

Celebratory Travel

Written by Connie Valimont

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Recently London began a countdown to next year's Olympics to be held in and near that city. Here's that and a few more of the "tapas" of celebrations for 2012.

Carnaval in South America (18-21 February, 2012)

The Party Never Stops: *Carnaval* in Brazil is an all-around unforgettable experience and is celebrated all over the country. The dates change each year; it is celebrated 7 Sundays before Easter Sunday.

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The celebration lasts 4 days, commencing the Saturday prior to Fat Tuesday with the crowning of the Fat King (King Momo, the Greek god of mockery). *Carnaval* came to South America from Europe as celebrations before the beginning of the forty-day Lenten season of fasting and prayer.

The word *carnival* is thought to come from the Italian *carne vale* or farewell to meat which was not eaten during Lent. These late winter celebrations in Europe gave root to the high-summer frenzy of *carnaval* in South America. Dates change every year, but it's always a noisy, energetic celebration of music and dance and exhibitions. The four days and nights of *carnaval* in Rio de Janeiro are the lavish, exotic, anything-goes exhibitionist spectacle the world sees. They are the result of planning, organizing, practicing and fantasies and the favorite holiday celebration in Rio in the heat of the February summer but not the only place in Brazil to find such antics. Salvador's *carnaval* is considered Brazil's second largest. The third largest, in Recife & Olinda, is said to be "the most beautiful, spontaneous and diverse of all the Carnivals in Brazil." Other South American countries with *carnaval* celebrations include Colombia, Venezuela, Uruguay, Argentina & Bolivia, so put on your costume and samba yourself silly at *Carnaval* in February in South America!

Kentucky and the Derby (4-5 May 2012)

The Run for the Roses: Often referred to as “the fastest two minutes in sports,” and the first leg of the Triple Crown, this huge springtime sports party features the rose as its official flower; the official song, “My Old Kentucky Home”; thoroughbred 3-year-old horses; and –of course—Mint Juleps (specifically made with Early Times Kentucky Whiskey, nearly 120,000 of these drinks are served at the two-day event of the Derby and the Kentucky Oaks, Derby’s “little sister”). And, much like the recent Royal Wedding, hats are a tradition here – and some are great exaggerations of that tradition. Although the contenders have yet to be decided, many are already watching the 2-year-old field but with names like Algorithm, Stat & Sum of the Parts, it sounds more like math class to me! Tickets & event packages are already available for next May’s event (there’s even a local group from Beaufort planning to attend!). And, there’s much to do beyond bluegrass, horses & bourbon. Kentucky prides itself on its natural adventures. There’s hundreds of hiking trails & camping sites; the longest cave system in the world; and (little known) the largest free-ranging elk herd east of Montana. There’s a 19-course Kentucky State Parks Golf Trail for you golfers. For you less outdoorsy types, there’s history & heritage; wineries & breweries; music & arts; shopping & dining. There are quaint downtown squares across the state that feature everything from antiques to galleries to artisan studios. Go for the Derby & stay to see Kentucky.

2012 Olympics in London (27Jul-12Aug)

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