

Isaac-delayed casino opens, brings out BR gamblers

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BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Thousands of gamblers gathered for the opening of Louisiana's newest riverboat casino — an opening delayed three days by Hurricane Isaac.

The \$368 million L'Auberge Casino & Hotel Baton Rouge had been scheduled to open Wednesday. Phyllis Reynolds, of Sunshine, got to the casino at 11 a.m., three hours before it opened Saturday, *The Advocate* (<http://bit.ly/T62J9i>) reported.

"I gamble every week, so I wanted to see what they have to offer, and it's really beautiful," said Reynolds, who usually plays the slots at the Belle of Baton Rouge.

So many people waited to get in that Reynolds had to move several times. She said she might have waited a week if she had known so many people would attend the opening.

L'Auberge is Pinnacle Entertainment Inc.'s fourth Louisiana property, joining the Boomtown Casino New Orleans, Boomtown Casino & Hotel Bossier City, and the L'Auberge Casino Resort Lake Charles.

Like other riverboat casinos, L'Auberge is permanently moored away from main navigation channels.

The project has been in the works for more than six years. Baton Rouge voters approved a third casino in 2008. According to a 2006 study by economist Loren Scott, the market can support only two casinos, which means one will likely fail. Both the Belle of Baton Rouge and Hollywood casino have spent millions of dollars on improvements in recent years.

Pinnacle began construction in May 2010, but low water in the Mississippi River, delayed the boat's hulls from being shipped from Bollinger Shipyard in Amelia. Last year, high water in the

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river delayed construction. Last week, there was a hurricane.

. "We had some high water, but it could have been much worse," said Anthony Sanfilippo, Pinnacle's president and chief executive officer.

Information from: The Advocate, <http://theadvocate.com>