

Great River Road Network of Museums and Interpretive Centers Nomination Form

Name of organization: Oak Alley Plantation

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Introduction: This is a network of museums and interpretive centers about the Mississippi River along the Great River Road. It is not our intent to select every museum or interpretive center along the Mississippi River, even though we recognize there are hundreds of museums that are doing excellent work. Our goal is to have a network of premier institutions that are willing to work together to further the interpretive and marketing goals for the Great River Road.

Section 1- Qualifications

The institution must interpret the Mississippi River or some significant aspect or relationship to the river with a high level of quality and be open to the public on a published, regular basis.

1. What story does your institution tell about the Mississippi River as part of its regular daily visitor experience? How does it relate to the themes for interpretation which are attached? Why do you feel that this significant aspect or relationship to the river is presented at a high level of quality? Describe the quality of the visit your guests receive.

Oak Alley's history, which we share through a series of guided and self paced experiences on the historic grounds and in the exhibits, is intricately tied to the Mississippi River. As a means of travel, its role in agricultural commerce and its position as a viaduct for furthering the slave trade up through St. James Parish, the story of the Mississippi is the story of this iconic sugar plantation, and figures heavily in a visit to the Historic Site. The river's affect on the landscape in particular is a recurring theme.

A visit to Oak Alley offers each visitor a chance to not only appreciate the impact of the Mississippi on Oak Alley through interpretation, but to see it for themselves. Visitors first view the river's relative closeness from the mansion's upper gallery, and then more information is provided on the importance of the river in the Sugarcane Theater where the dynasties of the Roman family and the importance of the River in creating these empires is interpreted.

2. What is the length of stay for the typical visitor experience at your institution? Please provide what you consider an average time, what you consider a short stay and what you consider a long stay for regular attendance.

Oak Alley's website and information recommends visitors to allow 2 hours for a visit while some visitors will spend upwards of 3 hours. Some visitors allow more time to take in the setting and spend up to 4 hours.

3. What educational or interpretive programs beyond exhibits do you conduct that interpret the Mississippi River or some significant aspect or relationship to the river?

The history of Oak Alley from it's conception to the last resident owner's, the Stewarts, has direct correlation with the Mississippi River. It was the river access that made Oak Alley an ideal location to create a sugar plantation, long before the iconic landscape with the alley of oaks ending in the grand mansion were a thought. In the slavery exhibit and during the conversation series in this exhibit, visitors learn about the importance of the river to the planters as well as it's use during the Civil War; how the Roman family traveled the river road and crossed the river to arrive at a neighboring church for baptisms of slaves. In the sugarcane exhibit, visitors learn about the Roman dynasty that owned 9 miles of the Mississippi River including Oak Alley and how their empire and the harvesting of sugarcane made them some of the wealthiest families. And then the "Big House" where the view from the balcony alone shows the significance and the impact the river had on Oak Alley's history as well as past and present landscapes.

4. What are your published and regular hours? Please describe hours for various seasons.

Oak Alley is open 7 days a week with the exception of New Year's Day, Mardi Gras Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Hours are 9am-5pm.

5. What is the annual attendance for regular museum hours at your site, exclusive of special events? What is the admission fee?

Oak Alley's annual visitation in 2016 was 242,105. This count only includes paid visitation. Admissions are \$22 per adult; \$8 (13-18 yrs) and \$5 (6-12 yrs). A 10% discount is offered to Senior (65+), Military, AAA, & Student.

6. What is your proximity to the Great River Road?

Oak Alley is located directly off the river road. Our mailing address is 3645 Highway 18, Vacherie, La.

7. Did you enclose a letter of endorsement from your state Mississippi River Parkway Commissioner?

No

Section II- Duties and Obligations:

1. Members of the network must have the Great River Road map at their site, at a minimum for reference, but preferably for sale or for distribution to visitors. One map will be provided as will an order form for additional maps. Will you agree to stock and/or sell the Great River Road map?

We would be delighted to have a map at our site and offer them to visitors.

2. Members of the network must ensure that front line personnel who have contact with the public are knowledgeable of and will promote the Great River Road and the museums and interpretive centers in the region. Describe how you will ensure that your front line personnel will be trained, briefed and monitored.

Oak Alley can provide materials in employee training binders on the program as well as include in monthly employee newsletters.

3. Are you willing to display signage at your center showing that you are a member of the Great River Road Network? This may be inside or outside signage, but must be prominently displayed. Where will you display the Interpretive Center sign?

Oak Alley Foundation is all to display a sign showing that we are a member of the great River Road Network near our entrance to the historic site.

4. Are you willing to secure the needed funds to have an officially approved Great River Road Interpretive Center sign erected at your site?

This would be determined based on cost to the Foundation.

Section III - Capacity:

The following questions are asked primarily for information purposes and will not be major factors in determination of inclusion in the network.

1. Do you have access to the internet? If your facility has a website, what is the address? Do you have the ability to post the www.experiencemississippiriver.com website on our website?

Oak Alley does have internet access and a website, www.OakAlleyPlantation.org. We do have the ability to include www.experiencemississippiriver.com as a resource on our website.

2. Do you have traveling exhibit space? If so, what size is it in square footage? Would you be willing or interested in hosting a traveling exhibit?

Oak Alley does have the space to display a traveling exhibit. The square footage would be determined by the size of the exhibit and space needed. The exhibit, in the near future, would most likely be exterior and located near the alley and River Road. The interpretation of Oak Alley is both interior and exterior and housed in 4 main exhibits: antebellum mansion, Sugarcane Theater, Civil War Encampment & *Slavery at Oak Alley*.

Please send photos of your interpretive center, both inside and outside, to 701 E. Washington Ave. Suite 202 Madison, WI 53703. Call 866-763-8310 if you have questions.

PROCESS

Nominations may be sent simultaneously to the chair of your state Mississippi River Parkway Commission and/or directly to the National Mississippi River Parkway Commission Office, 701 E. Washington Ave. Suite 202 Madison, WI 53703. Nominations must be received by September 1 to be eligible for consideration at the Annual Mississippi River Parkway Commission meeting each year. Please include a letter of endorsement by your state Mississippi River Parkway Commission Commissioner. This is extremely important.

Nominations are reviewed by the Heritage and Culture Committee of the National Mississippi River Parkway Commission. This committee has representation from all 10 states of the Mississippi River. Nominations are then also approved by the Board of Directors of the National Mississippi River Parkway Commission.

To date, there are 69 centers in the Great River Road Network that interpret the stories of the Mississippi River. These centers reside along the 10-state stretch of the river and range from museums, parks, nature centers, aquariums, historic and prehistoric sites.

Benefits to Network members include: a listing on the Great River Road map distributed nationally, a listing in the touch screen kiosk at the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium in Dubuque, listing on the MRPC website, and listing on signage at each GRR center along the river.