



**PORT NOLA**  
THE PORT OF NEW ORLEANS  
**PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**  
**February 24, 2017**  
**Contact: Matt Gresham**  
**(504) 528-3255**

**Port of New Orleans to Host *Celebrity*  
*Equinox* for Maiden Mardi Gras Sailing**  
*Ship is Longest Ever to Call on New Orleans; 2016 Passenger Totals  
Set Record for 6<sup>th</sup> Consecutive Year*

**New Orleans**—The longest and one of the most premium cruise ships ever to dock in New Orleans will sail into the Port’s Julia Street Cruise Terminal Sunday, Feb. 26, just in time for the finale of Mardi Gras festivities.

The *Celebrity Equinox*, a 1,041-foot cruise ship christened in 2009, will make its first visit to the Port of New Orleans, remaining in Port through Feb. 28 – Mardi Gras Day. The ship’s length is equal to 3.47 football fields.

“The Port is thrilled to welcome Celebrity Cruises back to New Orleans for an extended port call,” said Brandy Christian, Port President and CEO. “Celebrity’s brand is synonymous with luxury and we hope their guests enjoy all that New Orleans and the surrounding region have to offer.”

Celebrity Equinox holds 2,850 passengers and is the longest cruise ship to berth in New Orleans to date.

“We are excited to offer our guests the opportunity to experience the deep culture, history and fun that New Orleans has to offer,” said Lisa Lutoff-Perlo, President and CEO of Celebrity Cruises. “Mardi Gras and the amazing city of New Orleans is a big draw for our guests, and the perfect backdrop for them to create memories.”

New Orleans Mardi Gras and Jazz Fest are part of Celebrity Cruises “Signature Event Sailings” that include key global events such as The French Open in Paris, New Year’s Eve in Dubai, Carnival in Brazil, and the Pingxi Lantern Festival in Taipei among others. Each signature sailing offers a cruise plus optional unique shore excursions that highlight the world event by putting guests in the middle of the action. On board, guests are entertained, educated and engaged with unique shows, speakers and activities inspired by the itinerary’s event.

Founded in 1989, Celebrity merged with Royal Caribbean International in 1997 and currently has a fleet of 11 cruise ships in the fleet.

**-More-**



The Port's cruise industry continues to grow - up 4.5 percent overall in 2016 - continuing its record pace for the sixth consecutive year. The Port welcomed 1,070,695 cruise passengers in 2016, the third year in a row to top 1 million cruise passengers.

"New Orleans is one of the most attractive cities in the world for travelers and our cruise partners find the Port of New Orleans to be a natural and efficient homeport and port of call," Christian said. "We continue to strive to work with cruise lines to provide new and varied itineraries and a top notch experience for our guests."

New Orleans tourism officials predict a brighter future for international travelers, as Louis Armstrong International Airport launches two new direct international flights in 2017 to Germany and Great Britain.

"Choosing New Orleans as a cruise departure destination also offers the unique charm and rich offerings of most exotic ports of call. This combination continues to draw visitors from around the world. The new, direct air service on Copa, Condor and British Airways makes cruising from New Orleans that much more attractive," said Kim Priez, Senior Vice President of Tourism for the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Currently, the Port of New Orleans ranks as the sixth-largest cruise port in the United States, with direct industry expenditures in Louisiana totaling \$406 million, supporting 8,102 jobs and providing \$324 million in personal income, according to research conducted by Cruise Lines International Association. Port studies found 80 percent of cruise passengers are from out of the State of Louisiana and 60 percent spend an average of two nights in New Orleans either before or after their cruise.

"Cruising is big business for the Port and for Louisiana," said Christian, who also serves as chair of the Cruise Committee of the American Association of Port Authorities. "Due to the Port's sizeable drive-in market, passengers embarking on cruises from New Orleans visit restaurants and attractions throughout Louisiana and stay in our hotel rooms. We market cruising from New Orleans as two vacations in one, visit all that Louisiana has to offer either before or after your cruise."

To learn more about cruising from New Orleans visit: <http://www.portno.com/cruises>

*The Port of New Orleans is a deep-draft multipurpose port at the center of the world's busiest port system — Louisiana's Lower Mississippi River. Connected to major inland markets and Canada via 14,500 miles of waterways, six class-1 railroads and the interstate highway system, the Port is the ideal gateway for steel, project cargo, containers, coffee, natural rubber, chemicals, forest products, manufactured goods and cruising. An extensive network of ocean carrier services, along with added-value services like transloading of bulk into containers, make the Port of New Orleans the superior logistics solution for many types of cargo. To stay ahead of market demand, the Port has invested more than \$100 million in capital-improvement projects since 2012 and has a Master Plan to expand the Napoleon Avenue Container Terminal to an annual capacity of 1.5 million TEUs.*

**-End-**

