Every year, it’s the biggest, wildest free party in the country! Those folks in New Orleans know how to throw a celebration, and Fantasy makes it safe and easy for our Rally goers to have the times of their lives.

There are two phrases which you hear often during Mardi Gras – “Throw me something, Mister!” and “Laissez les bons temps rouler!”, which means “Let the Good Times Roll!” in French. And they certainly do.

Louisianans love a party, and often local social groups join together to form a krewe. These krewes put on parades, carnivals, parties and balls to celebrate Mardi Gras, just before the beginning of Lent. They generally consist of people with similar interests and hold their own events during the year, and some sponsor local service projects. But the fun really begins every February, when with Lent approaching, certain krewes decorate their own floats and organize their own parades. The riders on the floats throw trinkets and small gifts to the crowds, particularly gaily colored beads in traditional Mardi Gras colors – green, purple and yellow. And collecting those beads quickly becomes an obsession with Fantasy’s Mardi Gras guests!

Our party begins with a Masquerade Party, complete with a live jazz band, open bar and costume parade. The next day we head out for a guided city tour of New Orleans, including Lake Pontchartrain, the exclusive Garden District and Audubon Park, culminating with a jazz brunch at the famed Court of Two Sisters. After a brief rest, we head out to our reserved grandstand seats at the first two of our seven Mardi Gras parades.

After a traditional New Orleans breakfast the following morning, we venture out on a walking tour of New Orleans’ most popular spot – the fascinating French Quarter. In the evening, we’re back for the parades – three this time! We soak up more of New Orleans’ unique culture the following morning with coffee and beignets at Café du Monde and a cruise aboard the Natchez, a riverboat paddle wheeler. The evening is special, and definitely a highlight of the Rally. By special invitation, we are guests at the Carnival Krewe’s Bel Masque Tableau, which includes the presentation of their Royal Court, a formal dinner, cocktails and dancing.

The next morning we’re off again for a tour of Blaine Kern’s Mardi Gras World, the world’s largest float builder. We visit Hurricane Katrina exhibits at Presbytere Museum, and that evening go to the ultimate Mardi Gras parade of them all, sponsored by the Krewe of Endymion. Sunday we visit the National World War II Museum, which includes many displays representing the invasion of Normandy, the Allied strategy of island hopping, and the culminating attacks on Hiroshima. That evening, we’re back in our grandstand seats to view the famous Krewe of Bacchus parade. Another Rally highlight occurs the next day – as we experience a private tour of the Den of the Krewe of Thoth, where we can view up close and actually touch their floats...even climb on them if we want to!

All this partying has undoubtedly brought on our appetites, and we’re prime to try some jambalaya, etouffe, and gumbo. To learn more about Louisiana’s delicious dishes, we head to the New Orleans School of Cooking for an entertaining demonstration followed by lunch. The good times continue back at the Rally site with our Fantasy Cajun night, where we feast on Cajun food and drink, and enjoy music and dance instruction.

Fat Tuesday -- the last day of partying prior to Lent -- looms, and we’re off to our reserved seats right on St. Charles Avenue for a full day of parades, including the Krewes of Zulu, Rex, Elks and Orleansians, the Crescent City Truck Floats and Pete Fountain’s “Half Fast Walking Club”.

Fantasy’s Mardi Gras Celebration Rally has been operating for more than 25 years, mostly due to the efforts of Wagonmaster Greg Bruce, a New Orleans native who definitely knows the ins and outs of his home city. Greg knows people – and also where to eat, the best seats at the parades, where to go and how to get there. Our full service campground boasts 50 amp electric hookups and dump facilities. We use school buses for transportation as it’s easier to maneuver them amongst the crowds and tight places in New Orleans, but no bus ride should be longer than 30 minutes.

Mardi Gras season will be upon us before we know it, and Fantasy’s 2017 Rally takes place February 21 through March 1. It’s nine days of fun and just letting those good times roll...Mardi Pardi on!