



The bells of St. Louis Cathedral on Jackson Square mark the start of the New Orleans 43rd Annual Spring Fiesta in April. It's a great opportunity for visitors to see inside the gracious homes of old New Orleans.

New Orleans at its best in the early springtime

By AILEEN ADAMS
NEW ORLEANS, La. — New Orleans is like a glamorous woman. Her suitor is the Mississippi and she rests within the curve of the river's arm. The city, too, is at her enchanting best in early spring.

New Orleans takes its pleasure in many measures. After the madness of Mardi Gras and the rejoicing of Easter, there is yet another festival in New Orleans — the Spring Fiesta.

Although the Spring Fiesta is on a quieter, more leisurely and more intimate scale, it, like the Mardi Gras, has its moments of high festivity.

This year the New Orleans 43rd Annual Spring Fiesta will take place from April 20 to May 8.

On Friday, April 20, when the bells of St. Louis Cathedral announce the hour of seven, a picturesque pageant begins.

Jackson Square, always the centre of activity in the French Quarter, will be alive with lights. On either side of the square are the twin buildings built by Michaela de Pontalba, the daughter of the richest man of the Spanish colonial period.

These were literally the first luxury apartments to be built in America. On their gaily decorated balconies singers will be adding to the gaiety of the evening and in the square below New Orleans beauties in swaying antebellum gowns will promenade with their gallant escorts.

Soon the Queen of Fiesta will be crowned, followed by a presentation of the court and then the parade begins. The sidewalks of the



TRAVEL

Vieux Carre, all four blocks long and six blocks wide, will be filled with people, while jazz bands play on the corners.

Floats decorated with more Southern belles will ramble through the streets followed by horse-drawn carriages, barouches, antique autos, marching bands and strutting flambeaux carriers making flickering patterns on the lace-like wrought-iron balconies with their torches.

This is just the beginning and it is all open to the public.

Before you go back to your hotel or motel it would be pleasant to sample the beignets — the French doughnuts that don't have holes and are square — and a cafe-au-lait that is half coffee and half chicory laced with hot milk.

Or, if the night is balmy, stop at the ice cream parlor just off Jackson Square and close to Pirate's Alley for just about the best ice cream you'll ever taste.

On Saturday, April 21, the New Orleans Spring Fiesta tour really begins.

There are four different daytime tours of Vieux Carre homes. A guide will escort small groups to the 18th century homes throughout the French Quarter, tell you of their history, their fame or infamy and let you visit inside their doors.

This year the first three tours will visit homes on

April 21, 24 and 26. Each tour will be repeated consecutively on April 28, May 1 and May 3. On May 5 there will be an additional, fourth tour.

These daytime tours last from 1 to 4.30 p.m. so take sturdy walking shoes. Each different tour costs \$8 per person. Also on May 6, and once only, there will be an afternoon Courtyard tour at \$6 per person.

There are also night tours of the French Quarter. With these you walk along the legend-laden streets and through wrought-iron gates into cloistered, secluded gardens lit by candlelight and heavy with the scent of magnolia, azalea, hibiscus, oleander and bouganvillea blooms.

These tours open gates that tourists ordinarily would not be able to pass through. So many courtyards and patios have been opened to the non-profit Spring Fiesta Association that there are now two different tours.

Courtyards by Candlelight is held on the evenings of April 21, 23, 25 and 27, and repeated April 28, 30, May 2 and 4. Each tour costs \$6 per person.

Chandeliers on April 22, May 5 and 6, at \$8 per person. Across Canal Street, where the French Quarter ends and almost a century later, after the Louisiana Purchase, rich American newcomers built enormous mansions after the style of southern plantation homes, is the Garden District. Here, gardens and homes will be open to visitors.

The first Garden District tour will be held

April 23; the second (a different tour), will be on April 27. Both will be repeated consecutively on April 30 and May 4.

The second group of tours called Old Southern Homes will be held on April 25 and May 7. The April 25 tour will be

repeated on May 2. Garden District tours last from 1 to 4.30 p.m. and cost \$8 per person. Transportation is by bus at \$4.50 per person. Temperatures in New Orleans at fiesta time range from 20 to 25 Celsius (69 to 76 F.).

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bring back cigarettes and a bottle, but the Canada Customs men are watching for those who might abuse this verbal declaration. Frequent travellers might find themselves subject to scrutiny if the officer is suspicious — or happened to clear them through with a \$50 verbal declaration a month before.
However, said our informant, when you go away and declare your full \$150 annual allowance, you're wiser to mail your gifts than carry them with you. You can send as many parcels up to a \$15 value as you wish, but if they come with your luggage you are subject to duty if they go over the allowance.
Suntours plans to run \$99 charter flights between Winnipeg and Toronto this winter, starting Feb. 5 from Toronto. The regular fare return economy fare is \$214, plus \$8 tax.
Diplomat Hotel in Tel Aviv, Israel, is offering a two-for-the-price-of-one sales program for the winter season.
A five-star hotel on the Mediterranean shore, the Diplomat's price is \$37.50 (U.S.), plus 15 per cent service charge, including brunch style breakfast.

TRAVELCHAT
By Anne Wanstall
Travel Editor

Someone "up there" is reading Travelchat! A gentleman from Canada Customs called to put us straight about duty-free allowances for travellers — and to tell us about a loophole that all vacationers can appreciate.
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