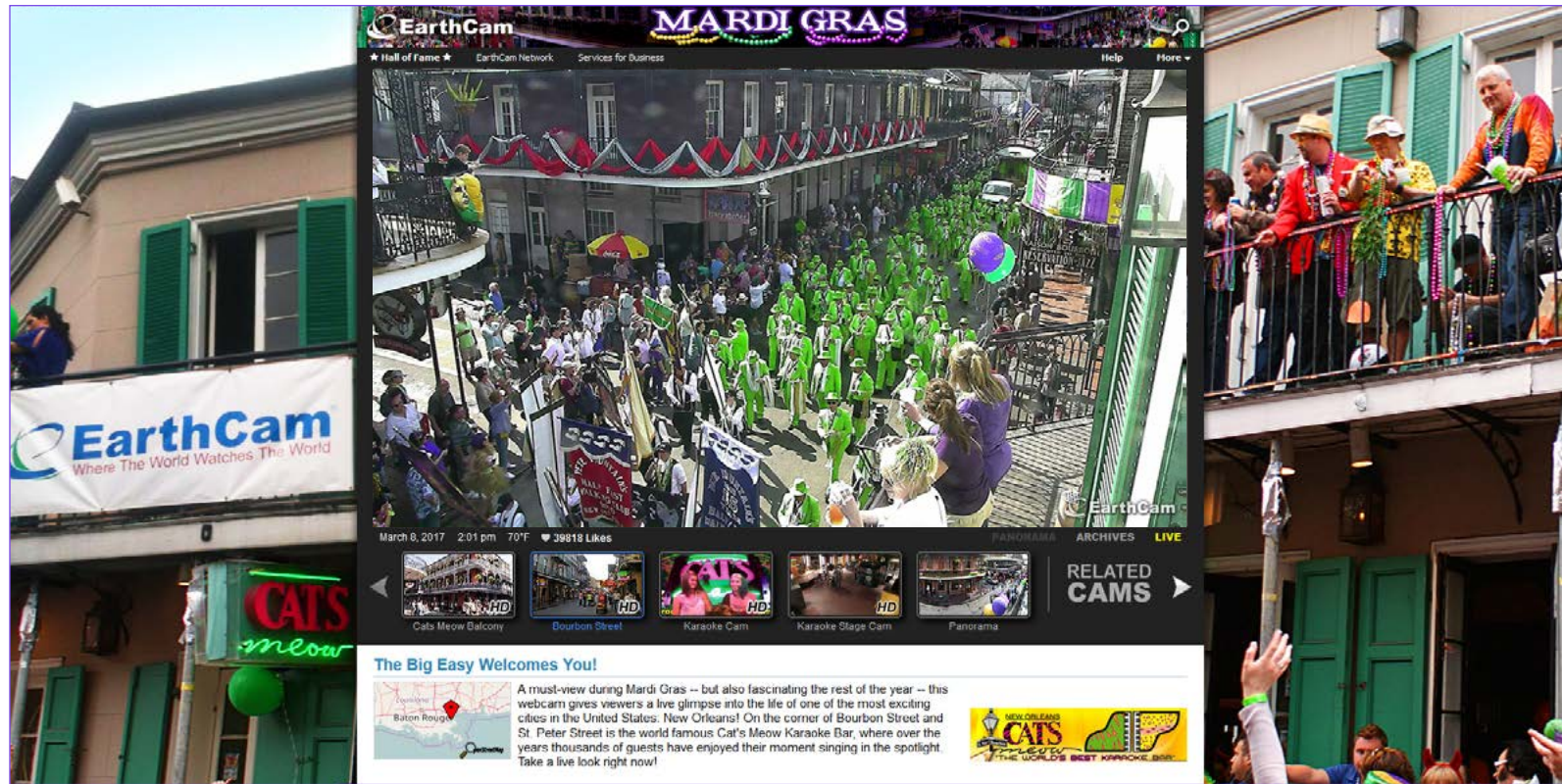


## Thousands throng to New Orleans for Fat Tuesday celebrations

By REBECCA SANTANA and JANET MCCONNAUGHEY, Associated Press

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NEW ORLEANS (AP) -- The Latest on Mardi Gras celebrations that end with Fat Tuesday, the culmination of the Carnival season (all times local):

### 8 a.m.

The 30 or so people taking the 7 a.m. Tuesday ferry to Canal Street includes a couple of groups in tutus and a half-dozen pirates.

Craig Channell says, "this is the one time of year people can act like fools and get away with it."

Channell, his wife, Darlene Channell, and friend Dian Walsh are visiting from Tampa. Host Bill Tucker is pulling a wagon holding a big cooler and four roll-up chairs.

Tucker says the cooler holds water and soft drinks. All agree that it's too early for drinking anything stronger.

With three of the four wearing tutus, Tucker is accessorized with a wide studded leather belt. Craig Channell's costume consists of a jester's hat. He jokes that his tutu is in the wash.

They went to the glitzy Endymion parade Saturday. Channell says Tampa's Gasparilla parade cannot compare.

### 7:45 a.m.

The port city of Mobile, Alabama, is transforming itself into one big parade route for the climax of Mardi Gras season, Fat Tuesday.

Government offices and many businesses will be closed as parades roll almost continuously through the city starting Tuesday morning.

The weather is supposed to be good, and tens of thousands of people are expected to line parade routes trying to catch colorful beads, Moon Pies and Mardi Gras trinkets.

Alabama parades also are planned in Gulf Shores and Orange Beach on the Baldwin County side of Mobile Bay.

New Orleans gets most of the crowds and attention around Mardi Gras, but Mobile bills itself as having the nation's oldest Mardi Gras celebration.

The Christian season of Lent leading up to Easter begins Wednesday.

### 2:35 a.m.



Thousands of people are expected to throng the streets for Mardi Gras celebrations in New Orleans.

Fat Tuesday is the culmination of the city and region's Carnival season.

Some of the biggest parades will take place along the St. Charles Avenue parade route.

Families, tourists and locals generally set up their chairs and ladders early to get a good seat for catching the trinkets thrown by riders on the floats.

In another part of the city, people dressed in elaborate costumes will take part in the St. Anne's parade, an eclectic walking parade.

At the stroke of midnight, police on horseback will do a ceremonial clearing of revelers on Bourbon Street to mark the formal end of the Mardi Gras season before Lent begins Wednesday.  
A true New Orleans celebration

The streets of New Orleans will be filled all day Tuesday with costumed revelers, dazzling floats featuring kings and queens, and people of all ages screaming for trinkets and beads. Lots of beads.

### [EarthCam: Mardi Gras](#)

Tuesday marks the culmination of the Carnival season, which started Jan. 6.

The biggest parades take place along the St. Charles Avenue parade route, where the Krewe of Zulu kicks off the morning's parades and is followed by the Krewe of Rex.

Families, tourists and locals set up their chairs and ladders early to get a good seat for catching the trinkets thrown by riders on the floats. The hand-crafted coconuts handed out by members of Zulu are particularly sought-after.

In another part of the city, people dressed in elaborate costumes take part in the St. Anne's parade - an eclectic walking parade that starts in the Bywater and Marigny neighborhoods and ends in the French Quarter.

Members of various Mardi Gras Indian tribes - they're African-American rather than Native American - will also be out on the streets in hand-sewn, beaded and feathered outfits that they have been working on for months.

At the stroke of midnight, police on horseback do a ceremonial clearing of revelers on Bourbon Street to mark the formal end of the Carnival season before Lent begins Wednesday. The word "carnival" comes from the Latin words meaning "farewell to flesh," and was originally a time to revel and to use up all the fat and meat in the larder before the austerities of Lent.

This year's Mardi Gras season was marred by a suspected drunken-driving incident that sent more than 20 people watching a parade to the hospital Saturday night. No one was killed.

Police say a drunken driver whose blood-alcohol level was nearly three times the legal limit plowed into a crowd of people watching the Krewe of Endymion parade in the Mid-City neighborhood. The driver, identified as 25-year-old Nelson Rizzuto, was arrested and is being held on \$125,000 bond.