

NEW ORLEANS

BEYOND THE BEADS

YOUR MARDI GRAS MUST-DO MANUAL

Mardi Gras Like a Local

Your Insider's Guide to Doing Carnival like a New Orleanian

Think Mardi Gras is just beer, beads, and Bourbon Street? You need to keep reading. Locals (and those in the NOLA) know that Mardi Gras isn't just something the city puts on for visitors –it's a celebration put on by locals for locals and you just happen to be invited. We love the company.

With more than 40 large and small parades in Orleans Parish alone, it helps to have a game plan. Here are some tips on how to experience Mardi Gras like you live here.

1. Embrace the Beginning

Each year, Carnival season kicks off on Twelfth Night (Jan. 6). If you want to celebrate with locals, hit one of the parades that roll on Twelfth Night – Joan of Arc in the French Quarter or Phunny Phorty Phellows along the streetcar route Uptown – or check out the ones on the weekends leading up to Mardi Gras Day, including Chewbacchus and Krewe du Vieux. The earlier parades are just as much fun and tend to be less crowded than ones later in the season. Plus, if you get started earlier, you also have an excuse to sample even more varieties of King Cake. Check out our guide to early Mardi Gras here for even more ways to experience the season closer to the start.

2. Download a Parade Tracker

Parade like a pro. Take a look at the routes online ahead of time and keep track of parade progress with an app like WDSU's Parade Tracker.

3. Find Your Place in the Fun

Locals often watch parades in the same spot each year. Head to the route a little early to scope out a good spot near a restroom and to set up your chairs, ice chests, ladders, whatever. (Here's the rule: Try to keep your stuff at least 6 feet from the curb). Getting to know your neighbors is often as much fun as the parade itself.

4. Learn How to Get Around

Travel by car, streetcar, bus, and taxi is often disrupted during Mardi Gras. Be prepared for a lot of walking or try renting a bike. You can track public transit disruptions at www.norta.com.

5. Wear A Costume

What do we do? We love to dress up. Brightly colored wigs, tutus, and or sequins are always fun. Whether you're wearing a full costume, or just a mask, hat, or wig, you'll fit in best if you get into the Mardi Gras spirit. Anything purple, green, or gold will do the trick.

6. Do A Little Reading

Learn about Mardi Gras traditions ahead of time so you know what's going on. For instance, if you want to catch beads like a local, yell out "Throw me something, mister!"

7. Pace Yourself, Partner

With weeks of festivities, there's no reason to overdo it on any one day. Make sure to eat right and stay hydrated throughout the celebrations. Know your limits. Yes, people bring kegs and full bars to the parade route. Enjoy and be smart.

8. Don't Be Lewd, Dude

Hey, there are kids around. Please be respectful. We get that racy entertainment that happens in the French Quarter – it's a good time for the right crowd. But outside the Quarter it's all about families, relaxing, and enjoying life.

9. Hit the Bucket List Items

Want to make sure your Mardi Gras is truly one for the books? There are certain things you just have to experience. From the Greasing of the Poles on the Friday before Mardi Gras to paying your respects to the canine royalty of the Mystic Krewe of Barkus, here are 17 must-dos to truly get the most of the Mardi Gras experience.



CUCUMBER LIME MOCKTAIL



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Peel and dice 1 large cucumber, then add to a high-speed blender.
2. To the blender Add 1 cup of water, juice of 2 limes, 3 tbsp mint leaves (adjust to your taste), 2 tbsp maple syrup, and a pinch of salt. Blend until smooth.
3. Strain the cucumber juice through a fine strainer or cheesecloth into a jar.
4. To the jar, add 1 cup carbonated mineral water and 2 cups of ice cubes (you can add more ice cubes if you like).
5. Serve in glasses with ice cubes. For decoration, you can add some cucumber slices, a lime wedge and some more mint.



INGREDIENTS

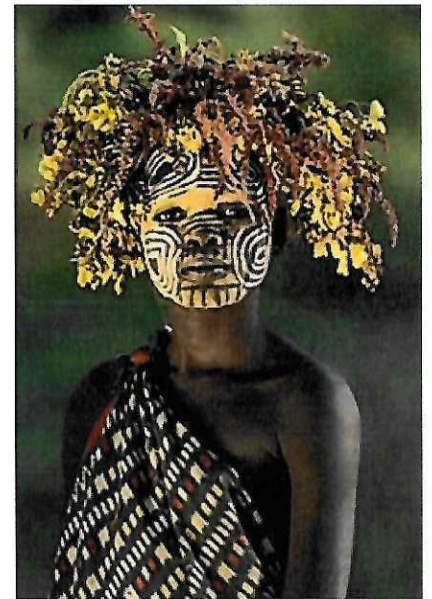
- 1 large cucumber
- 1 cup of water
- 2 limes
- 3 tbsp mint leaves
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- pinch of salt
- 1 cup carbonated mineral water
- 2 cups of ice cubes (or more as needed)

In October and November of 2024, I traveled to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to visit rural tribes in the Omo Valley. This trip can be classified as a high-level adventure travel experience, suitable for physically fit individuals and not for the faint of heart! Unlike the luxury camps often seen in Kenyan safari brochures, the journey involved 12-hour travel days, which included two flights and eight hours of driving on unpaved roads with potholes and sharp rocks, requiring militia escort. Upon arrival, accommodations consisted of a generator-run mobile camp with cold river-water showers and basic tents. Internet access was extremely limited.



The tribal visits were divided into two regions. The southern region, near the Kenyan border, is home to the Kara, Hamar, and Omorate tribal villages, along with the nomadic Daasanach tribe who move with the Omo River's seasonal flooding. I have yet to process the photographs from these visits.

In the northern region, bordering South Sudan, I visited the Suri tribe, also known as the Suma, from Kibish Village. Here, women and young children manage crops and goats while men and older boys tend to remote cattle camps. The younger Suri generation maintains cultural traditions, such as piercing and stretching their ear lobes for clay discs. Suri girls create intricate face designs using river clay pastes in various colors and wear elaborate head decorations made from local flora. Suri women also practice ritualistic scarification to mark significant life events such as puberty, menstruation, and childbirth.



Despite the trip's challenges and the remote region's potential dangers, I am grateful for the experience and the opportunity to photograph these unique cultures. While I may not wish to return soon, I value the knowledge gained from this journey. I am thankful to Nancy for arranging my international flights and providing support throughout the trip, even though connectivity was a challenge in remote areas of Ethiopia.



Jo Ann Tomaselli



Glacier National Park and the Canadian Rockies by Rail



EXPERIENCE SPECTACULAR LANDSCAPES AND SCENERY ON THIS 11 DAY ADVENTURE TO GLACIER NATIONAL PARK AND THE CANADIAN ROCKIES. DISCOVER THE BEAUTY OF GLACIER NATIONAL PARK AS YOU TRAVEL ALONG THE WORLD FAMOUS GOING-TO-THE-SUN ROAD. ENJOY ONE OF THE MOST SCENIC TRAIN JOURNEYS AS YOU TRAVEL THROUGH THE CANADIAN ROCKIES. TOUR THE ICEFIELDS PARKWAY AND RIDE AN ICE EXPLORER VEHICLE ONTO ATHABASCA GLACIER. EXPLORE THE PICTURESQUE MOUNTAIN TOWN OF BANFF AND TAKE IN THE SPLENDOR OF LAKE LOUISE WHILE RELAXING AT THE HISTORICAL FAIRMONT CHATEAU LAKE LOUISE.



BE YOUR **REAL ID** SELF

DEADLINE: **MAY 7, 2025**



Since the Groundhog predicted 6 more weeks of winter, we figured we would share a recipe for warm pick me up to help you get through these upcoming wintry weeks.

Featuring a taste of some of the amazing Italian coffee beans we serve onboard at Cafe Nation through our partnership with Ily Coffee.

Caffe Amaretto Recipe

Combine the below ingredients for a yummy beverage.

- 1.5 oz Amaretto liqueur
- 8oz Ily Coffee Medium to Dark Roast
- Whipped cream garnish
- Cinnamon sprinkle at the end

GROUPS FOR 2025-2026

UTAH'S MIGHTY FIVE AND THE ROCKIES, SEPTEMBER 9-17, 2025, with Collette Vacations, Highlights include Rocky Mountaineer, Glenwood Springs, Moab, Arches National Park, Canyonlands National Park, Dead Horse Point State Park, Capitol Reef National Park, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Bryce Canyon National Park, Zion National Park ending our tour at Paris Hotel Las Vegas. The tour includes round trip transfers to/from Newark, airfare, air taxes, fees and surcharges. Insurance is available at \$429.00. Book now and save \$200 per person. Rates \$6,549.00 (double), \$7,749.00 (single) and \$6,449.00 (triple) and must be booked by January 20, 2025.

OLD WORLD SICILY AND MALTA, NOVEMBER 5-16, 2025, with Collette Vacations. This is a small group departure for Home Town Travel with a maximum of 24 passengers on this adventure. These legendary isles are nestled amongst the deep blue water of the Mediterranean. Discover how ancient traditions blend into modern society as you travel along timeless Italian Maltese and Sicilian towns. This eleven-night tour begins with a four-night stay in Malta with a ferry to Sicily where you will stay three nights in Ragusa and three nights in Taormina. This package includes round trip transportation to Newark airport from our office, round trip air from Newark airport with an overnight flight to Malta, 10 breakfasts, 1 lunch and 4 dinners, professional escort throughout the trip and all accommodations and entrance fees. The rate per person based on double occupancy is \$5,399.00. Cancel for any reason insurance is optional and at a rate of \$549.00. Please call for more information.

NOVEMBER 25, 2025-ICONIC CHRISTMAS MARKETS ABOARD AMA REINA (Nuremburg to Budapest)

Travel back through centuries as you walk along cobblestone streets through grand cities and historic towns bedecked with twinkling Christmas trees and lined with wooden huts gleaming with handcrafted treasures. Nuremberg's festive Christkindlemarkt, the largest and oldest Christmas market in Germany, Regensburg's Artisan Christmas Market, one of Bavaria's most beautiful and romantic, Vienna with its impressive Christmas Market and Budapest where most products are handmade. Revel in a feast for the senses: sparkling lights, festive sounds of children dressed as angels singing carols and the enticing smells of hot-mulled wine, roasted chestnuts, sausages, and sweet treats of every kind. Rates start at \$3,699.00 per person double occupancy. Air fare and pre and post op
MARCH 13-26, 2026—TWELVE NIGHT VIETNAM & THAILAND CRUISE ABOARD THE CELEBRITY SOLSTICE
This bucket list trip starts in Hong Kong and visits Hanoi (Halong Bay), Hue/Danang, Ho Chi Minh (Phu My), Bangkok/Laemchabang and Ko Samui Thailand, and disembarking in Singapore. Pre and post land packages will be available. Cruise includes balcony accommodations (V1), all current port and government taxes, beverage package, gratuities, and Wi-Fi. SAVE OVER \$1,500 PER CABIN. Rate per person based on double \$3,350.00. A deposit of \$900/cabin is required to reserve your cabin. Final payment is not due until December 1, 2025. **ONE CABIN LEFT.**

MARCH 8, 2026 to APRIL 8, 2026—31 DAY PANAMA CANAL, INCA & SOUTH AMERICAN DISCOVERY ABOARD HOLLAND AMERICA'S OOSTERDAM.

Holland America's first Vista-class ship, the Oosterdam recently emerged from dry dock with exciting updates including completely refurbished suites and new lounge, dining and entertainment venues, such as Music Walk with Lincoln Center Stage, B.B. King's Blues Club and Billboard on board. Guests can choose from delectable specialty restaurants, hone culinary Skills with America's Test Kitchen and thrill to BBC Earth experiences. Embark in cosmopolitan Buenos Aires where pre-cruise packages will be available soon. Visit the penguins in Patagonia as you get ready to sail past Cape Horn and the Straits of Magellan. We then sail from Ushuaia and cruise the dramatic coast of Chile with stops in Puerto Montt and Punta Arenas. Sail through Glacier Alley enroute to a full transit of the Panama Canal. Inside cabins start at \$4,999.00 per person double. Available additions include Holland America's "Have It All" package which includes beverage package, three specialty dining venues, \$300 per person shore excursion credit, wi-fi and \$250 per person on board credit. This package is available for \$55 per person/per day. Prepaid gratuities are available at \$17/day. Other categories are available. Call for other rates and more information.

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Cultural Treasures of Japan with Collette Vacations April 2026

Welcome to Japan, the “Land of the Rising Sun.” Explore ancient and modern Japanese culture firsthand. Discover peaceful temples and technological marvels set against unimaginable natural beauty. This amazing 14-day tour will include airfare from Newark, transfer to and from Newark airport from Home Town Travel, 18 meals, all accommodations, sightseeing with entrance fees, transportation within Japan and a professional tour escort throughout the trip. Some of the highlights of this tour will include: Tokyo, Asakusa, Sensoji Shrine, Tea Ceremony, Ginza, Lake Ashi Cruise, Matsumoto Castle, Takayama, Sake Tasting and Hida beef dinner, Kyoto, bullet train and Hiroshima. Exact dates and rates will be out shortly. For more information, please call the office.

Netherlands, Belgium & France with Collette Vacations September 2026

From iconic Dutch windmills and cozy Belgian streets to the world-renowned Champagne region and the “City of Light,” experience the essence of three European countries. This 12-day tour will include airfare from Newark, transfers to and from Newark airport from Home Town Travel, 16 meals, all accommodations, transportation throughout your journey, sightseeing with entrance fees and a professional escort. Some of the highlights of this tour will include: Amsterdam, Canal Cruise, Kinderdijk, Bruges, Reims, Route du Champagne, Paris Parisian Bakery Workshop, Parfum Workshop, Le Marais, Ile de la Cite, Seine River Cruise and Eiffel Tower dinner. Exact dates and rates will be out shortly.

We will be having an informative Wine and Cheese with Collette tours in April with all the information on promoted tours. Please make sure to RSVP early, date will be confirmed and will be in our news blast.

Princess Cruises Goes Country with New Music Partnership

Princess Cruises, in partnership with the Academy of Country Music (ACM), is bringing country music to the high seas with the ACM Live from the Red Barrel Lounge concert series. On Caribbean voyages departing Galveston, Texas, between Feb. 9 and March 17, guests aboard Regal Princess will enjoy live performances from some of country music's most exciting emerging artists, including chart-topping singer and ACM Award nominee Kameron Marlowe, reigning ACM New Vocal Duo or Group of the Year Tigirlily Gold, and America's Got Talent breakout stars Chapel Hart, along with other rising acts across several cruises sailing out of Galveston in early 2025 voyages. (Pictured above: Maddie & Tae being interviewed live from the Princess Stage at the 59th ACM Awards Show.)

As part of the series, six ascending country music acts will perform two, 45-minute concerts in the Princess Theater and interact with guests during Meet & Greet sessions.