



History and Impact of Gasparilla

The Legend of Gasparilla

The theme of Gasparilla was inspired by the local legend of José Gaspar, a Spanish naval officer who turned to piracy. Different legends say that he was either real or fictional, possibly a nobleman and adviser to King Charles III of Spain who was exiled after a romantic scandal in the Spanish court. Or perhaps Gaspar was an ambitious young officer in the Spanish navy who was driven to mutiny by a tyrannically cruel captain. Whatever his reasons, the stories agree that Gaspar stole away in the late 1700s to the virtually uninhabited southwestern coast of Spanish Florida and established a secret base at Charlotte Harbor, now known as Gasparilla Island.

Gaspar is said to have plundered many ships and taken many female hostages in almost four decades of roaming from Louisiana to the Spanish main aboard his stolen flagship, the *Floridablanca*. His exploits came to a sudden end in 1821 when, to avoid being captured by the schooner *USS Enterprise*, he wrapped himself in the ship's anchor chains and threw himself overboard while shouting "Gasparilla dies by his own hand"

Gasparilla is an Entire Season in the Tampa Bay Area

The first Gasparilla Parade was held in downtown Tampa in 1904, by the members of the newly formed Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla and was fashioned after the famous Mardi Gras parades and season. After that, Gasparilla Children's Parade began in 1947, the Sant'Yago Knight Parade (first held in 1974), and many galas and balls are hosted by individual Krewes, representing thousands of the most prominent businessmen and women in the Tampa Bay Area. The Tampa has long hosted a variety of Gasparilla related events typically from approximately January through April. One of the first was the Gasparilla Open, a PGA Tour stop which was sponsored by Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla from 1932 to 1935. The 1935 edition had the largest prize purse on that year's PGA Tour (\$4000), but with the deepening of the Great Depression, the tournament was discontinued. It returned in 1956 as the Gasparilla Invitational Tournament, an amateur competition which has been held annually ever since.

Other large-scale events held during the Gasparilla season include the Gasparilla Festival of the Arts (established 1970), the Gasparilla Distance Classic, the Gasparilla Film Festival, and the Gasparilla Music Festival. The Inaugural Gasparilla Concours d'Elegance was held April 2019. GCDE now kicks off the season in December as a fully sanctioned Gasparilla partner.

Truly, Gaspar has impacted the Tampa Bay Area charities and the community that they serve far greater than his statement of defiance would have ever foretold. Your participation in the Gasparilla Concours d'Elegance is a testament to the continued generosity of the historical automotive community.