



BOB STRONG/AFP/Getty Images

Carnival Time in Trinidad and Tobago!

By GENEVIEVE LONG

Place like the islands of Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean have something for everyone year-round. Sunny beaches, lively and friendly people, fascinating history, unique local music and cultural attractions, and even eco-tourism. But even for people who hail from Trinidad and Tobago who have emigrated to other regions, there is one time of year that is best to go home for a visit—Carnival.

The islands truly come to life during Carnival—a once a year festival that is the last hurrah before the spare season of Lent. This year it falls on Feb. 7 and 8. While Lent is a time of fasting, repentance and reflection, Carnival is the total opposite.

In Latin, Carne Vale or “farewell to the flesh” used to literally be when

the extremes of human behavior were put on the display in the streets. And though the festival is celebrated from New Orleans to Rio and many places in between, Trinidad and Tobago is one of the most popular spots for returning locals and throngs of tourists to celebrate.

As an unofficial public holiday, you’ll find the streets filled with people celebrating in wild, flamboyant costumes—mostly the younger generations and almost no families.

Back in the early days, Carnival came to the islands around the 1780’s by way of French settlers. According to the official tourism website of Trinidad and Tobago (www.visittrn.com), some of the traditional Carnival characters like Dame Lorraine, Jab Jab (a devil-like creation that would threaten you jovially with horns and three-pronged fork), Pierrot Grenade

(like a Greek chorus, commenting on topical issues in rhyme) and Midnight Robber came about in the old days. But even today, they are still popular portrayals. It was a wild festival of the common people that the upper classes kept a safe distance from.

So what will a visitor to Trinidad and Tobago find when they join Carnival this year?

J’ouvert, (from the French Jour Ouvert which literally means “Open Day”), kicks things off with a bang. But make sure you get some rest before the real party begins, because it will be two days of non-stop fun.

There is always a soundtrack to go along with the vibrant season of Carnival. The wide variety of music will invite you to dance in the streets—there’s everything from traditional calypso to soca to “ex-tempo” (music made up on the spur of the moment).

As for actually participating in the street festivities or “playing mas”, you can book a costume in any one of a number of bands. There are the pared-down bands like Burroquets where the objective is to have fun, not look pretty. The “party” bands like Young Harts, Poison, Barbarossa and Legends attract both the fun-lovers and the hard bodies. There are also “play yuh mas” bands that focus on the art of costume-making, such as Kallicharan’s and Wayne Berekley, and bands like Minshall and his Calaloo Company.

Carnival is a time when theatrics, fun and the vibrant energy of the people of Trinidad and Tobago combine to make a unique experience. And best of all, there is still time to book your ticket for one of the most entertaining shows on earth!

Noubia Jordan, 3, dancing on the streets of Brooklyn, New York dressed up in a golden, feathered costume from Trinidad as part of the West Indian-American Day Carnival Parade in September 2002. Thousands of immigrants from Trinidad and Tobago return to the islands every year for the festival.

Trinidad and Tobago Online:
www.visittrn.com

Travel Tips:

- Passport must be valid for 3 months longer than you intend to stay in the country
- You must have tickets and documents for return or onward travel
- No Visa is required for US Citizens or European Union residents to stay up to 3 months

Accommodations:

Bed & Breakfast
Old Grange Inn
Phone: (868) 639-0275
Fax: (868) 639-9395
<http://www.trinidad.net/grangeinn/index.html>

Crowne Plaza Trinidad
Phone: (868) 625-3366
Fax: (868) 625-4677 / 625-2773
Web page: <http://www.crowneplaza.com>

General Safety Tips:

- Always lock your doors, whether you are in your hotel room, in a car or taxi.
- Never leave your valuables unattended, especially in cars or on beaches – and flaunt them in such a way as to make yourself an easy target.
- Do not travel alone at night, especially along poorly lit areas, deserted beaches or scenic lookouts.
- If you are in doubt about an area in which you are staying or travelling, ask – get advice from the hotel staff or call your embassy.
- When traveling, especially from the airport to your destination, use an accredited taxi. You can ask for details on accreditation at the information booth at the airport.
- Trust your instincts – if something doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t.
- The Emergency Number 999 will reach the Police Rapid Response Unit.

Travel Deals

Travel Deals for the Week of January 31, 2005 according to www.travelzoo.com

Hotel Deals

3-Diamond San Francisco Hotel, \$79 (to 4/15)
Radisson Miyako Hotel

\$159-B&B at SoCal Golf & Tennis Resort (Now-2/21)
La Costa Resort and Spa

San Diego-Bahia Resort Hotel-\$99/nt (Now-Feb 26)
Orbitz

LA’s Portofino Hotel & Yacht Club-\$129 (Now-2/26)
Orbitz

RIU Orlando from \$51/nt (Now-Feb. 26)
Orbitz

\$49 Radisson 4* Resort 1 Mile Fr Disney (To March)
eLeisureLink.com

DISNEY’S Animal Kingdom Lodge-\$209/nt. (Feb/May)
All Seasons Travel

Sports and Active Vacations

\$469 – Caribbean Golf Resort, All-inclusive w/Air
The Vacation Travel Mart

IXTAPA \$770 CLUB MED 7nt+FREE LUGGAGE & \$40 Credit
AskAboutTravel.com

Dive Adventure-Moorea RT Air-7Nts-5Dives fr. \$2339
Crown Travel

5* Telluride Ski Vacation from \$510 pp (Hotel+Air)
Orbitz

Millennium Golf Resort in Scottsdale-4*-\$128/nt
Orbitz

NFL Pro Bowl Packages from \$1085
Pleasant Holidays

CABO-4* Golf Resort & Spa-\$139/nt-All Inclusive
Orbitz

Thailand Ghost Stories Spook Phuket Tourism Office

PHUKET, Thailand (Reuters) - Tourism chiefs in tsunami-hit parts of southern Thailand are urging the media to stop writing stories about ghosts because they say it is scaring away holidaymakers.

“It’s inappropriate for media operators such as Thai television to be presenting this,” Phattanaiphong Ekwanch, president of the Phuket Tourism Business Association, was quoted as saying in Thursday’s Nation newspaper.

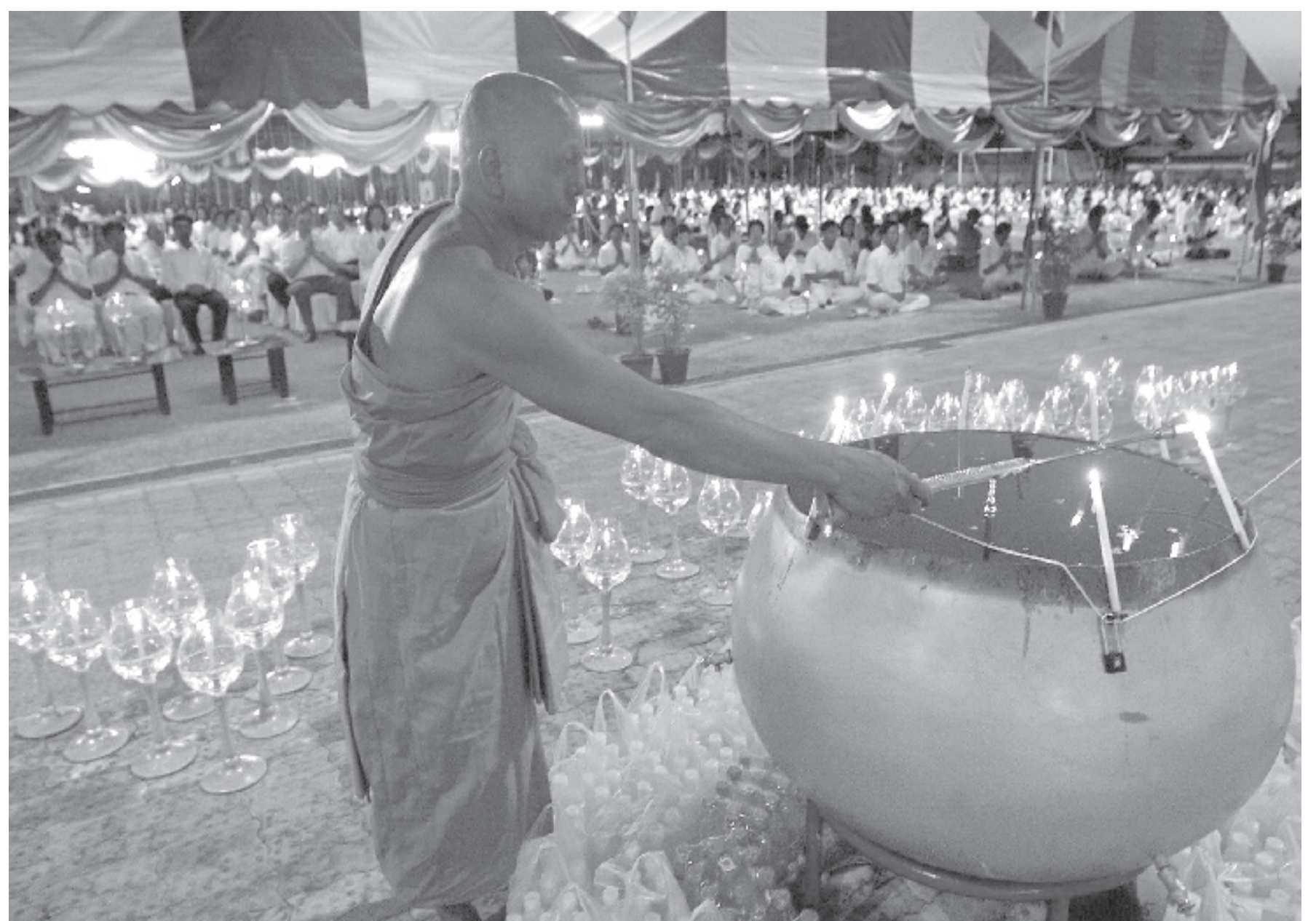
“It’s not amusing and also has a serious impact on the tourist industry, affecting Asian people in particular as many of them believe in spirits,” he said.

Domestic and foreign media have reported dozens of ghost sightings in tsunami-affected areas as deeply superstitious, Buddhist Thais come to terms with the magnitude of the Dec. 26 disaster, which killed more than 5,300 people in Thailand, many of them foreign tourists.

The encounters have ranged from backpackers heard laughing and shouting on deserted beaches to holidaymakers hailing a cab to the airport, only to disappear mysteriously along the way.

Phattanaiphong said the sightings could only be figments of the imagination because the correct religious rites had been performed to allow troubled spirits to move on to a peaceful resting place.

PHUKET, THAILAND: A Thai Buddhist monk lights a candle during prayers for tsunami victims in Phuket province southern of Thailand, 26 January 2005. Many people have reported ghost sightings after the tsunami in January.



AFP PHOTO/Pornchai KITTIVONGSAKUL

Top 10 most romantic inns in the US for 2005 named

For the 11th year in a row, iLoveInns.com and American Historic Inns have announced the Top 10 Most Romantic Inns for 2005. The prestigious award is given based on the qualities of the luxurious décor, a sense of place, hospitality and overall romantic mystique. Places named in this year’s pickings include a 500 acre wooded hideaway in Pennsylvania; a New York beach retreat in East Hampton that boasts world-class restaurants; a celebrity-magnet California winery that has attracted such famous names as Margaret Thatcher and Martha Stewart, and much more. Get more information at www.iLoveInns.com.

Delta starts non-stop flights from JFK to Tallahassee and Pensacola on Jan. 31

Now New Yorkers can fly from the Big Apple to the charming northwest corner of Florida on non-stop flights by Delta Airlines to the Sunshine State. From dune beaches to coastal dune lakes, charming villages to new urban communities, old southern towns to conservation areas and state parks, Florida has something to offer everyone. A wide variety of accommodations are available, just visit Florida’s official travel Website at www.flausa.com.