

Parade

5 Lively Mardi Gras Celebrations Outside of New Orleans

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By **M.B. ROBERTS**



► *In Red River, New Mexico, revelers stuff their worries into and burn a Wild Loup-Garou, a fictional character that serves as a mascot for Mardi Gras in the Mountains. (Sherry Phillips)*

When it comes to Mardi Gras, the extravagant, decadent and over-the-top celebration in the French Quarter of New Orleans most likely comes to mind. But Fat Tuesday, the last hurrah before the start of Lent, isn't just celebrated in The Big Easy. Plenty of other towns hold their own homegrown celebrations of the grandest variety. Here are a few of our favorites.

Mobile, Alabama

The coastal town of **Mobile**, only 144 miles east of New Orleans, is home to the oldest annual Carnival celebration in the U.S., which was started by Frenchman Nicholas Langlois in 1703. Residents, who skip school and work to turn out in droves for parades and other festivities, say this is the real Mardi Gras celebration.

Biloxi, Mississippi

Biloxi, which debuted its first Mardi Gras parade in 1908, today hosts more than 20 parades cheered on by half a million revelers. In 2011, the Long Beach Carnival Association came onboard with Biloxi's first evening parade.

Orlando, Florida

At **Florida's Universal Studios**, Mardi Gras is a spectacular combination of concerts, delectable food and a grand parade where some 1.7 million beads are thrown from stunningly decorated floats.

Galveston, Texas

The Mystic Krewe of Aquarius, Krewe Gambrinus and Knights of Momus Grand Night Parade are the featured attractions when the island city of **Galveston**, which is home to plenty of balconies for revelers to gather and watch, comes to life for Fat Tuesday.

Red River, New Mexico

Visit **Mardi Gras in the Mountains** and you'll know that Louisiana doesn't have a lock on Fat Tuesday. This quaint community packs costume balls, Cajun cook-offs, crawfish boils, a gator race and of course a parade down Main Street into its annual extravaganza.