

Louisiana's Location

As you read, look for:

- the difference between absolute and relative location,
- Louisiana's boundaries, and
- vocabulary terms **absolute location** and **relative location**.

Where are we? Geographers answer that question in two ways. They identify location in either absolute or relative terms. **Absolute location** refers to a specific spot on planet Earth. For example, Shreveport's new convention center is at 400 Caddo Street in Shreveport. **Relative location** explains where a place is in relation to another place or places. For example, the Shreveport Convention Center is at the intersection of Caddo and Marshall Streets in downtown Shreveport.

If someone asks where you live and you give your street address, you have given your absolute location. If you say you live across the street from the library, you have given your relative location.

Below: Street map showing absolute location of the new Shreveport Convention Center.



Parallel refers to latitude;
meridian refers to longitude.

Louisiana in the United States

Absolute location can also be described using a grid system of lines of latitude and longitude. Latitude (also called *parallels*) measures a location's distance north or south of the equator. Longitude measures how far east or west a location is from the prime meridian. Louisiana lies between 28° 55' and 33° north (N) latitude and between 89° and 94° west (W) longitude. North Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent share approximately the same latitude. The longitude lines through Louisiana also pass through parts of Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, and through Ontario, Manitoba, and the Northwest Territories of Canada.

If a cartographer (mapmaker) drew a north-south line through the center of the United States, Louisiana would lie just east of that line. Twenty-four states lie east of Louisiana, and twenty-five lie west of westernmost Louisiana. Louisiana joins other coastal states to form the southeastern United States. To be further south in the United States, you would have to be in Texas, Florida, or Hawaii.

In a comparison of the physical size of the fifty states, Louisiana ranks thirty-first, with a total area (land and water) of 49,651 square miles. Like eggs in a carton, a dozen Louisianas would fit into Alaska, but it would take forty-eight Rhode Islands to fill Louisiana.

Map 3 Louisiana in the United States

Map Skill: What other states share approximately the same latitude as Louisiana?





Boundaries

The system of latitude and longitude is also used to mark boundaries. Parallels and meridians (lines of longitude) describe some of the political borders between states. One of the boundaries between Mississippi and Louisiana is set near the 31st parallel north (31° N latitude). The boundary between Arkansas and Louisiana is set near the 33rd parallel north (33° N latitude). The 94th meridian west (94° W longitude) separates Louisiana and Texas.

Several waterways form political boundaries of Louisiana. The Mississippi River shapes the upper boundary between Louisiana and Mississippi, and the Pearl River forms the lower boundary. The Gulf of Mexico marks Louisiana's southern boundary. The Sabine River and its reservoir, Toledo Bend, act as the boundary between Louisiana and Texas.

Check for Understanding ✓

1. What is Louisiana's absolute location?
2. What is Louisiana's location relative to other states?
3. What are Louisiana's natural boundaries?
4. What are Louisiana's manmade boundaries?

Map 4 Louisiana's Boundaries

Map Skill: What feature forms the longest boundary?

Lagniappe

Our neighbor Texas is the only state that is both north and south of Louisiana.