



LA MARTINIQUE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Géraldine Rome
Martinique Promotion Bureau
T: 212-838-6887
E: geraldine.rome@atout-france.fr

Steve Bennett
SBPR Corp.
T: 305-213-8074
E: Steve@SBPRcorp.com



Photo Credit: Henri Salomon

MARTINIQUE CELEBRATES CARNIVAL 2017

Vibrant festival season extending more than a month culminates February 26–March 1

NEW YORK, NY (January 6, 2017) – Excitement is building for Carnival Season in Martinique, the annual month-long celebration that culminates with a wild series of colorful street parades, parties, concerts and more February 26–March 1, 2017.

“The February 26 to March 1st period marks the apex of our Carnival, but the fun actually starts weeks before,” said Muriel Wiltord, Director Americas for the Martinique Promotion Bureau. “Beginning now, in early-January, Carnival queens parades and competitions are held each weekend in towns throughout the island. The *fête* is infused week after week with a merry madness in the bigger towns and cities, especially Fort-de-France.”

Carnival celebrations reach a fever-pitch beginning on *Dimanche Gras* or **Fat Sunday** as Martinique becomes awirl with daytime parades of costumed marchers strumming strings and strutting to a Carnival beat. Puppets, called *bwa bwa*, festooned in fantastic dress, are carried about, while *nègres-gros-sirop* – revelers whose bodies are covered with coal tar and sugarcane syrup – break through the crowds playfully frightening children.

The spectacle grows on Carnival Monday. This is the day for Martinican burlesque; Mock Weddings with men garbed as pregnant brides or floozies, and women done up as reluctant bridegrooms.

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Shrove Tuesday is **Red Devils Day**, highlighted by glorious parades, with all eyes on armies of tots in brilliant red-devil costumes carrying homemade tridents. A mask of animal skin and horns is worn with a red cloth jumpsuit adorned with hundreds of glittering mirrors and small bells that jingle when in motion. The **Red Devils** dance until sundown when their elders take over in a celebration that may seem like Carnival's climax. This is just a preview of more to come, though.

For the rest of the Christian world, **Ash Wednesday**, the first day of Lent, is a time to pray. But in Martinique, it's a time to play. And play they do. Local rums, reputedly among the world's best, flow like water. Emotions run high and hot. It is the **Day of the She-Devils** (*La Fête des Diablesses*), when some 30,000 revelers gather to mourn the end of Carnival and the symbolic death of Vaval, King Carnival. Only two colors are worn: black and white. For revelers not in mourning attire, any kind of crazy get-up is okay, so long as it's black-and-white.

Visitors to Martinique during Carnival Season can safely join parades, or watch from bleachers set up on sidewalks lining the parade routes, or from hotel balconies overlooking the streets and squares.

For more information on travel to Martinique, please visit www.us.martinique.org.

About Martinique (www.us.martinique.org)

The Caribbean Island with French Flair, The Isle of Flowers, The Rum Capital of the World, The Isle of the Famed Poet (Aimé Césaire) – Martinique ranks among the most alluring and enchanting destinations in the world. As an overseas region of France, Martinique boasts modern and reliable infrastructure – roads, water and power utilities, hospitals, and telecommunications services all on par with any other part of the European Union. At the same time, Martinique's beautifully unspoiled beaches, volcanic peaks, rainforests, 80+ miles of hiking trails, waterfalls, streams, and other natural wonders are the equal of neighboring Dominica to the north and St. Lucia to the south, so visitors here truly get the best of both worlds. The currency is the Euro, the flag is Le Tricolour, and the official language is French, but Martinique's character, cuisine, musical heritage, art, culture, common language, and identity are of a distinctly Afro-Caribbean inclination known as Creole. It is this special combination of modern world conveniences, pristine nature, and rich heritage that has earned for Martinique several notable distinctions in recent years, including being ranked in the Top 16 Places to go in 2016 by Condé Nast Traveler, named as a "Must-Visit" destination for 2015 by *Caribbean Journal*, "Best Caribbean Destination" by *About.com*, and "Top Caribbean Island for Delectable Dining" by *Caribbean Travel + Life*. The Bay of Fort-de-France, which fronts Martinique's charming capital city, was also inducted into *The Club of The Most Beautiful Bays in the World*. Martinique's storied history further stirs travel passions. Napoleon's bride, Empress Josephine, was born and raised in Martinique, while the majestic Mt. Pelée volcano and St. Pierre, *The Pompeii of the Caribbean*, are found here.

A special place, to be sure, with so much to offer – *Martinique c'est magnifique!*

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