



Fun facts about other
Saint Patrick's Day parades

Description

Inclusive celebrations honouring the patron saint of the Irish take place worldwide

By **Byron Toben**

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The **197th Montreal Saint Patrick's Day Parade**, uninterrupted since 1824 save only during the last two years, 2000 and 2001, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resumed again, scaled-down in 2022.

Despite local claims to be the 3rd largest in the world, the Internet lists dub it as the **6th largest**.

Gone this, on-again, off-again year, were the floats and many of the usual participants. Marchers, usually 4000, were limited to 500 persons from 29 Irish and Scottish groups instead of the normal 120 groups of all sorts. Spectators lining the Ste-Catherine street route to Phillips Square braced drizzly and rainy conditions but were cheerful and enthusiastic as pipers and drummers passed by. All in all, a terrific job of organizing by the **United Irish Societies of Montreal**.

Montreal mayor **Valerie Plante** and Grand Marshal **Shawn O'Donnell** led the procession up to the Chief Reviewing Officer **Steve Garnett**. The Queen and her court, holdovers from the cancelled 2020/21 parades and now two years older, were finally fully recognized. The Queen is **Orla Mahon** and the Princesses, **Julia Barnwell, Aveen Mahon, Rebecca McAuley** and **Meg Sweeney**.



The Saint Patrick's Day parade queen and her princesses – Image: courtesy of the United Irish Societies of Montreal

The day before, Montreal exurb **Hudson** also had its parade, first established in 2009, down Main Street.

Cheering for our locals lead me to also remember some oddments about the parades in other cities around the world.

New York

Acknowledged as **the oldest and largest in the world**, it was led in 1956 by the visiting Lord Mayor of Dublin, **Robert Briscoe**. Briscoe, who had been active in the Irish movement for Home Rule and even organized a large shipment of arms from Germany to support the IRA, was Jewish. He also led the next year, in 1957, the annual New York Passover parade, becoming the only person ever to lead both parades.

Acknowledged as the oldest and largest in the world, it [New York's Saint Patrick's Day parade] was led in 1956 by the visiting Lord Mayor of Dublin, Robert Briscoe...

An American TV series, **Playhouse 90**, presented a June 1957 episode about his life called **The Fabulous Irishman** starring **Art Carney** (later to achieve fame as Jackie Gleason's sidekick in *The Honeymooners*). I tried to conjure up that episode on the Internet but, apparently, only a one-hour [segment](#) still exists.

Chicago

With a large Irish-American population, the city dyes the downtown Chicago River leading past the twin Marina Towers into Lake Michigan green on Saint Patrick's day. This practice began in 1962 under Mayor Richard J. Daley. The dye is supplied by an orange powder of secret composition delivered by a fleet of motorboats.



Saint Patrick's Day in Chicago – Image: [ScottMLiebenson](#), [CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

Montserrat

The tiny Caribbean island British territory in the lesser Antilles chain is the only area to declare Saint Patrick's Day as a national holiday and is credited as having the **4th largest**. (Elsewhere, some cities or regions may declare it as a local holiday but only Montserrat as a national one.) It was originally a British dumping ground for indentured servants, mostly Irish, and wisps of Gaelic are still found in the local speech.

'The tiny Caribbean island British territory [of Montserrat] in the lesser Antilles chain is the only area to declare Saint Patrick's Day as a national holiday...'

Buenos Aires

stages the largest Saint Patrick's parade in South America and is rated the **5th largest**.

London, UK

is apparently the **2nd largest** in the world.

Dublin, Ireland

is believed to be the **3rd largest**.



Saint Patrick's Day in Dublin – Image: [William Murphy, CC BY-SA 2.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

Munich, Germany

seems to be the **9th largest** worldwide and **largest in continental Europe**. Already well known for its beer fests and rousing bands, this seems a good fit.

The top 10 list is rounded out with three in Oceania.

Sydney, Australia

The **8th largest** reflects its famous Opera House and other structures green for the day.

Auckland, New Zealand

The **7th largest**, both New Zealand and Australia were largely populated by Irish prisoners and indentured servants.

Singapore

The city-state began its parade only in 2006 but has shot up to **10th largest**.

Viewers having info or comments on these or other countries celebrating with Saint Patrick's day parades are welcome to send them to Westmount Mag.

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Lorna Wilson as Bernice in Kitty Calling – Image: courtesy of Colleen Curran

Colleen Curran's Kitty Calling

The series continues its own parade of funny 3-minute videos as it commences **Season Three** with its latest episode. Bernice is still publicizing her book *Bernice and Me* ostensibly written by her pet kitten while do-gooder Kitty calls in to check things out and offer advice.

facebook.com/CKKittyCalling

Feature image: Montreal Saint Patrick's Day Parade in 2007, by [Sandra Cohen-Rose and Colin Rose from Montreal, Canada, CC BY 2.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

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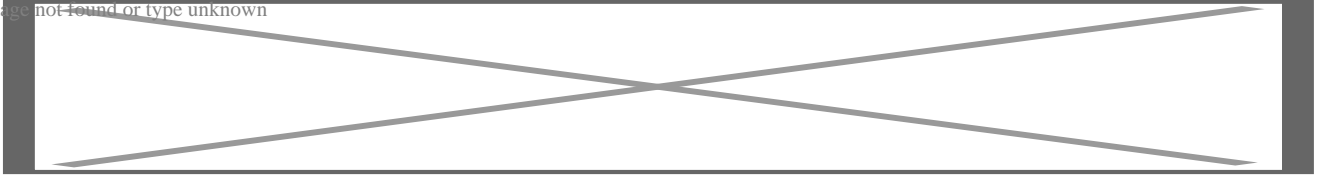
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Byron Toben, a past president of The Montreal Press Club, has been WestmountMag.ca's theatre reviewer since July 2015. Previously, he wrote for since terminated web sites Rover Arts and Charlebois Post, print weekly The Downtowner and print monthly The Senior Times. He also is an expert consultant on U.S. work permits for Canadians.



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