLette said. "We've entertained guests from all over, including California, Kansas, France and England."

After cruising along Caddo, set foot on dry land for a hearty meal at the Uncertain General Store and Grill. Enjoy fresh, hot-off-the grill Caddo cuisine and scenic views of Caddo Lake from your table in a relaxed, family atmosphere. Kay Shields-Perot and her team cater to large groups, so be sure to bring the whole family or a bunch of friends for a unique experience. Some flavorful menu items include gator bites, drunken shrimp, catfish burgers and frog legs.

"A guest who eats with us occasionally made a career out of boat taxi-driving years ago. Now in his 90s, he's more than happy to talk to other guests about his stories on Caddo back in the day," Kay said. After eating, stroll through the general store, and stock up on souvenirs, unusual knickknacks, T-shirts or fishing supplies.

Plan to dedicate an entire afternoon exploring and enjoying your time on Caddo Lake. Let this swamp weave its spell over you. "Once you witness firsthand the looming trees thick with moss and the wildlife at play around Caddo Lake, you'll be drawn back," Johnny said.

If you go

When: March-November: Tuesday-Saturday; Boat departure times: 11am, 1pm, 4pm, 6pm. Holiday tours will run on Memorial Day, July 4th and Labor Day. If these times don't work with your schedule, the Fletchers are more than happy to accommodate your needs. Closed on Thanksgiving Day. Group tours are by reservation only: Minimum 12-14 per tour, and multiple tours can be booked back-to-back. Dining arrangements available and encouraged.

Directions: From Longview, take I-20E. Take exit 11 to merge onto I-220E. Then, take exit 2 toward Lake Shore Drive. Turn left onto South Lakeshore Drive, and you've reached Jayne Marie on Cross Lake.

Contact: 1.888.325.5456

Cost: \$18/adults, \$10/children 12 & under, \$16/seniors, free for any child 3 years old and younger