

Traveling The Length Of The Jefferson Highway Is Like A Year In College

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When I look back on my 3000 mile trip over the Jefferson Highway, I always think of it as a year in college with all the advantages of actually seeing the country, its peoples and industries and coming into personal contact with them instead of merely reading about them.

In no year that I spent in college did I get the breadth of view, the varied contact with people, the proper perspective of a wide section of this country and as constantly changing succession of pictures of natural scenery and economic progress, as I got in that delightful trip by automobile from St. Joseph, Missouri to New Orleans.

Mark Twain's "Following the Equator" gave him an interesting trip, but a journey over the Jefferson Highway cuts a cross section of the country for the traveler and allows him glimpses of people ranging from the languorous Creoles of New Orleans, the quaint French of some of the interior towns of Louisiana, the "rarin' to go" folks of Texas and Oklahoma, the satisfied Missourian and on to the more vigorous and more active people of the north.

Where else could one get such endless variety as on the Jefferson Highway where one, starting with the Old City of New Orleans and its fascinating customs and scenes, may follow the levees of the Mississippi and through the "stringtowns" that border these immense earthen safeguards against floods, amid rice, sugar and cotton plantations, through the Elberta peach district of Texas, the oil fields of Oklahoma, the zinc and lead section of the Joplin country, the historic Order No. 11 part of Missouri past the early home of the Younger boys and on into Kansas City, the young and lusty metropolis of the West?

From the submerged rice fields by way of the "black lands" of Texas and the red soil of Oklahoma, to the wonderful loess soil of the Missouri River bluffs from Kansas City to St. Joseph, one has an unusual sequence of land conditions with their varied products.

And history, ranging from the time of the Spanish occupation of the Louisiana Purchase, through the period when lead was mined in Missouri to make bullets for use in the battle of Braddock's defeat, through the years when St. Joseph was the outpost of civilization and the outfitting point for the westward bound, touching the time when the Platte Purchase was made and 2,000,000 acres of land, necessary to square out the state of Missouri, admitted to the union 16 years before, were bought of the Indians for \$7,500---all this is lived over again for the tourist who travels with an inquiring mind and inviting attitude.

Interesting? As interesting as the Arabian Nights, and twice as fascinating, because it is true and will stand the test of daylight. And, some day, I have promised myself, I'll see the equally interesting north half of that wonderful highway.

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