

If you want to experience the fun and excitement of Mardi Gras in New Orleans, you'd better be making plans to be there now. The event this year blasts off on Fat Tuesday, February 24, and promises to be the very best in the two-century history of masks, music and mayhem of the always wild event.



New Orleans, created in 1718 by French settlers, is famed for its rich Creole culture, the birthplace of pure jazz, eclectic architecture, celebrations and some of the best Southern cooking in the land. As it is just about every night, Mardi Gras in the French Quarter will be as free and wild as revelers will find anywhere, seniors certainly included.

Although New Orleans hotel prices and dinners in plush restaurants will be high, all Mardi Gras events, including, music, costumed marchers, street concerts and parades, are all free. Also, the rumor that you must bare a part of your body to get free strings of beads shouldn't apply to seniors. But be prepared and don't be surprised if it does. The idea is to join in on all the fun your age and health can handle, and then worry about recovering from it the next day.

Once you've experienced Mardi Gras in the Big Easy, you'll want to return, to next year's celebration, or maybe before that just for a more quiet vacation. The jazz, night life, fantastic food and wrought-iron architecture will always lure you back to one of America's most welcoming cities.