

Nine Parades Over Two Weekends, Live Music, Rides, Games & More

South Louisiana is home to the greatest free party on earth, a colorful celebration known as Mardi Gras. In Lafayette residents celebrate in many ways including the traditional Courir de Mardi Gras; parades with marching bands, beads and doubloons; Mardi Gras Indians with elaborate dancing and costumes; various styles of king cakes; as well as extravagant Mardi Gras balls complete with kings and queens. For a complete list of events visit LafayetteTravel.com/Mardi-Gras

When is Mardi Gras?

Ash Wednesday is always 46 days before Easter (40 days of Lent plus six Sundays) and Fat Tuesday is always the day before Ash Wednesday. The season starts on Jan. 6, the Twelfth Night or feast of Epiphany and ends at midnight on Fat Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday.

- ❖ FEBRUARY 9, 2016 ❖ MARCH 5, 2019 ❖ MARCH 1, 2022
- ❖ FEBRUARY 28, 2017 ❖ FEBRUARY 25, 2020 ❖ FEBRUARY 21, 2023
- ❖ FEBRUARY 13, 2018 ❖ FEBRUARY 16, 2021 ❖ FEBRUARY 13, 2024

The Colors of Mardi Gras

In 1872, King Rex, the king of New Orleans' carnival, selected the official colors of Mardi Gras-purple, green and gold. Purple represents justice, green represents faith and gold represents power.

Mardi Gras Krewes

A Mardi Gras Krewe is the membership organization for a parade. Krewes also get together throughout the year for balls and other events.

Throws, Doubloons, Beads, Cups & More

The throwing of trinkets to the crowds was started in the early 1870s by the Twelfth Night Revelers, and is a time-honored expectation for young and old alike. Special throws with the Krewe's emblem become collector's items. 'Throw me something mister or sister' is a shout that can be heard as the parade floats roll past. Throws are inexpensive trinkets (doubloons, beads, cups, etc.) tossed from floats by costumed and masked krewe members.

King Cake

The history of the King Cake began in 12th century France where the cake would be baked on the eve of Jan. 6 to celebrate the visit to the Christ Child by the three Kings. A small token was hidden in the cake as a surprise for the finder. Today, the cake is circular in shape and richly decorated in bright colors representing a bejeweled crown to remind us of the Kings. The baby hidden in the cake symbolizes the Christ Child. King cakes are available at bakeries all over South Louisiana Jan. 6 through Mardi Gras day, with some offering them year round.

Lafayette's Mardi Gras Timeline

Lafayette's first Mardi Gras dates back to 1897. In 1934, the Southwest Mardi Gras Association was formed by representatives from civic and service organizations to ensure that Lafayette would always have a Mardi Gras celebration. King Gabriel and Queen Evangeline who symbolize the Acadian sweethearts in Longfellow's "Evangeline," are reunited each year at Mardi Gras to rule over the Mardi Gras festivities.

Courir de Mardi Gras

The Courir de Mardi Gras dates back to the earliest days of settlement and is still considered a rite of passage. With its roots firmly planted in the medieval tradition of ceremonial begging, bands of masked and costumed horseback riders roam the countryside begging for ingredients for their communal gumbo. Eunice, Mamou, Iota and Church Point are a few of the towns that continue to celebrate Mardi Gras with this rural tradition.

Family-Friendly Mardi Gras

Lafayette's Mardi Gras offers a family-friendly atmosphere. Families stake out their spots along the parade route and float riders love to throw beads and trinkets to children. If you're from out-of-town, make a sign for the parade. Float riders look for these and welcome non-locals with a shower of beads.

Parking

You may park along a side street free of charge, avoiding driveways and private property. Don't be surprised to see entrepreneurs along the way to park in a private parking lot near the parade route. If you want to watch the parades from the Mardi Gras Festival, you may park for a fee at Cajun Field and admission to the festival is free.

Safety & Other Tips

- ❖ STAY BEHIND THE BARRICADES WHILE THE PARADE IS IN PROGRESS.
- ❖ DRESS FOR COLD AND WARM TEMPERATURES USING CLOTHING LAYERS.
- ❖ HAVE FUN, BUT REALIZE THAT LEWD BEHAVIOR OR DRUNKENNESS CAN GET YOU ARRESTED.
- ❖ BLANKETS ARE GOOD FOR CHILDREN TO SIT ON AND TO STAY WARM.
- ❖ DON'T THROW THINGS AT THE FLOAT RIDERS.
- ❖ ITEMS PROHIBITED ALONG THE PARADE ROUTE INCLUDE WEAPONS, FIREWORKS, GLASS CONTAINERS AND PETS.
- ❖ KEEP AN EYE ON CHILDREN.
- ❖ IT'S ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA TO BRING ALONG AN UMBRELLA.

