New Mardi Gras Survey Data Illustrates Impact of Carnival Season in Shreveport-Bossier

Survey finds that the estimated economic impact of Mardi Gras parades was more than $21 million in 2019, a 25% increase compared to 2016 survey data.

Recently, the Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau received the preliminary results of a new survey of Mardi Gras parade attendees conducted during the 2019 Carnival season in Shreveport-Bossier. The study, which was prepared by Wysong Brand Solutions, LLC, is based on data gathered during more than 600 interviews along the routes of five parades: Krewe of Sobek, Krewe of Harambee, Krewe of Centaur, Krewe of Gemini, and Krewe of Highland.

The study found that the estimated combined total attendance of the five parades was 244,500, with 36% of those attendees visiting from outside of Caddo and Bossier Parishes. The estimated economic impact of these five parades on Shreveport-Bossier, including direct and indirect spending, was found to be more than $21 million. This figure represents a 25% increase over 2016 survey data, which estimated total spending at $16 million.

The parades with the largest estimated attendance figures were the Krewe of Gemini, with 127,000, and the Krewe of Centaur, with 91,000. Inclement weather preceding and during the parades was thought to have negatively impacted Sobek, Centaur and Highland parades.

The parade with the highest percentage of out-of-town visitors was the Krewe of Centaur Parade, where 59% of individuals surveyed reported living outside of Caddo or Bossier Parishes. Overall, the percentage of parade attendees who reported living outside of Caddo or Bossier Parish grew by 7%. In 2016, 29% of parade attendees reported being visitors. In 2019, that overall percentage increased to 36%.

To learn more about Mardi Gras in Shreveport-Bossier, visit www.ShreveportMardiGras.com.
Suzanne Card, convention sales manager, Jessica Rodgers, convention sales manager, and Tracy Young, sales manager at Hilton Hotel Shreveport, went on sales calls in Baton Rouge, July 16-17. The group visited 20 associations to thank them for their business and to welcome them back to the Shreveport-Bossier area.

Brandy Evans, vice president of communications, graduated from the rigorous Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME) program, July 26, at Destinations International in St. Louis, Mo., July 22-25. She completed the program in a year and took courses that focused on destination advocacy, leadership, marketing, and other tourism-related programs.

Stacy Brown, president, also attended the conference. The convention offers attendees the opportunity to connect with tourism thought leaders and educational seminars.

Card booked the 2019 Bumper to Bumper Auto Parts Specialists’ Equipment Fair to be held at the Shreveport Convention Center, Sept. 17-19. The event will attract approximately 100 attendees. The group is also considering Shreveport-Bossier for their 2022 company meeting which would draw approximately 500 attendees.

In addition, Card booked the Louisiana Society of Association Executives’ 2020 annual convention to be held at the Shreveport Convention Center, Sept. 20-22. The event will attract approximately 60 Louisiana-based association meeting planners to Shreveport-Bossier.

Kevin Flowers, convention sales manager, conducted a site visit, July 19-20, with the reunion planner for the USS Bairoko Association. The group is considering Shreveport-Bossier as the host destination for its military reunion in fall 2020.

Charlotte Rice, executive assistant to the president and Boom or Bust Byway coordinator, attended the International Association of Administrative Professionals Summit in National Harbor, Md., July 18-21. The annual event offers key tools, resources and professional development for executive assistants.

Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau staff attended the Lt. Governor’s Travel Summit in Baton Rouge, Aug. 27-29. The annual convention featured a keynote address from the Lt. Governor, top educational speakers from around the country, workshops addressing the latest industry trends, opportunities to network with other tourism professionals, and more. Stacy Brown, Brandy Evans, and Aly Velasquez, marketing associate, attended a meeting with Brand USA to discuss international marketing cooperative opportunities. Evans also served as a thought leader in the Thought Leaders in Communications and PR Workshop. The Holiday Trail of Lights sponsored the Travel Counselors room and Velasquez addressed the group on behalf of the board.

Chris Jay, public relations and social media manager, attended Travel Media Showcase in Atlanta, Ga., Aug. 20-23. He had appointments with more than 40 travel writers from outlets including AAA Home & Away, Roads & Kingdoms, Fodor’s, and more. This travel media show typically results in an increased number of applicants to participate in upcoming media familiarization tours of Shreveport-Bossier.
City of Shreveport and Shreveport Green Organize Citywide Cleanup Day

The City of Shreveport, in partnership with Shreveport Green, hosted a citywide cleanup on Aug. 24. This project supports Mayor Adrian Perkins' #loveshreveport campaign.

“If we love the city we call home, then we should keep it clean,” said Mayor Perkins. “This cleanup day will be the first of many where we come together as a community to clean up our city.”

Homeowners, businesses, schools, and organizations took part in the day to clean and beautify the area in which they live, work, and play. City departments also collected bulk items and collected trash.

“The Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau is proud to support Mayor Perkins’ Citywide cleanup initiative,” said Stacy Brown, president of the Tourist Bureau. “Eradicating litter and beautifying Shreveport-Bossier is an important part of making our destination appealing to visitors.” Approximately 850 volunteers from local organizations participated in the cleanup including Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau, Caddo Parish Public Schools, Shreveport Memorial Library, and more.

“We are thrilled that Mayor Perkins realizes the importance of a clean city and is taking the lead in making this a reality,” said Donna Curtis, executive director of Shreveport Green. “Our citizens have always responded overwhelmingly to volunteer projects, and we are proud to be a part of this exciting effort.”

To learn more about the Shreveport Citywide Cleanup, visit www.shreveportgreen.org.

Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau Announces New Convention Sales Manager

“We are thrilled to have Jessica join our team. Her knowledge of the Shreveport Convention Center and local market gives her the ability to jump in and add even more value to the meeting and event planning industry,” said David Bradley, vice president of sales and services for the Tourist Bureau.

Rodgers brings nine years of sales experience to her role. She previously worked as the sales manager for Shreveport Convention Center. There, she booked conventions, weddings, meetings, and other events such as Jurassic Quest, a dinosaur exhibition for children that drew approximately 10,000 attendees in 2018.

For more information about conventions and meetings, visit www.shreveport-bossier.org/meetings.

Sports Biz Connect Expands to Sports BIZ Challenge

The Shreveport-Bossier Sports BIZ Challenge will be held at Louisiana State University Shreveport on Oct. 17. The annual event serves as a networking opportunity for the sports tourism industry. This year, the event has expanded to include a series of sports competitions. Registered teams can participate in several sporting competitions such as basketball and disc golf.

“The Shreveport-Bossier Sports Commission is proud to expand this event and partner with the Shreveport Chamber of Commerce, Bossier Chamber of Commerce, Shreveport-Bossier African American Chamber of Commerce, and our sports organization partners,” said Nicholas Kopka, logistics manager for the Sports Commission. “Our goal is to provide an opportunity for the local sports industry to network and to facilitate team building in a fun new way.”

Registration for teams of five people is $150 and is due by Sept. 26. To register a team and to learn more, visit www.sportsbizchallenge.com.
Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser selected Liz Swaine, executive director of Downtown Development Authority, and Jada Durden, social media blogger of www.LovingThisLifeJada.com, to receive Bayou Krewe Ambassadors awards at the Lt. Governor’s Tourism Summit, Aug. 29. Launched in 2017, the program identifies and empowers passionate people to become brand ambassadors.

The Louisiana Office of Tourism’s Music Ambassadors program awards $1,000 to bands that play at a qualifying event. To register, visit www.louisianatravel.com/music/articles/louisiana-music-ambassadors.

Sponsorship opportunities are now available for Red River Mardi Gras Bash during the Krewe of Centaur Parade, Feb. 15, hosted by the Tourist Bureau. The party, an American Bus Association Top 100 Event, is an exclusive party for out-of-town groups from throughout the southern region to enjoy one of the largest Mardi Gras parades in Louisiana. There are several sponsorship opportunities for local attractions to get involved in the event from entertainment and tent banner to t-shirt and golf cart sponsorship. For more information, contact Erica Telsee, tourism sales manager for the Tourist Bureau, at etelsee@sbcbt.org or call 1-800-551-8682 ext. 104.